

Using Art in History and Literature Classes: What's the Story?

An Online Professional Development Seminar



Student in front of Roger Brown's *American Landscape with Revolutionary Heroes*, North Carolina Museum of Art

Part 1: Visual Analysis
Part 2: Historical Context

John Coffey, Deputy Director for Art
Ashley Weinard, Educator

North Carolina Museum of Art

AMERICA *in* CLASS[®]

from the National Humanities Center

**north
carolina
museum
of art**

north carolina MUSEUM of art

- Founded in 1947
- The first state in the nation to use public funds to buy an art collection



European painting from the Renaissance to the 19th century

Egyptian funerary art

Ancient Greek and Roman sculpture and vase painting

American art of the 18th through 20th centuries,

One of only two permanent displays of Jewish art in an American art museum.

Museum Park is home to more than a dozen monumental works of art



AMERICA in CLASS®

from the National Humanities Center

HISTORY & LITERATURE
PRIMARY SOURCES
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The National Humanities Center presents America in Class®: **primary** and **secondary** resources, **online seminars**, and **lessons** for history and literature teachers.

America in Class® is designed to promote the analytical skills called for in the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and literacy in history and social studies:

- identifying and evaluating textual evidence,
- determining central ideas,
- understanding the meanings of words,
- comprehending the structure of a text,
- recognizing an author's point of view, and
- interpreting content presented in diverse media, including visual images.

Primary Sources

Collections of historical documents, literary texts, and works of art thematically organized with notes and discussion questions, annotated and excerpted for classroom use.

Online Seminars

Live, interactive professional development seminars for history and literature teachers, conducted by leading scholars.

Lessons

Key questions, essential understandings, and primary sources with context, background, and discussion excerpts for classroom teaching.

Request our FREE poster



GOALS

- To help make history and literature teachers more comfortable with and confident about using art in their classes
- To provide object-based discussion strategies to use with students
- To show how knowledge of historical context can affect a viewer's perception of a work of art
- To help teachers meet the visual analysis component of the Common Core State Standards

FROM THE FORUM

What we learned from the forum:

Teachers use a variety of art:

Surrealists

Middle Eastern

Asian/Indian

American:

Hudson River School, John Caleb Bingham, John Gast

Many teachers use art to “supplement” the teaching of history and literature.

Art offers a way to provoke reflection on values.

Teachers interpret art in a variety of ways—as cultural celebration, social critique, persuasive tool.

The technical aspects of “reading” a painting intimidate some teachers and students.

FROM THE FORUM

What we asked in the forum:

How can we integrate images meaningfully and seamlessly into literature or culture classes? (In other words, what do we mean when we say we use art to “supplement” the teaching of literature and history?)

What methods can we use to engage students in the study of art?

How do you read a painting, and how can we teach students to do so?

How can we become more intentional and focused in our use of art in class?

FROM THE FORUM

What we asked in the forum:

What questions can we ask to help students analyze art—in fact, all visual images—with greater depth and sophistication?

How can we avoid falling into the trap of allowing students to believe that representative paintings are “accurate reflections of reality”?

How does teaching art in an art class differ from teaching it in a history or literature class?

Is art a primary or secondary source?

How does teaching with art translate into an online environment?



John Coffey, Deputy Director for Art

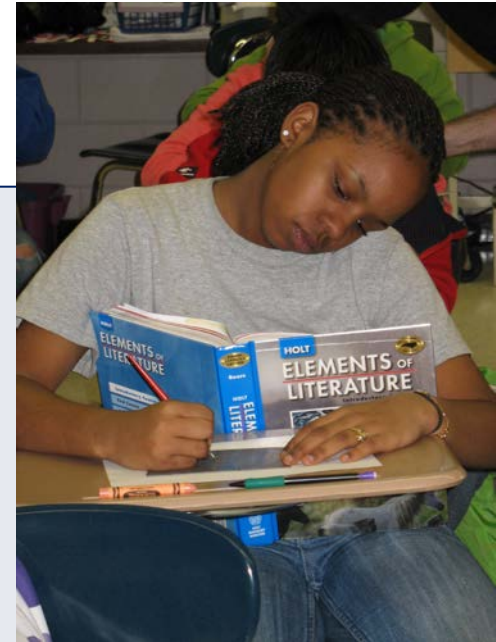


**Ashley Weinard,
Museum Educator**

North Carolina Museum of Art

Intro: What can I do with art?

- Introduce a concept, time period or genre
- Teach literary or historical analysis
- Gauge student questions/understanding about a concept, period, etc.
- Illustrate a historical context
- Generate creative/original writing
- Evaluate student understanding
- Motivate students to learn...



Basic Tips for Discussing Works of Art

- **Let students look and explore first...**
Begin with **open-ended questions** that allow students to explore the works of art before you direct their attention or offer your own interpretation.
- **Make students support their ideas...**
Pose **follow-up** questions, such as “*What detail in the painting makes you think that?*”
- **Encourage self-reflection...**
Return to the work of art after your study and ask students to consider how their impressions have changed.



Part I: Modeling Visual Analysis

What can we discover about these three works of art by just looking closely and making connections to prior knowledge?



Easy Discussion Questions

What is going on in this picture?

What makes you think that?

What more can you find?

*

What does this work of art make you wonder?

Where might you find answers to your questions?

*

What information do you already know that could help you understand what you see?



Christian Friedrich Mayr (American, born Germany, 1803-1851)
Kitchen Ball at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, 1838
North Carolina Museum of Art



Charles Felix Blauvelt (American, 1824-1900)
A German Immigrant Inquiring His Way, 1855
North Carolina Museum of Art



Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889-1975)
Spring on the Missouri, 1945
North Carolina Museum of Art

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[Lessons](#)[Programs](#)[Works of Art](#)[Concept Maps](#)[start a concept map!](#)[LOG IN](#)
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Teach the *Big Picture:* Art **Resources** + **Tools** to help you connect classrooms and invigorate learning

Works of Art

Discover 150 of the most teachable objects in the North Carolina Museum of Art collection.



Concepts

Which of these concepts do you teach?
See how works of art relate across disciplines.

Lesson Plan: *Defining Images of African American Slavery*



Written by Zoe Voigt, Humanities Teacher

Essential Question: *What can we learn about 19th-century ideas and culture by analyzing how white artists portrayed slavery?*

Abstract: Students will create their own illustration of slavery after analyzing and discussing other artistic representations of slavery.

GRADE LEVEL

9 10 11 12

SUBJECT AREAS

Social Studies

Visual Arts

CONCEPTS

Identity power

Activities

Assessments

Resources

Background Info

Comments

Student Learning Objectives

- Students will explore the ideas and culture that influenced white artists in their portrayal of African American slavery.

1. Provide each student with a copy of the attached [Image Analysis Chart](#). Have the class examine *Kitchen Ball at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia* and *Plantation Burial*. Encourage students to record their observations on the Image Analysis Charts.

2. Divide the class into pairs. Assign each pair of students to complete one Image Analysis Chart by combining their individual observations to create the best possible Image Analysis Chart. Allowing students to look at their Image Analysis Charts, hold a whole-class discussion focused on the following questions:

- *What are the similarities and differences in the paintings?*

Part II: Adding in Historical Context

How does contextual information and interpretive analysis change how we view these works of art?

Christian Friedrich Mayr (American, born Germany, 1803-1851); *Kitchen Ball at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia*, 1838
North Carolina Museum of Art





Captain Fredrick Marryat, *Diary in America*, pp. 272-3

“Among others, attracted to the springs professionally, was a very clever German painter, who, like all Germans, had a very correct ear for music. He had painted a kitchen-dance in Old Virginia, and in the picture he had introduced all the well-known coloured people in the place; among the rest were the band of musicians, but I observed that one man was missing. “Why did you not put him in,” inquired I. “Why, Sir, I could not put him in; it was impossible; he never *plays in tune*. Why, if I put him in, Sir, he would spoil the *harmony* of my whole picture!”

What might contemporary viewers have seen in this painting?



Christian Friedrich Mayr (American, born Germany, 1803-1851)
Kitchen Ball at White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, 1838
North Carolina Museum of Art



Eastman Johnson (American, 1824-1906)
Old Kentucky Home (Negro Life at the South), 1859
New York Public Library



William Aiken Walker (American, 1838-1921)
Two Cotton Pickers in the Field, date unknown



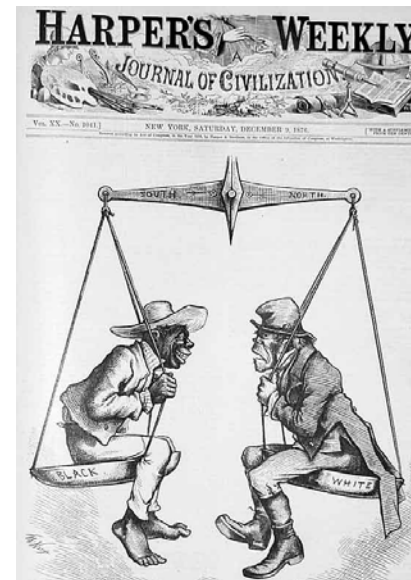
Charles Felix Blauvelt
(American, 1824-1900)
*A German Immigrant
Inquiring His Way*, 1855
North Carolina Museum of Art

What might contemporary viewers have seen in this painting?



Charles Felix Blauvelt (American, 1824-1900)
A German Immigrant Inquiring His Way, 1855
North Carolina Museum of Art

Contemporary Cartoons



**What might contemporary viewers
have seen in this painting?**



Charles Felix Blauvelt (American, 1824-1900)
A German Immigrant Inquiring His Way, 1855
North Carolina Museum of Art



David Gilmour Blythe (American, 1815-1865)
A Match Seller, circa 1859
North Carolina Museum of Art



John George Brown (American, born Great Britain), 1831-1913
A Tough Story, 1886
North Carolina Museum of Art

Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889-1975), *Spring on the Missouri*, 1945, North Carolina Museum of Art



Bent 1945

What picture is this artist painting of
early 20th Century America?



Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889-1975)
Spring on the Missouri, 1945.
North Carolina Museum of Art



Photo by Dorothea Lange



Benton, Lithographs for
Kansas City Star, 1937

What picture is this artist painting of early 20th Century America? How does it compare to other iconic images of America from the same time?



Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889-1975)
Spring on the Missouri, 1945
North Carolina Museum of Art

Contemporary Works of Art



Grant Wood (American, 1891–1942)
Stone City, Iowa, 1930
Joslyn Museum of Art



Stanton McDonald-Wright American, 1890-1973
Street Synchrony, 1917
North Carolina Museum of Art

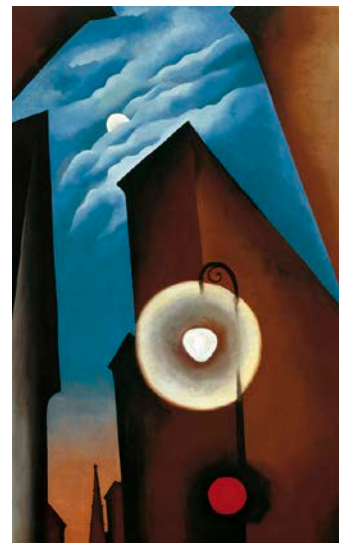
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Thomas Hart Benton (American, 1889-1975)
Spring on the Missouri, 1945
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Joseph Stella
Voice of the City of New York Interpreted, 1920-22
The Brooklyn Bridge (The Bridge)



Georgia O'Keeffe
New York with Moon, 1935



Reflection

How do you see and understand these works of art differently than you did when they were first introduced?

**north
carolina
museum
of art**

Final slide.

Thank you