

February

Grade 5

Boats in American Art

Winslow Homer "The Fog Warning"

George Caleb Bingham "Fur Traders Descending the Missouri"

About the Artist:

See the following page.

Artwork Overview:

See following pages.

Topics for Discussion:

1. How are these two paintings different? How are they the same?
2. Do you think the artists liked to go boating? Why?
3. How do you think Homer wants you to feel when you look at "Fog Warning"
4. How do you think Bingham wanted you to feel when you look at "Fur Traders Descending the Missouri" ?
5. Which place would you rather be as represented by these two artists? Why?

Hand-on Art Activity:

Chalk Drawings

Materials:

12 x 18 colored construction paper
White tagboard
Colored chalk
Hairspray to set chalk
Pencil, glue

Directions:

1. First discuss with the students the differences between the two paintings presented. Bingham's painting is calm while Homer's is turbulent. Students must decide which way they want their chalk drawing to be.
2. Before beginning the chalk drawing practice repeated lines to show various movements. Wavy repeated lines show rhythm while straight lines show calm.
3. Using the chalk begin by lightly drawing the basic composition. Be sure to cover entire paper with colors.
4. Fill -in drawing with color, overlapping and blending the color when desired.
5. When complete the students should sign their names to the front.
6. Sign the front, lower left when complete.
7. After the children leave the room spray each chalk drawing with a light coat of hairspray.

George Caleb Bingham
(1811-1879)

George Caleb Bingham, The Missouri artist who painted these spirited river men lived in a time that now seems romantic and filled with legends. While growing up he daily saw boats and all sorts of people who plied the rivers for a living - trappers, Indians, traders, raftsmen, keelboatmen, and mountain men.

Bingham was born in Virginia in 1811 and spent the first eight years of his life on the family plantation. His family headed west to Missouri in covered wagons in 1819.

As a boy, George taught himself to draw by copying engravings out of books and by constant sketching. He was quite ingenious in finding colors to add to his pictures. He tried the dye his mother used for fibers as well as axle grease and reddish dust from old bricks mixed with oil.

Bingham began making portraits for a living when he was nineteen. He spent a few months in Philadelphia at an art academy. Soon he developed his own style, which included the use of pure, fresh colors and the creation of delicate atmospheric conditions. When he returned from Philadelphia to Missouri in 1844, Bingham was determined to record visually the people and events of the river. His work was well received in New York exhibits by 1845. During his lifetime he was involved in politics and held several political offices in Missouri.

This thoroughly American artist created "genre" (scenes of ordinary folks engaged in daily activities) that show us brawling river men, trappers, and powerful rivers and help us better understand our heritage. He died in 1879.

Winslow Homer
(1836-1910)

Winslow Homer became famous for paintings of the sea that are remarkable for their intensity of feeling and stirring grandeur. He never painted fishermen and sea captains as individuals, but as symbols for the rugged quality of all people who follow the sea. In the same way, Homer's vision of the sea is not local, but universal. Homer took American art out of the romanticism of the mid 1800's and carried it to the most powerful heights of realism.

Homer was born in Boston. He was apprenticed to a lithographer in 1854 and became a free-lance illustrator in 1857. By 1859, he was living in New York City. There he worked for "Harper's Weekly", which employed him during the Civil War to illustrate battlefield scenes. Homer did many war illustrations. At the same time, he painted his first oils, which were scenes of farm and country life. He began painting water colors of these subjects in 1873.

Homer spent 10 months in Paris in 1867. He was not deeply influenced by his Paris stay, but his figure style was affected by the heroic peasants painted by the French artist Jean Francois Millet. A trip to the coastal town of Tynemouth, England in 1881 and 1882 centered Homer's interest in the sea.

Returning to America, Homer settled permanently at Prout's Neck on the coast of Maine. Most of his sea painting were done at Prout's Neck. Homer often traveled to the Adirondack Mountains and to Florida, Bermuda and Nassau. He developed his water color technique on these trips. He skillfully applied transparent washes to instill a dramatic quality and fine feeling for light.