



## WHEN THE BORDER VANISHES

### Through Artists' Eyes: Viewing Landscape and Environment

The Hudson River School was a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century American art movement by a group of landscape painters. Their paintings depicted the Hudson River Valley, the Catskill Mountains, Adirondack Mountains, and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Some painters also traveled westward, documenting through sketches and paintings the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Rocky Mountains, Yosemite, and other significant western wonders of nature. A few ventured to South America and, of course, Europe. These painters presented a romantic, even spiritual, view of America's landscapes. With the Westward Movement and the call of Manifest Destiny, they often depicted a positive bond between settlers and nature. Some, however, included elements of the destruction of nature amidst the seemingly glorified views of expansion and nationalism.

**Standard:**

- I. Culture and Cultural Diversity
- II. Time, Continuity, and Change
- III. People, Places, and Environment
- IV. Individual Development and Identity
- VI. Power, Authority, and Governance

**Grade Level:** 7-12

**Objectives:**

The student will:

- Analyze paintings from the Hudson River School
- Compare and contrast landscapes portrayed in paintings
- Determine how the Hudson River School painters viewed and affected the environment
- Relate works of art to events and periods in U.S. history
- Correlate art, literature, and U.S. history
- Compare modern landscapes with those of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Time:** 1-3 class periods

**Materials:**

Copies of paintings: **A.** *Sierra Nevada Morning* (c.1870s) by Albert Bierstadt; **B.** *Home in the Woods* (1847) by Thomas Cole; **C.** *Twilight on the Wilderness* (1860) by Frederic Church; **D.** *Kindred Spirits* (1849) by Asher Brown Durand

*Handout: "To a Waterfowl"*

Art materials: paper and markers (colored pencils, crayons, etc.)

Websites:

Hudson River School:

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-2536601137.html>

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hurs/hd\\_hurs.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hurs/hd_hurs.htm)

[http://www.learner.org/amerpass/unit\\_index.html](http://www.learner.org/amerpass/unit_index.html) (See Units 4 & 5)

Thomas Cole

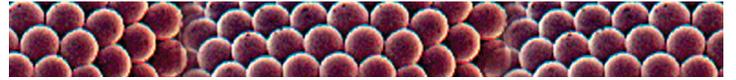
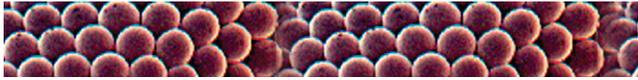
[http://whitemountainart.com/Biographies/bio\\_tc.htm](http://whitemountainart.com/Biographies/bio_tc.htm)

[http://www.essortment.com/all/thomascolebiog\\_rizk.htm](http://www.essortment.com/all/thomascolebiog_rizk.htm)

Albert Bierstadt

<http://www.albertbierstadt.org/biography.html>

[http://whitemountainart.com/Biographies/bio\\_ab.htm](http://whitemountainart.com/Biographies/bio_ab.htm)



Frederic Church

[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chur/hd\\_chur.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chur/hd_chur.htm)

[http://whitemountainart.com/Biographies/bio\\_fec.htm](http://whitemountainart.com/Biographies/bio_fec.htm)

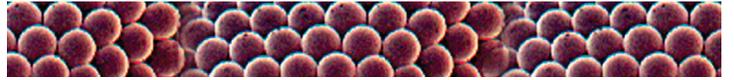
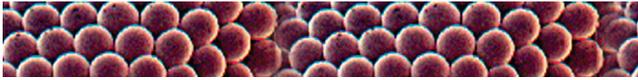
Asher Durand

[http://whitemountainart.com/Biographies/bio\\_abd.htm](http://whitemountainart.com/Biographies/bio_abd.htm)

<http://www.questroyalfineart.com/artist/asher-b-durand>

Procedures:

1. Create a "Gallery View" in the classroom. Display the four paintings. Divide the class equally into five groups. Print enough copies of each painting so that each group has a set.
2. Do not reveal any information about the paintings prior to students viewing the exhibit. (Indicate answers by referring to letters of paintings: A, B, C, D.)  
Instruct students to consider:
  - a. Describe each painting. What is in the foreground? Background? Most prominent feature?
  - b. Is there a theme among the paintings? What is the theme? Does a painting not fit the theme? Explain why or why not.
  - c. Identify regions of the U.S. that appear to be represented in the paintings.
  - d. Arrange paintings in chronological order, using whatever clues are available.
  - e. In which century might each painting have been painted? Decade?
  - f. What do the paintings have in common? How are they different?
  - g. Create a title for each painting.
3. Have each group of students reveal their findings about the paintings. Compare and contrast their results. How many findings did they have in common? Summarize their ideas.
4. Give students the titles of each painting. Have them match the actual titles with the paintings. Check results. Did any students come close to the original titles with the ones they created?
5. Leave the paintings on the walls.
6. Supply information about the artists or have students access the above websites.
7. Hudson River School and the Environment:
  - ◆ What views did these artists have of the environment in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?
  - ◆ How do animals and people balance with the depiction of nature?
  - ◆ Eventually, Hudson River School painters had to deal with change: westward expansion, settlements, and industrial development. Based on the paintings, how did the artists depict changes?
  - ◆ Compare the dates of the paintings. What historical events might have influenced the depiction of landscapes?
  - ◆ What organizations of today might these artists join?
  - ◆ How active might they be in environmental movements?
  - ◆ How would these artists depict the "American landscape" of today?
  - ◆ How could the Hudson River School paintings be used today by environmental groups to create interest in preservation?



Additional paintings for viewing changes in environment in the 19th century:

Asher B. Durand, *Progress (The Advance of Civilization)*, 1853

[http://www.learner.org/amerpass/slideshow/archive\\_search.php?number=7404&fullsize=1](http://www.learner.org/amerpass/slideshow/archive_search.php?number=7404&fullsize=1)

Asher B. Durand, *An Old Man's Reminiscences*, 1845

[http://www.flickr.com/photos/boston\\_public\\_library/4920229227/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/4920229227/)

Albert Bierstadt, *Emigrants Crossing the Plains*, 1867

<http://www.nationalcowboymuseum.org/education/lesson-plans/Emigrants/Emigrants.aspx>

8. Provide blank paper and colored pencils or markers. Students should return to their original groups as selected for the "Gallery View."
  - They are landscape artists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Have each group create one drawing that represents the most typical landscape in the United States today.
  - When completed, display these new paintings with the Hudson River School paintings on the walls. Discuss the similarities and differences.
  - Have each group create a name for their "school" of painting. Post these names with the paintings in the Gallery.

#### Extension Activities:

1. Examine again the painting, *Kindred Spirits*, by Asher Durand. What are the two men doing? Why might they be in this location? Determine the mood of the two men. What is their role in the nature surrounding them? What might they have discussed?

The men are William Cullen Bryant (with beard) and Thomas Cole. They were colleagues who shared views of nature and expression of its beauty. Handout and read the poem, *To a Waterfowl*, and compare with any of Cole's paintings.

After reading, *To a Waterfowl*, and viewing Thomas Cole's paintings, what conclusions can the student make regarding the friendship of Bryant and Cole?

For additional information about William Cullen Bryant:

<http://www.artesmagazine.com/2010/06/the-hudson-river-school-of-painting-helps-define-american-identity-2/>

Bryant and Cole were immortalized in the painting, *Kindred Spirits*, after Durand heard the eulogy delivered by Bryant at Thomas Cole's funeral.

Continue to explore the connections between 19<sup>th</sup> century American writers and painters. ■

2. Analyze the two works of art, *Snowshoe Dance at the First Snowfall* (1835-1837) by George Catlin and the poster, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World*. Larger images are available online.

Compare and contrast the painting and poster. What views of the American Indian are depicted in each work? How would you describe the West from Caitlin's perspective? From the perspective of Buffalo Bill? Would these works of art fit into the Hudson River School of Painting? Why or why not? Search for more of George Catlin's paintings and read the short biographies included below. View more of Buffalo Bill's posters and read about his life in sources provided.

#### Additional Readings:

<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/george-catlin/>

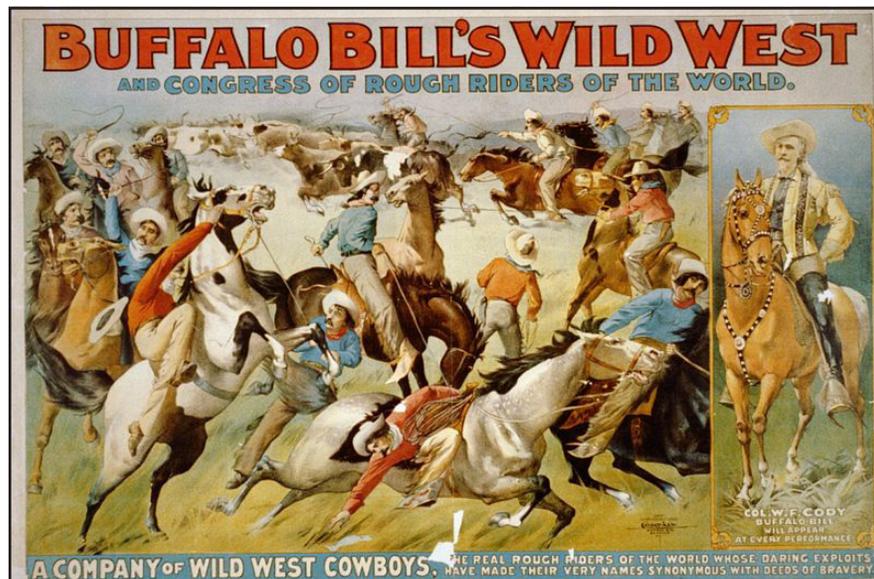
<http://history1800s.about.com/od/artists/a/george-catlin-bio.htm>

<http://www.legendsofamerica.com/we-buffalobillgallery.html>

[http://richgros.com/Cody/the\\_wild\\_west\\_show.html](http://richgros.com/Cody/the_wild_west_show.html)



**Snowshoe Dance at the First Snowfall**  
George Catlin



**Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress  
of the Rough Riders of the World**

3. View these paintings (larger images available online).

**Questions:**

- a. What do the paintings have in common? How are they different?
- b. Are the titles of the paintings interchangeable? Why or why not?
- c. Is one painting more familiar to you than the other? Why is this?
- d. Apply the terms: romanticism, realism, nationalism, and Manifest Destiny to the paintings, if appropriate. Explain why the applications are appropriate.
- e. Discuss the symbolism present in these works.
- f. Apply the ideas depicted in the paintings to specific topics of study in U.S. History.
- g. In which painting do you see yourself? Why does one image capture you more than another?
- h. Apply the concept of expansion to current history. Does expansion continue today? What would a painting show if it captured this concept?

Additional sites for information (many more are available):

<http://www.nativeamerican.co.uk/gast.html>

<http://www.nationalcowboymuseum.org/education/lesson-plans/Emigrants/Emigrants.aspx> ■



**American Progress**  
John Gast



**Emigrants Crossing the Prairie**  
Albert Bierstadt