

Art & the Environment

Lesson 1: Landscapes of the Past



Landscapes of the Past

What did the Hudson Valley look like before industrialization?

Duration:

2-3 class periods

Learning Objectives:

- Introduce students to the Hudson River School art movement and develop understanding of its major characteristics.
- Develop an understanding of what the landscape of the Hudson Valley looked like in the late 1700s and early 1800s.
- Develop the ability to analyze paintings and images for historic content and meaning.

Materials:

- Smart board or computer to project images
- Student worksheets

Description of Lesson:

Educator will lead a discussion about the Hudson River School art movement and some of the artists who painted in this style. Students will discuss and interpret prints, maps, and paintings to develop an understanding of what the Hudson Valley looked like in the late 1700s and early 1800s. AIHA staff will lead a discussion as a museum field trip or classroom visit of 4 Hudson River School paintings and how the artists expressed their ideas about nature with accompanying art activity. Finally, students will engage in a writing activity to synthesize their learning.

Schedule of Activities:

Class 1- Read “Overview of the Hudson River School” article; complete associated worksheet. “Landscapes of the Past” Powerpoint; group discussion. Group painting analysis. Image analysis; complete associated worksheet. Prepare for museum visit.

Class 2- AIHA visit (field trip or classroom visit arranged in advance).

Class 3- Discussion from AIHA visit. Postcard writing activity.

Introduction to the Hudson River School

Materials:

- Smart board or computer to project images
- Student worksheets

Engage: Ask students to close their eyes and imagine what they think the landscape of the Hudson Valley or your community looked like 150 years ago. Ask questions such as the following:

- Do you think it looked the same as today? Why or why not?
- Do you think there were a lot of people living here at that time?
- What do you think the environment looked like?
- What types of houses and buildings did people construct?

Allow students to share their thoughts for each. Teacher can document answers, if desired. This step provides an opportunity to assess individual students' understanding of human settlement in the region during 1800s.

Explore: Explain to students that they will be learning about the landscape of the Hudson Valley through artwork and historic images created in the past. Give students a copy of the “Overview of the Hudson River School” reading. Have students read the document and complete the associated worksheet.

Explain: Use the “Landscapes of the Past” Powerpoint to lead a lecture about the Hudson River School art movement and its artists. Lead a discussion about how artists use their paintings to convey messages and themes.

Discussion Questions

What is the Hudson River School?

Why did American artists focus on landscapes in the 1800s?

Why do you think Americans considered the landscape to be a source of national pride and identity?

Elaborate: Tell students that they will be visiting the Albany Institute to see original Hudson River School paintings (or a visit by AIHA educator with reproductions). Practice analyzing the painting “A Distant View of Albany” by William Hart. Hand out an image of the painting (can also project on Smartboard) and the Painting Analysis worksheet. Divide the painting into quadrants and have students complete the worksheet by filling in what they see and what they think it means in each section. Students should write 2-3 sentences explaining what message the artist was trying to convey in the painting.

★ Use the Painting Analysis key in the Teacher Resources to help guide the discussion.

Evaluate: Explain to students that Hudson River School artists were just one of the groups who documented what the Hudson Valley looked like during this period. Hand out images 1-4 (can also be projected on smart board) and Image Analysis worksheet. Have students analyze the images and complete the worksheet in class or as homework. Students should hand in their completed worksheet for assessment of understanding.

★ Image Analysis can be done individually or in pairs/groups.

AIHA Field Trip or Classroom Visit

Materials:

- Smartboard or computer to project images.
- Student worksheets

★ Contact AIHA in advance to discuss arranging a field trip to the museum or classroom visit by museum educator. Schedule field trip or classroom visit based on needs and availability. AIHA staff member will lead students on a lesson introducing students to Hudson River School paintings in the museum's collection. As part of museum or classroom visit, AIHA will lead students in an art project related to the Hudson River School landscape paintings.

★ If a visit is not possible for your class, examples of images with questioning strategies and lesson plan for landscape collage activity are below:

Hudson River School Paintings



The Adirondacks; James M. Hart, 1861

Discussion Questions:

- What do you see in this painting?
- What season do you think this painting represents? Why?
- How would you describe the mood of the painting? Why?
- Do you see any evidence of humans in this scene? If yes, where?
- How do you think the artist feels about nature? Why?



View of the Catskill Mountain House; Sarah Cole, 1848

Discussion Questions:

- What do you see in this painting?
- What season do you think is represented in this painting? Why?
- How have humans altered the landscape?
- How would you describe the relationship between humans and nature in this scene? Why?
- How would you describe the mood of the painting? Why?



View near Lansingburgh,
Looking toward Troy; Attributed
to James M. Hart, c. 1860

Discussion Questions:
What do you see in this painting?
How have humans altered the landscape?
How many modes of transportation can you find? (Note the train in the distance on the far right)
How would you describe the mood of this painting? Why?
How would you describe the relationship between humans and nature in this painting?



Catskill Mountain House;
DeWitt Clinton Boutelle (1820-
1884), 1845

Discussion Questions:
What do you see in this painting?
How is this painting similar or different than the ones we previously saw?
How have humans changed the landscape?
How would you describe the mood in the painting? Why?
How would you describe the color of the sky? What do you think this means?
Notice the broken/cut tree in the foreground; what do you think this means?



Note: The questions provided are examples of a technique known as Visual Thinking Strategies used by AIHA educators. The purpose of the questions is to encourage students to use their observation and critical thinking skills. Multiple interpretations of paintings or symbols within the artwork are encouraged. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers as long as students are able to explain their responses using evidence within the painting or outside knowledge.

Landscape Collage

Students will use a variety of materials to create a collage inspired by the landscape design of Hudson River School paintings.

Supplies/Materials/Equipment:

(Provided by AIHA)

Pencils

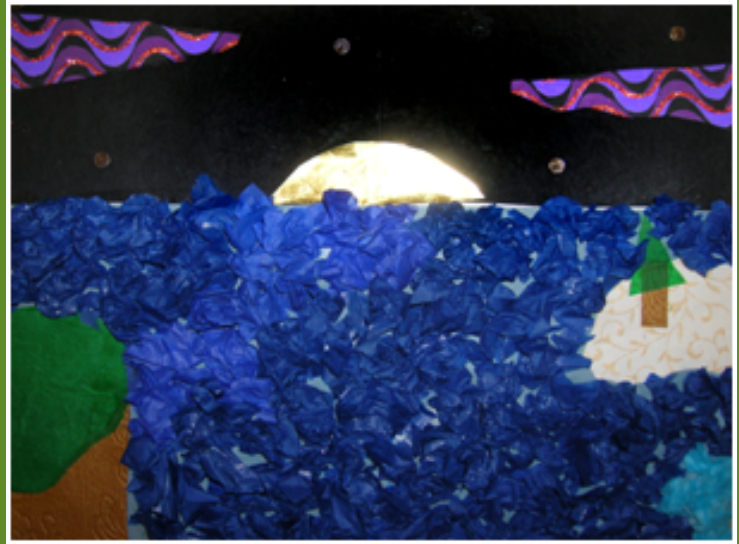
9 x 12" paper, 1 sheet per student

Decorative papers

Tissue papers

Glue

Scissors



Student Sample

Art Concepts:

Line

Form

Landscape

Color

3- Dimensional

Texture

Shape

Collage



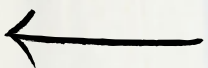
Student Sample

Procedure:

1. Students will view and discuss landscape samples on view in the Hudson River School exhibition.
2. Educator will lead demonstration on materials available and collage techniques.
3. Students will create a landscape collage using a variety of media.

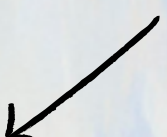
1

Albany skyline barely in view over horizon

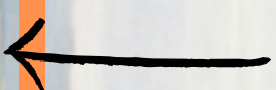


2

Blue sky and distant hills framed by the tree



Sailboats and sloops show presence of economic or leisure activity on the Hudson River



3

Country house and fence show evidence of human settlement



4

A family is seen sitting along a path, enjoying the landscape



Wrap-up and Assessment

Materials:

- Student images
- Student worksheets

Engage: Lead a discussion with students reflecting on what was covered during the AIHA visit. Use follow-up questions to evaluate individual students' comprehension of the materials.

Explore: Hand out or display the 3 Postcard Activity paintings in the Student Images. Ask students to look at the paintings and choose the one they like the most.

Explain: Hand out Travel Postcard worksheet and writing prompt. Explain that each student will use the painting they select to write a postcard to a family or friend. Students will imagine they are one of the people depicted in the painting and write a letter explaining why they came to this site, what they experienced, and what they did.

Elaborate: Tell students that during the period of the Hudson River School (1825-1875) many Americans were able to afford to take vacations for the first time. Traveling to natural or wild scenes was a popular tourist activity. Some places in New York State like Niagara Falls, Lake George, and the Adirondacks were popular destinations just like they are today. These paintings often served as a reminder of the beautiful places people visited during this time.

Evaluate: Have students complete activity in class or assigned as homework to hand in for assessment.