

BACKGROUND READING FOR PRESENTERS

Winslow Homer – 1836-1910

Fog Warning

What they call talent is nothing but the capacity for doing con

- Winslow Homer

Born in 1836, **Winslow Homer** is regarded by many as one of the greatest American painters of the 19th century. He was born and raised in the Cambridge area, Boston, MA. The first work he did in the field of art was working as a print maker in Boston, as well as in New York, which he eventually made his home in 1859.

Early on in his career he worked in oil paintings. The same year he was sent to work in Virginia, where he worked as the front, editor and design chief, for Harper's Weekly. Some of the earliest paintings that he created, from the Civil War, date back to 1863, and are quite similar to the prints that he did, while working in this position with the magazine. As the war came to a close, and the understanding of what the war meant, a number of his portraits which depicted the war were reflective of the changes and ideas that Americans had about the war, and what it really meant to the nation.

During the end of 1866, he made his way to a 10-month stay in Paris, France, working in the countryside, and taking advantage of the opportunity to see much of the work that had been portrayed in the region. Much of the work that he did during this period, took a more basic approach. Some of the subjects, which he depicted, were young children playing in the park, or simple depictions of parents with their children in an outdoor setting.

During the period of the 1870s, Homer also returned to Virginia, to get a feel of what had happened to the community and the people, post war, and also to find out what had happened to many of the former slaves that were now free in the post war era. Much of the work he depicted in the late 1870s, also resembled that somber atmosphere.

In 1881, a trip to England was one of his last trips abroad; during this time he settled in Cullercoats, from late 1881, until 1882 when he departed. The strenuous lifestyles that he watched while living in the seaside town, the hard work that the residents did, were depicted in his work.

From the summer of 1883, until his death, Winslow Homer resided in a small town a few miles south of Portland. Much of the work he did during his final years, were some of the most impressive water colors that he created during the course of his career. Isolation and solitude were things he enjoyed later in his life, and he got that in this small seaside town.

By 1890, much of his work depicted more dynamic interpretations; these contemporary pieces, were the pieces that are most well known, and the art work that is most admired by his audience and his fans. Homer died in 1910. Much of his later work is some of the most well known, and many of his contemporary and modern pieces are depicted in a number of museums in Boston and in New York City.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Winslow Homer – 1836-1910

Fog Warning

1. Description

What do you see in the painting?

How does it make you feel? What mood does it create?

Describe the kind of day it is. How can you tell?

How do you think the fisherman feels and what do you suppose he is thinking?

Has anyone been on a boat in the ocean or a large lake? What was it like?

2. Color

What colors you see in the painting? Do they create a mood?

What if the artist had painted light colored water and an orange sky?

What does contrast mean? How does the artist use contrast in this painting?

If he had painted a dark fish in the boat, would you have been able to see it?

How does contrast help define objects or shapes?

What else in the picture shows contrast between light and dark?

Name the color that seems most important.

3. Size

How does the size of a sailboat and a rowboat compare in real life?

Compare the two boats in the painting. Which is bigger? Why?

What is a good way to show that something in a picture is closer to us than something else?

4. Line, Shape, Movement

What kinds of lines are made by the waves? Which direction do they go?

Look at the lines made in the water by the boat oars. Which way do they go?

Are there any vertical lines in this painting?

Does line as well as color serve to break up the picture space? How?

5. Emotional Response

Would you like to have this painting in your home?

If so, what room would you hang it in?

SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

Winslow Homer – 1836-1910

Fog Warning

Seascape

Materials: Paper, glue, tissue paper, white chalk; water colors, pastels, or colored pencils

Achieve the wavy, blue-green effect of the sea by using torn pieces of colored tissue paper. Tear and glue layers to make a wavy, bumpy effect. Use white chalk for highlights at the tops of the waves.

Add to the seascape things such as boats, birds, fish, lighthouses, etc.

Short Story

Materials: Writing paper, pencils

Pretend that this is a magazine illustration and that you have been hired to write a short story to go with it.

Water Scene

Materials: Paper, water colors, pastels, crayons, or colored pencils

Draw or paint some scene with water. Maybe it could be a place you have been. Try to let your colors create a mood, perhaps how you felt when you were near water. Show if the day was foggy, rainy, sunny, etc.