

Classroom Connections

SCHOOL TOUR | *The Making of America*

Grade Levels: 4th—8th

The
Nelson-Atkins
Museum
of Art



L to R: Jean-Baptiste Dubuc (French, 1743-1819), *Mantel Clock*, 1806-1817. Copper alloy with gilding and silvering, 19 x 14 1/2 inches. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 33-109. | George Caleb Bingham (American, 1811-1879), *Fishing on the Mississippi*, 1851. Oil on canvas, 28 3/4 x 36 inches (unframed). Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 33-4/4. | Joseph Hirsch (American, 1910-1981), *Lynch Family*, 1946. Oil on canvas, 35 x 33 inches (unframed). Gift of the Friends of Art, 46-82.



CURRICULUM AREAS ADDRESSED IN THIS TOUR:

Visual Arts Standards (KS)

- Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Visual Art Standards (MO)

- Investigate the nature of art and discuss responses to artworks.
- Explain how American culture and events and ideas in U.S. history are expressed in works of art.

History, Government, and Social Studies Standards (KS)

- The student will investigate beliefs, contributions, ideas, and/or diverse populations and connect them to contemporary issues.
- The student will recognize and evaluate continuity and change over time and its impact on individuals and communities.

Social Studies Standards (MO)

- Explain connections between historical context and peoples' perspectives at the time in American history.
- Analyze the artistic and intellectual achievements of Americans at different periods in history.

TOUR DESCRIPTION:

During this tour, students will explore the museum's collection of American art from colonial times through the mid-1900s. They will examine the interdependent relationships between artists and their contemporary place in history while actively observing and describing works of art, supporting their opinions using visual evidence, responding to art through descriptive writing, and thinking critically about how artists elicit various responses through their work.

TOUR OBJECTIVES:

- Students will discover that, since the founding of our country, American artists have been influenced by events happening around them and have played an important role in shaping American history.
- Students will identify the ways in which art can communicate mood, reflect on society, and influence perception.

4525 Oak Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64111
nelson-atkins.org

To schedule a tour:
nelson-atkins.org/educators/school-tours/

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Practice Looking

During their tour of the American art collection, students will engage in open-ended observation and interpretation of works of art. One way to practice these skills is to lead a class discussion about a work of art using just three questions:

- What's going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Choose an American work from the museum's website (art.nelson-atkins.org/collections) to talk about as a class and, after a moment of silent looking, kick off the discussion by asking the first question. Paraphrase any responses that are given, being sure to ask the second question if students offer interpretive comments. Keep the discussion going by regularly asking the third question.*

*This is a highly abbreviated description of a teaching method called Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). For more details on the pedagogy, development, and successful implementation of VTS, visit vtshome.org.

Consider Context

The works students will see on this tour represent a 200-year period, from about 1750 to about 1950. To help put art in context, brainstorm as a class a list of people, events, and/or inventions that were important during that span of time in American history.

Dig In

Have each student research an American artist whose work they may see at the museum. Suggestions:

Thomas Hart Benton

Edward Hopper

Frederic Remington

George Caleb Bingham

Georgia O'Keeffe

John Singer Sargent

John Singleton Copley

Charles Willson Peale

Henry Ossawa Tanner

AFTER YOUR VISIT

Connect

Use art as a springboard for writing: instruct students to choose a work they saw in the museum and to write a narrative based on what they see in the image. They should take note of the setting, characters, and suggested action shown in the work of art to add detail and interest to their narrative.

Compare & Contrast

American art at the Nelson-Atkins goes far beyond what students saw on their tour. Display a work of contemporary American art and ask students to compare it with something they saw during their visit. Are any of the themes, imagery, or materials the same? How are the works different from one another?

Suggested contemporary works (view at art.nelson-atkins.org/collections):

- Jason Garcia, *Corn Maiden #8*, 2008
- Kerry James Marshall, *Memento #5*, 2003
- Maya Lin, *Silver Missouri*, 2013
- Kehinde Wiley, *St. Adrian*, 2006

GLOSSARY OF TERMS RELATED TO AMERICAN ART

Canvassing: Asking for votes for a particular candidate or issue in an election

Cast: A sculpture made by pouring molten metal or a similar material into a mold

Commission: A agreement made between a patron and an artist to produce a work of art

Composition: The placement or arrangement of forms, colors, and other elements within a work of art

Cross-cultural exchange: Interaction between two or more different culture groups that involves the sharing of ideas, trade goods, and/or other elements of culture

Flatboat: A flat-bottomed boat used to transport freight and passengers downstream on shallow waterways; it was an important mode of shipping in the United States until the invention of steam-powered boats in the early 1800s

Genre painting: A scene of everyday life that depicts ordinary, often anonymous people rather than recognizable individuals

Heritage: Valued objects, ideas, and cultural traditions that have been passed down from previous generations within a particular group

Industrialization: The transformation of a society through the large-scale introduction of manufacturing

Landscape: An artwork that depicts natural scenery

Lynch: To kill someone by mob action without legal authority

Memorialize: To preserve the memory of a person or event

Narrative Art: Art that tells a story, either as a single moment in a suggested ongoing story or as a sequence of scenes unfolding over time

Patron: A person who supports an artist, often by purchasing the artist's work

Portrait: A work of art that depicts a specific individual

Regionalism: A movement in American art that reached its height in the 1930s; it focused on scenes of rural life shown in a realistic and generally positive manner

Rural: Relating to the countryside rather than the town or city

Still Life: A work of art with inanimate objects—such as fruit, flowers, or dishes—as its subject matter

Symbol: A visual image or design that represents something or someone else

Urban: Relating to a city or town

Westward Expansion: The growth of the United States that occurred when people of European descent populated more and more territory in North America, spreading westward from the original thirteen colonies

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: American Paintings to 1945
Edited by Margaret C. Conrads

This catalog includes images, detailed descriptions, and contextual information for the American paintings on view at the Nelson-Atkins. Available in the ERC.

Smithsonian Q & A: American Art and Artists
By Tricia Wright

In this guide, students can get easy-to-understand answers to some of the more common art historical questions they may have about American art. Available in the ERC.

Great American Artists for Kids
By MaryAnn F. Kohl and Kim Solga

This book provides biographical information about a variety of American artists and describes a related hands-on art project idea for each one. Available in the ERC.

Picturing America
National Endowment for the Humanities

This set of poster-sized reproductions of great works of American art also includes a Teachers Resource Book and classroom discussion questions. Available in the ERC.

Library of Congress Classroom Materials
loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials

Search this extensive database for photographs, documents, and other primary sources that can help students link works of art with different time periods and themes in American history.

EDSITEment
edsitement.neh.gov

Developed by the National Endowment for the Humanities, this site features a searchable database of lesson plans and student resources related to art, history, and other humanities subjects.



EDUCATOR RESOURCE CENTER

The ERC can help you expand your pre- and post-visit activities to connect students' museum experience with your classroom curriculum. The ERC offers:

- Curriculum consultations
- Circulating resources
- Professional development workshops

Visit nelson-atkins.org/educators/resources for info.