

**Pre- and Post-Visit Activities:
Staten Island SEEN: Landscape Art**

Overview:

These activities, which support the Staten Island Museum's lesson "Staten Island SEEN: Landscape Art," introduce students to a definition of landscape paintings and the compositional elements of a landscape.

Background Information for Educators:

Although paintings of the natural world have existed since ancient times, it was only in the 16th century that Dutch painters coined the term "landschap" (Dutch for landscape), which was defined as "an expanse of scenery seen from a single point of view." In the 1600s, landscape painting became an independent genre in the area we now refer to as the Netherlands and Belgium. The urbanization of these areas gave rise to a new mercantile and professional middle class who became patrons of the arts and developed an interest in drawings, prints, and paintings that reflected their everyday lives. Dutch artists created a range of landscapes and seascapes that responded to an age of exploration, the rise of nationalism, an idyllic view of peasants and bucolic pastures, and a concept of leisure as an escape from the urban center to the countryside.

In the 19th century, American painters created the first recognized art movement in the United States by focusing their attention on landscapes. Like the Dutch artists before them, the Hudson River School artists painted their natural surroundings. The beauty and power reflected in these paintings captured the imaginations of Americans and Europeans alike. The recognition of the American landscape as a great natural treasure, as well as the advent of sciences like biology and geology, led to some of the first conservation efforts in the nation.

By the 1870s, photographic imagery presented a significant challenge to not only landscape painters but also artists in general. Many modern painters increasingly moved away from wanting their paintings to appear to be a photographic copy of the natural world to an experience of landscape that could be shaped by emotions, memories, or the artist's aesthetic choices. Likewise, by the second half of the 20th century, the sweeping vistas of 19th century landscape paintings gave way to modern, often man-made environments, populated, if at all, by small faceless figures or the occasional car. These paintings rejected the romantic and sentimental attachment to nature and focused instead on the industrial, the modern, and the banal. The escalating concerns for the environment will no doubt continue to inform landscape painting in the 21st century.

Vocabulary:

- **Background** - a term in visual arts that describes the part of a composition that appears to be farthest from the viewer.
- **Balance** - the distribution of objects, colors, textures, and space within a composition. Balance can be symmetrical, in which the elements on each side of a median line are similar, or asymmetrical, in which each side differs.

- Brushstroke - the visible trace of an artist's brush.
- Color - light, as perceived when reflected off of objects. Color has three main characteristics: hue, described by its name (red, green, blue, etc.); value (how light or dark it is); and intensity (how bright or dull it is).
- Foreground - a term in visual arts that describes the part of a composition that appears closest to the viewer.
- Form - the term that describes three-dimensional shapes, which have length, width, and depth. Spheres, cylinders, and boxes are examples of forms.
- Emphasis - the part of the design that our eyes are drawn to. Usually the artist will make one area stand out by contrasting it with other areas. The area will be different in size, color, texture, shape, etc.
- Horizon line - the division line between earth and sky in a picture.
- Hudson River School - the first acknowledged movement of American art, the Hudson River School was a group of 19th century artists who concentrated on painting the American landscape.
- Illusion - the action of deceiving.
- Landscape - a term used to classify a painting, drawing, or other depiction of natural scenery. Although figures and manmade objects may be included in a landscape, they are of secondary importance to the composition.
- Line - a mark with greater length than width. Lines can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, straight or curved, thick or thin.
- Middle ground - a term in visual arts that describes the part of a composition between the foreground and background.
- Movement - the path the viewer's eye takes through the artwork, often to focal areas. Such movement can be directed along lines, shapes, and colors within the artwork.
- Overlapping - the placement in a composition of one form in front of another, partially covering the form behind, in order to create the illusion of depth.
- Pattern - the repeating of an object or symbol within an artwork.
- Perspective - a way of painting or drawing that makes some objects appear closer than others, and that presents a particular point of view.
- Plane - a continuous flat surface (as in a picture plane).
- Plein air painting - French for "open air." The term most often refers to the practice of painting outdoors rather than in the studio. It is also used for paintings that strongly convey the impression of having been painted outdoors.
- Proportion - the feeling of unity created when all parts (sizes, amounts, or number) relate well with each other.
- Repetition - a pattern of repeating imagery. (Repetition is always a feature of pattern, but a repetition is not always a pattern.)
- Rhythm - this principle is created when one or more elements of design are used repeatedly to create a feeling of organized movement.
- Scale - the size of one object or part of a landscape in relation to another.
- Shape - a closed line. Shapes can be geometric, like squares and circles; or organic, like free-formed shapes or natural shapes. Shapes are flat (two-dimensional) and can express length and width.
- Space - the area between and around objects. Space can also refer to the feeling of depth. Real space is three-dimensional; in visual arts, when we can create the feeling or illusion of depth, we call it space.
- Texture - a term describing the surface quality of an artwork that can be seen and felt. Textures can be rough or smooth, soft or hard.

Staten Island SEEN: Landscape Art

- Urban sprawl - the term for the expansive, rapid growth of greater metropolitan areas, traditionally suburbs, over a large geographic area.
- Vantage point - (*point of view*) a position from which an object or place is observed.

Before Your Visit:

Grades 4-6

This can be completed during class time or as homework.

- Using www.google.com, look up two terms, "landscape" and "landscape art." Create a "T" chart using the yielded search results and answer the following questions:
 - What words and ideas are associated with the terms "landscape" and "landscape art?"
 - Given your findings, what kind of subject matter would you expect a work of landscape art to have?
 - Where could you find landscape art?
 - What elements would you expect in a landscape painting?
 - What materials could be used to create landscape art? Explain.
- Open *Microsoft Word* or another word processing software. Go to "page layout" and click on "page orientation." Ask the students:
 - Why do you think one of the options for page orientation is called "landscape" and one is called "portrait?"
 - In what ways do you think landscape art differs from portrait art?

Grades 7-12

Research Hudson River School artists, including Jasper Cropsey. Take notes using the Cornell format (below).

Suggested Resources:

- [National Park Service](#)
- [The Metropolitan Museum of Art](#)
- "[Celebrating the Hudson River School of Art](#)." CBS News. 18 Oct 2015.
- "[Jasper Cropsey Paintings on Display at His Hudson Valley Home](#)." *New York Times*. 5 Nov, 2015.
- "[Rec Room Treasures: Special Hand-Me-Down Paintings](#)." *New York Times*. 5 Apr, 2011.

After Your Visit:

Add details to the art you created at the Staten Island Museum. Using pens or pencils, draw details such as people, roads, architecture, etc., to add scale. Create a story to go along with the art.

Staten Island SEEN: Landscape Art

Name: _____

Date: _____

Cornell Notes Template

Topic:

Key Points:

Notes:

Staten Island SEEN: Landscape Art

Name: _____

Date: _____

Create a story or narrative to go along with the landscape you created at the Staten Island Museum.
