



The Rockwell Museum

High School Tour:
Spirit of the West

Pre and Post Visit Materials

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OBJECTIVES

Students will utilize language arts skills of speaking and listening; and visual arts skills of observation and analysis to explore the history of America and the cultural and aesthetic traditions of the American West through the museum's collection of paintings, sculptures, and Native American art.

NEW YORK STATE LEARNING STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Art

Standard 3. Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Standard 4. Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

English Language Arts

Standard 1. Language for Information and Understanding

Standard 3. Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Standard 4. Language for Social Interaction

Social Studies

Standard 1. History of the United States

Standard 3. Geography

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Art

- Exploration of mediums
- Using themes, symbols, events, and personal experiences
- Defining the artist
- Cultural awareness
- Analysis

English Language Arts

Comparing and contrasting
Personal Response and Critical Thinking
Culture, Experience and Values
Generating ideas through collaboration
Interpretation and evaluation
Listening
Speaking

Math

- Comparative terms

Science

- Environment

Social Studies

- Geography
- Diversity
- Conflict
- European Influences

MUSEUM MANNERS

Please go over these basic rules with your students before their visit; and if possible, make copies for your chaperones.

- Number One Rule – Do Not Touch.
- Stay at least one foot away from the works of art and one foot away from cases containing art.
- Please do not lean on walls.
- Groups should stay together at all times.
- Walk; don't run.
- Talk; don't yell.
- Raise hands to speak.
- No eating, drinking, or chewing gum in the galleries.
- Backpacks must not be carried through the museum but may be left in our coatroom.
- Use pencils only for sketching or notes.
- No **flash** photography.
- Cell phones should be turned off.

PLEASE NOTE

Teachers and chaperones are responsible for maintaining the same discipline as you would in the classroom.

K W L EXERCISE

**What do you know, what do you want to know,
and what did you learn?**

This exercise is an assessment tool that you can use to evaluate basic information that was learned on the tour.

Before your visit ask students to tell you:

What do you know

- about the Western United States?
- about the impact of westward bound pioneers on indigenous cultures?
- about early explorer artists role in sparking America's determination to go west?

Then ask students:

What do you want to know

- about the Western United States?
- about the impact of westward bound pioneers on indigenous cultures?
- about early explorer artists role in sparking America's determination to go west?

Record answers and save for post visit.

After the visit ask students to tell you:

What did you learn

- about the Western United States?
- about the impact of westward bound pioneers on indigenous cultures?
- about early explorer artists role in sparking America's determination to go west?

VOCABULARY

1. **Art Museum** - a place that protects and displays artwork that is of special interest or value.
2. **Sculpture** - An object made out of wood, metal, or clay (or other materials) that you can see from two or three sides.
3. **Abstract Art** - Painting, sculpture, and graphic art that does not represent recognizable objects.
4. **Representational Art** - A work of art that depicts *recognizable* objects within the physical world, like people, places, and things.
5. **Native American** - The first people to live in the Americas (North, Central, and South). Native Americans are also called Indians.
6. **Manifest Destiny** – The 19th-century doctrine that the United States had the right and duty to expand throughout the North American continent.
9. **Indian Reservation** – Is land which is managed by a Native American tribe under the United States Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs. The land is federal territory.
10. **Indian Reserve** - Canadian name for Indian Reservation, although the history is markedly different from that of the reservation in the U.S.
11. **Ethnographic** - Detailed study of a group of living beings, describing behavior, characteristics, cultural mores, etc.
12. **Topography**: Graphic representation of the surface features of a place or region on a map, indicating their relative positions and elevations.
13. **Culture** - The ideas, customs, skills, and arts that are passed on from one generation to another within a group of people.



PROPERTY OF The Rockwell Museum, Corning, New York
Exterior Photo 2001 Photo Credit: Frank J. Borkowski

THE ROCKWELL MUSEUM



George Catlin, *Breaking Down the Wild Horse*, 1830, oil on canvas

PROPERTY OF The Rockwell Museum, Corning, New York

PAINTING ANALYSIS WORKSHEET DIRECTIONS

- Project the image of The Rockwell Museum to show students where their visit will take place.
- Project the image of *Breaking Down the Wild Horse* by George Catlin. Please let your students know that they will be seeing this painting when they come to The Rockwell Museum.

Have students observe the painting and complete the *Painting Analysis Worksheet* on page 11. You will need to make one copy for each student

PAINTING ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Painting: *Breaking Down the Wild Horse*

Artist: George Catlin

Observe the entire painting again. Next, examine individual items in the painting. Then, divide the painting into four sections and study each section to see what new details become visible.

Step 1: OBSERVATION

List people, animals, objects, and actions in the painting.

<u>People</u>	<u>Animals</u>	<u>Objects</u>	<u>Actions</u>

Step 2: CONCLUSIONS

Based on what you wrote above, list three things you think are happening in this painting.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Step 3: PURPOSE

Why do you think the artist created this painting?

Breaking Down the Wild Horse

QUESTIONING ACTIVITY

Engage students in the questioning activity below. Students may refer to their painting analysis worksheet to begin the dialogue. This activity will encourage students to feel free to answer questions and share their ideas on the tour.

Ask: “What’s going on in this picture?”

(This asks students to open the conversation about their observation.)

Expand questioning with:

“What else is happening?”

“What more?”

Seek clarification with:

“What do you see that makes you say that?”

(This causes students to ground interpretations in their observations.)

Ask: “Who do you see here?”

(This asks students to delve more deeply into what they can and cannot surmise about the characters represented in the work and to extract information from the painting itself.)

“What can we learn from looking at...their clothes, their pose, expression, gesture?”

Ask: “What are they doing?”

(This requires students to pinpoint activities, events, body language, and gestures.)

Ask: “Where are they?”

(This asks students to examine the work carefully to determine the setting for the piece.)

Ask: “When is it?”

“What time of day is it?”

“What season is it?”

“In what era can we place this work?”

Ask: “What do you think the artist was trying to tell us about the people, person, and or place?”

(This introduces the idea that artists make choices and do so intentionally.)

“How does the artist persuade us of particular interpretations?”

(This requires students to provide evidence for their speculation or conjecture.)

“Why do you think the artist might have made a picture like this?”

(This encourages students to think about art in relationship to real life.)

WRITING ACTIVITY

Paint a picture with words...

Write a descriptive paragraph, story, or poem that reflects your interpretation of the painting *Breaking Down the Wild Horse* by George Catlin.

Suggestion for a poem:

Describe what the Indian sees, hears, and feels.

Starting Line I am a Plains Indian....

Second Line I see (describe)...

Third Line I hear (describe)...

Fourth Line I feel (describe)...

NOTE: Please consider bringing one or two examples of writing to be read aloud while observing the painting on the tour.

George Catlin biography

Origin: United States

Born: July 26, 1796, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

Died: December 23, 1872, Jersey City, New Jersey

After a brief stint as a lawyer, George Catlin devoted himself entirely to easel painting upon his move to Philadelphia in 1823. There he studied under Rembrandt Peale (1778-1860) and Thomas Sully (1783-1872), both highly acclaimed portraitists.

In 1824, Catlin witnessed a delegation of American Indians in Washington, D.C., and was fascinated by their appearance and culture. Knowing the federal government was in the process of relocating the Indians from their native lands or forcing them to acculturate, Catlin resolved to use his art "in rescuing from oblivion the looks and customs of the vanishing races of native man in America." Between 1832 and 1836, he made a series of trips into Indian territory up the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers resulting in over 600 paintings of Indian portraits, landscapes, ceremonies, and daily rituals. Catlin titled the collection his "Indian Gallery" which was exhibited in major cities on the East Coast. He campaigned for its acquisition by the United States government in hopes that it would become the nucleus of a National Museum of American Indians. Congress continually refused to supply funds for its acquisition.

In an effort to find a buyer, Catlin traveled the "Indian Gallery" to Europe in 1839. The display became something of an extravaganza with not only his paintings, but artifacts and performing Indians as well. The show was not financially successful, and creditors seized the collection in 1852. However, the "Gallery" remained intact thanks to Joseph Harrison of Philadelphia, who paid off the majority of the debt, took possession of the collection, and shipped it back to Pennsylvania.

After his business failure and a short stint in debtors' prison, Catlin spent eight years traveling to South America, painting more Indians and landscapes. He then returned to Europe and lived in Brussels for ten years, producing three hundred new works of his travels and recreating three hundred images from his lost collection.

After more than thirty years abroad, Catlin returned to New York in 1870 and passed away two years later. In 1881, the original "Indian Gallery" finally made its way to the Smithsonian Institution as a donation from Joseph Harrison's widow. Although many of the works were damaged from being stored in a boiler room, about 450 of the paintings survived and were restored. Largely unappreciated during his lifetime, Catlin's work now stands as an accomplished historical record of this nation's early inhabitants.

Reference: National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson Hole, Wyoming

POST VISIT SUGGESTIONS

Have students access the Museum's website rockwellmuseum.org and click on "Collections". A slide show of Museum artwork is available for viewing.

Topics for writing or discussion:

1. Discuss U.S. **expansionism or imperialism**, and the belief in America's duty to "elevate uncivilized peoples" (Manifest Destiny 1840's).
2. Consider U.S. Foreign Policy today. How does it compare to the 19c Government policies towards Native Americans?
3. Consider how Native American social mores, customs, etc, were perceived as backwards by invading Europeans. Do we view other cultures that way today? Why?

Artistic Response:

Have students create a visual arts response to question #3. It can be done in any medium. Have the students share their work with each other, discussing why they chose to express their ideas as they did and their choice of medium(s).

Compare/Contrast Two Artworks

Have students write about how the paintings are alike and different. Students may use copies of the **Venn diagram** on page 15 as a planning page.

Historical Biography

Have students write a historical biography about an artist from the Museum's collection.

Suggested themes to explore in the biography:

- What historic events or developments were taking place in the U.S. during the lifetime of the artist?
- How did the developments and events influence the artists' work i.e. subject matter, painting style, etc?

Venn Diagram

Topic: _____

