

Art Alive! – Lessons for the Primary Classroom

***Pittsford on the Erie Canal*, 1837**

George Harvey, American (born England), 1800-1878

Oil on wood panel

2005.33



LET'S LOOK: What do you see?
 What in the painting makes you say that?
 How does the artist help you to see that?
 What questions do you have?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

Five Senses

Ask students to imagine and describe textures, smells, sounds, and tastes they “see” in the artwork. What specific details are they “reading?”

Using the line drawing of the painting, students can fill in the missing details that they think are important.

Then What Happened?

Introduce the artwork as if it were a scene from a storyboard. Ask the students to imagine how the story might continue (group activity).

Using the storyboard worksheet, the students can draw additional or alternate scenes using details gleaned from the brainstorm session.

How's the Weather?

Ask the students to identify and describe the weather conditions in the scene. What details does the artist use to tell us the weather?

Use the worksheet to depict this scene in different seasons or weather conditions. Students can draw and color in new details or cut them from magazines to create a collage.

Create a mural by projecting the image on the wall and sketching in the outlines; students can then add the details.

TARGETED SKILLS:

description, details, vocabulary,
point of view

story structure, details, sequencing

description, inference, context,
prediction

Art Alive! – Lessons for the Elementary Classroom

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LET'S LOOK:

What do you see?

What in the painting makes you say that?

How does the artist help you to see that?

What questions do you have?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

Yesterday & Today

Ask students to imagine the painting as a scene from the past. What clues or details indicate that it is an historical scene? How might the scene have changed since it was painted?

Use the line drawing worksheet to create a 21st century version of the scene. Students can draw in the details or use pictures from magazines.

Art in Action

Translate the painting into theater: students can take turns in the role of the characters, creating a few moments of dialogue or action..

Experiment with still poses and action scenes.

Photograph the students in their poses and compare with the painting.

Wish You Were Here!

Using the painting as a “vacation destination,” compose postcards to family or friends telling about your experience. Choose 1-2 specific details and describe them in words so that your friends can picture the location too.

TARGETED SKILLS:

details, description, vocabulary,
inference, compare / contrast

description, context,
point of view

description, point of view,
prioritizing, correspondence

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About the Painting:

This painting is a landscape but one that celebrates man's taming of nature. The Erie Canal and its towpath, with canal boat pulled by three horses (no mules here!), dominates the painting; the grandeur of man's technological achievement shares equal billing with the drama of the clouds and sky. The stillness of the water reflects the sky, the boat and the trees. This painting and another like it, *Sultry Calm*, were painted from sketches done during the artist's visit to the Rochester area. The scene has been located at King's Landing just outside Pittsford village; the distant skyline includes the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church and the step-gabled building at the Four Corners (today known as the Phoenix Building).

About the Artist:

Painter George Harvey visited the Pittsford area and recorded his impressions of the weather and the village in a series of sketches and paintings. He had hoped to produce and sell a portfolio of prints depicting America's unique scenery, a popular theme in both America and his homeland, England, in the mid 19th century. Entitled *Atmospheric Landscapes*, the series was to convey "to the nations on the other side of the Atlantic ideas of scenery which could never have entered into their imaginations, and convictions of American enterprises and improvements which description could hardly bring home to general belief." Although the series project failed, he continued to paint the landscapes that celebrate the beauties of the American landscape.

Additional Information:

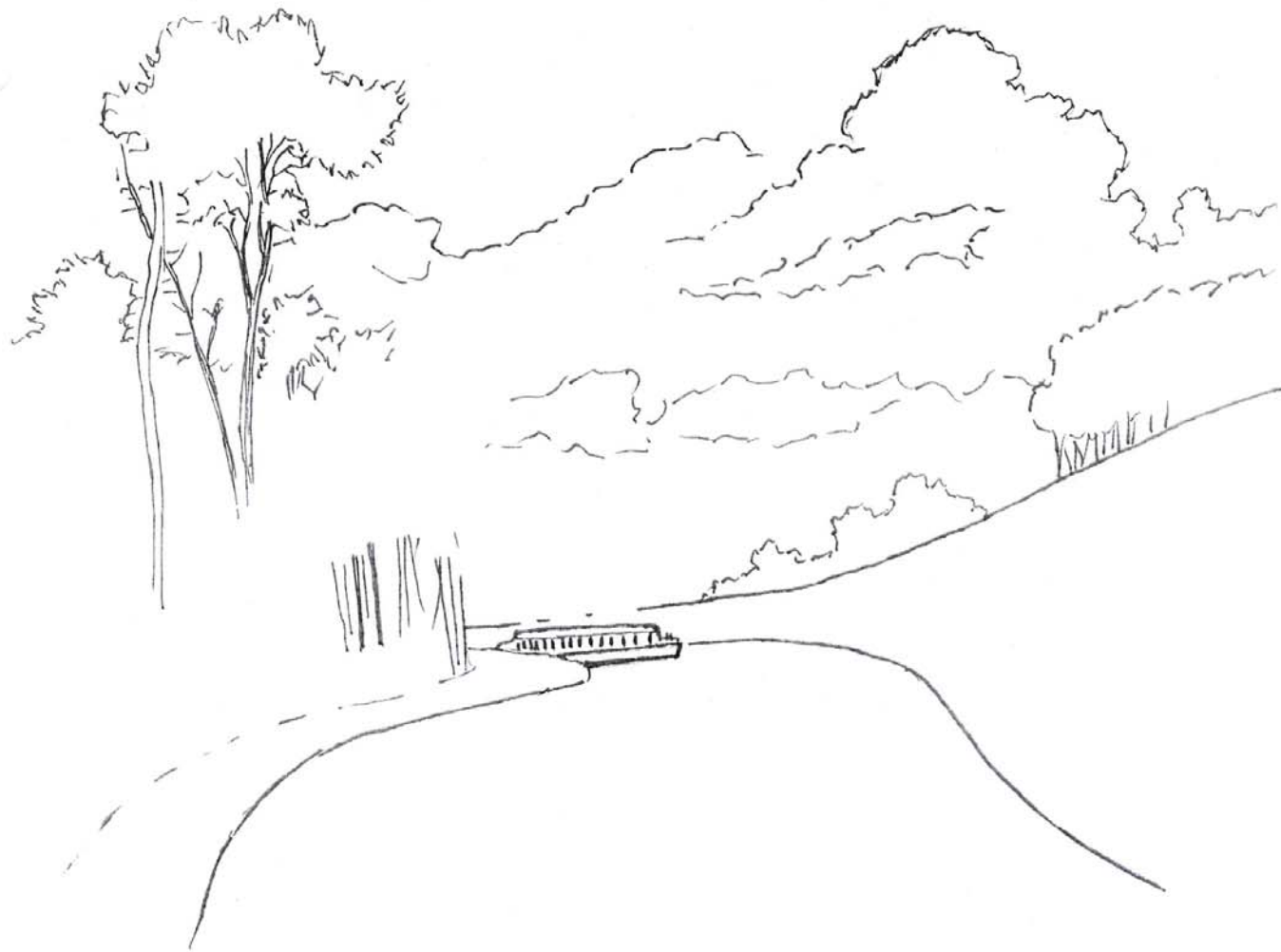
Harvey observed:

The cumulus cloud, from which the sketch was taken, rose with great suddenness. At noon the weather was very oppressive and sultry, and not a cloud to be seen; at two o'clock the sky was in commotion, and at three a most terrific thunder storm burst upon the country. The little village in the distance is near to Rochester, a great place for flour mills. The principal trade of Pittsford is the purchase of grain for other markets; it is situated in one of the most productive agricultural districts in the Union. The Erie Canal has been the means of giving to the city of New York that immense commercial importance which she at present possesses.

The Erie Canal, completed in 1825, resulted in the explosive growth of Rochester and communities in the Genesee valley. Agricultural products and raw materials were shipped north on the Genesee River or along the state roads to Rochester; industries there turned Rochester into America's first "boomtown" whose products were shipped by canal to New York City and markets throughout eastern America and Europe. However, in 1835 the construction of the Erie Railroad (in Pittsford along the south bank of the Erie Canal although not seen in Harvey's painting) would challenge the economic significance of the Erie Canal as well as its place in America's imagination.

Name _____

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***Then What Happened?* A Storyboard Worksheet**

Sketch out your story scene by scene, just as movie makers do.

Develop your story idea by placing the painting in as a beginning, middle or ending scene, and then draw two other scenes that fill in the story.

GEORGE HARVEY

Pittsford on the Erie Canal, 1837

Story Title: _____

