LEARNING TO LOOK

Objectives:
Observing Details
Developing Vocabulary
Using the 5 Senses
Identifying the Elements of Art

Color and Light
Lines
Shapes
Composition and Balance
Exploring Through the 5 Senses

LOOKING TO LEARN

Objectives:
Looking for Information
Comparing and Contrasting Information
Making Inferences

Art as Document
The Big Picture
Create a Story Picture
Story Starter

Asher Brown Durand (American, 1796 – 1886)
Genesee Oaks, 1860
Oil on canvas
Gift of the Women's Council in honor of Harris K. Prior, 74.5

MEMORIAL ART GALLERY
UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

500 University Avenue  *  Rochester, NY 14607  *  (585) 276-8900  *  http://mag.rochester.edu

The Gallery’s 2011-12 school program is made possible by Dominion and an anonymous donor. Support for the Estelle B. Goldman Curator of Education is provided by the estate of Estelle B. Goldman. The McPherson Director of Education is endowed by an anonymous donor.
LOOKING TO LEARN

Color and Light: How does an artist use colors to interest us in his painting? Refer to color copy to complete this exercise.

- What colors do you see? These colors are called the artist’s “palette.”
  Write the names of all the colors you see. __________________________________________________________
  Circle the whites and yellows.
  How many shades of green can you identify? ________________________________________________________

- Artists use colors to make a picture look three dimensional.
  What colors seem to jump out at you? _______________________________________________________________
  Which colors take you deep into the picture? _________________________________________________________
  Artists use paler hues of colors to make objects seem farther away. Look in the middle ground to see how Durand has done this.

- How does the artist show brightness and light?

  Is this a sunny or a cloudy day? How can you tell?
  Where is the light coming from? _________________________________________________________________
  Where are the shadows? ____________________________
  Circle areas in the painting where the artist has put bright lights and shadows close together.

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Lines: How does an artist use lines to make objects look real?

- Painters draw with many different lines.

Use your finger to trace the outlines.
Look for straight lines and curved lines. Mark them with a colored pencil.
Identify some objects that are created by dabs of paint with no outlines.

Where can you see horizontal lines?

The line where the land meets the sky is called the “horizon line.”

Where do you see vertical lines?

Some lines are hinted at by the artist.
Where is the river going?
Its path is also a line that takes you farther back into the picture.
That diagonal line, called linear perspective, gives us the feeling of depth or dimension.

Is there any imagined line, a “sight line,” that connects you to the man in the painting?

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Shapes: How does the artist use shapes to help us look all around the painting?

- Focus your eyes so you do not see the objects but look instead for the shapes. A viewfinder can help you see only small parts of the painting at a time.
  Where do you see circles and ovals? ____________________________________________________________
  Identify them on your painting with a colored pencil.
  Locate the triangles. (Hint: empty spaces count too!)
  ____________________________________________________________
  Do you see any squares or rectangles? __________________________________________________________
  Why do you think the artist preferred to use rounded shapes? ______________________________________

- Walk around the classroom or outdoors and look through your viewfinder at the world above you, below you, in front of you and around you. Look until you find a picture through the frame that you think is interesting. Describe what you see.
  ____________________________________________________________
  Are some things in your view “cut off” by your frame so that you can only see parts of them?

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Composition and Balance: How does an artist combine what he sees and what he wants things to look like in his painting?

- Paintings are usually divided into the foreground or view closest to us, the middle ground, and then the background or distance.
  
  Can you find the foreground in this painting? Mark it on the painting.
  
  What has the artist put in the foreground?

  Can you find the middle ground? Mark it on the painting.
  
  What has the artist put in the middle ground?

  Can you find the background? Mark it on the painting.
  
  What has the artist put in the background?

  Why do you think the artist made the background more than half of the painting?

- Painters like to balance the objects in the painting. Draw a line down the middle of the picture; divide the painting into a right side and a left side. List all the objects you see on each side. Is the painting composition balanced?

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Exploring through the 5 Senses:

• Imagine the sounds you would hear if you could step into the painting.
• Describe the smells of the countryside.

___________________________________________________________

• Do you see anything that might feel very soft to the touch? What might be very rough or very smooth to touch? 
  What would be cool to your touch? What would be warm?

___________________________________________________________

• Describe what your eyes see at first. What appears after you look longer and harder?

___________________________________________________________

• Is there anything you would like to taste?

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Art as Document: How does the artist give us a picture of a time and a place?

- Ask yourself this question: I wonder what is going on in this painting?
  - Where is this scene? ________________________________
  - What is the weather like? ________________________________
  - What in the painting tells you about the weather? ________________________________
  - What time of year is it? ________________________________
  - What plants are growing here? ________________________________
  - How many people do you see? ________________________________
  - What are they doing? ________________________________
  - Does anyone know the artist is there? _______ What in the painting tells you that? ________________________________
  - Are there any buildings? ________________________________
  - What is around the corner? ________________________________
  - What is behind those big trees? ________________________________
  - What else can you see? ________________________________

- Use the chart to list the things you can see in the painting.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEOPLE</th>
<th>ANIMALS</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>BUILDINGS</th>
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The Big Picture: How do details support the meaning as a whole?

What is the main idea or theme you see in the painting? ____________________________

What title would you choose? ____________________________

What details support your idea? ____________________________

What is the title Asher B. Durand gave to his painting? ____________________________

What details has he used to give us that theme? ____________________________

Your Title: ____________________________  Artist Title: ____________________________

Supporting Details: ____________________________  Supporting Details: ____________________________

__________________________  ____________________________

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LOOKING TO LEARN

Create a Story Picture using a detail out of the painting.

- Do not look at the painting but ask someone to draw or copy a detail out of the painting onto a card. Create a story picture using the detail as your starting point.

Now look at the actual painting. How did the artist use that detail to create his story?

_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

Compare how he used the detail with the use you made of it.

_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________

- What details are very important in the story of *Genesee Oaks*?

_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________
**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.

**Story Title:** ____________________________________________