

Art Alive!

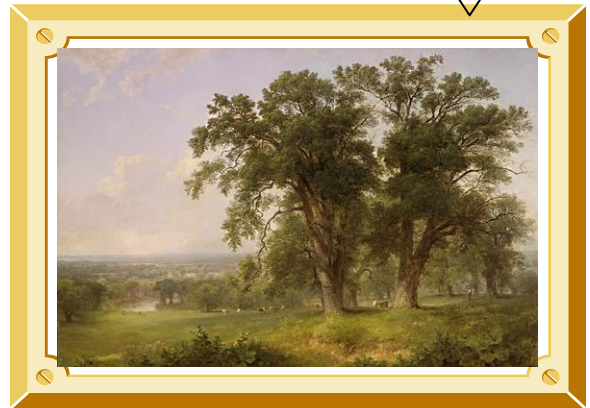
Utilize a work of art for looking, thinking, connecting, imagining, and expressing ideas, then **Practice** Language Arts skills through hands-on, student-driven, ELA-based activities

Objectives: Students will use art as --

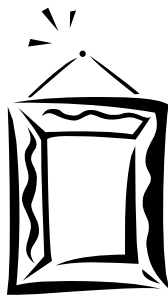
- a springboard for imaginative and creative expression
- a decoding exercise for the development of creative problem solving skills

Materials included:

- ❖ Transparency of a painting from the Memorial Art Gallery's collection
- ❖ Questions to guide student looking
- ❖ Information on artwork and artist
- ❖ Classroom activity suggestions
- ❖ Sample worksheets for select activities
- ❖ Teacher evaluation form



A.B. Durand, *Genesee Oaks*, c. 1915



**SEE OTHER SIDE FOR
TEACHER GUIDE!**



Memorial Art Gallery
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Art Alive! – Lessons for the Primary Classroom

Genesee Oaks, ca. 1915

Asher Brown Durand, American, 1796-1886

Oil on canvas

74.5



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.

Animal Life

Ask the students to imagine the scene as an animal habitat. What animals can the students see in the painting? What other kinds of animals might have lived there?

Create a group mural by projecting the image on the wall and sketching in the outlines; students can then add pictures of other animals that could find a home there.

TARGETED SKILLS:

description, details, vocabulary,
point of view

story structure, details, sequencing

description, , inference, context

Art Alive! – Lessons for the Elementary Classroom

Genesee Oaks, ca. 1915
Asher Brown Durand, American, 1796-1886
Oil on canvas
74.5



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.

What's in a Name?

Introduce the name of the painting and ask students to find all the details that fit the title.

Ask students to rename the painting and explain their choice.

Divide the class into groups and ask each to create a new title based on a different characteristic of the painting: color, location, action, time, etc.

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

inference, details,
prioritizing, description,
point of view

description, point of view,
prioritizing, correspondence

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About the Painting:

This painting is certainly a landscape; a view of a grassy meadow dominated by a pair of large oak trees, with hills and additional woods following a river into the hazy distance. At first glance the meadow is unpopulated, but a closer look reveals a few cows and their caretaker in the shade of the massive trees. Lifelike details are visible everywhere in the brightness of the sky, the fluffiness of clouds, the curling edges of ferns, the long stems of grasses, and the arching branches of the oaks.

About the Artist:

In 1859 artist Asher Brown Durand spent several weeks in early summer in the Genesee Valley, probably invited to this region (just south of Rochester, NY) by one of the area's major landowners. During this visit he made a series of sketches that he used later in his New York City studio to create *Genesee Oaks*.

A landowner in the 1850s might well commission an artist to document his land holdings, just as a family might commission a group portrait. Durand would have been the natural choice for such a landscape commission. Since the 1840s, Durand had been identified as one of the leading contemporary painters, specializing in landscapes. During the 1840s Durand and fellow painter Thomas Cole developed what would be considered the first uniquely American style of painting, the Hudson River School. While not a formal school—it had no classrooms or official students—its principles influenced a generation of artists.

Additional Information:

The importance of the trees in this view and in the history of the Genesee River valley almost serves to categorize this painting as a portrait: a portrait of the trees. This is a real place, still identifiable by local Genesee-area residents as the Wadsworth place. The Wadsworth family planted and preserved many trees on their estate and required all tenants of their land to do the same. The huge oaks in this painting and others like them still dominate the local landscape today.

American in the 1840s was on the verge of tremendous change. The European settlers were beginning their movement westward in earnest, and they saw the extraordinary resources in the pristine wilderness as a divine gift—a gift both to be revered and cultivated. *Genesee Oaks* is an expression of both instincts, with its central portrait of three majestic trees—survivors of the old-growth forests—standing in the midst of newly cleared land and the river leading off into the distance.

Name _____

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Name _____

***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.

ASHUR BROWN DURAND
Genesee Oaks, c. 1915



Story Title: _____

