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Albert Bierstadt Lesson Plan

NYS LEARNING STANDARDS:

- The Arts: standards 1 & 4— Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts; Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art.
- English: standards 1 & 4—Language for Information and Understanding; Language for Social Interaction.
- Social Studies: standard 1—History of the United States and New York.

GRADES: 7th, adaptable 5th-12th

LEARNING STYLES:

- Spatial/Visual
- Bodily/Kinesthetic
- Verbal/Linguistic

MATERIALS

- Reference resources on American artists
- Access to a printer to download images and/or photocopier to copy images from publications
- Space to create an exhibition gallery and a method to display copies of paintings (examples: Use corkboard and thumbtacks or classroom walls with masking tape).

OBJECTIVE

- To identify Albert Bierstadt and have a grasp of basic information about his life and works
- To develop visual literacy and artistic appreciation
- To show history's interdisciplinary connectedness

PROCEDURE

- Discuss landscape art with your students. Divide the class into groups of three students.
- Have each group do separate research. Allow time for research outside the classroom.
- Each group should study the artist's biography and works of art. Each group should choose one of the artist's landscape paintings.
- Help each group obtain a copy of it by downloading, photocopying from a publication.
- Each group should plan to exhibit the work of art and prepare a "gallery talk" about the artist and the work of art.

Among the questions they should research:

1. Where was the artist born and where did he live?
2. As a youth, did the artist show an interest for art and how was that demonstrated?
3. Where did the artist study art (example, in Europe, with another artist, in a special school)? What kind of lessons did he learn? What types of art inspired the artist?
4. How did the artist become interested in landscape painting?
5. What sites did the artist paint?
6. What is the style of the artist? For example, do the paintings seem realistic in a traditional way or are they abstract? Does the artist paint with distinct lines or with broad patterns or strokes?
7. How does the artist use color: are the paintings dark, bright, subdued, pale, harsh? How does the artist portray light in the painting? Where is the primary focal point (the primary area of interest) in the painting?
8. What were the artist's ideas about art and about the landscape? What did he say that helps you understand their ideas? What did other people of the time say about the artist's works?

Questions Concerning the work of art:

1. What is the title (or name) of the painting? What site does it depict?
2. When did the artist paint it? What experiences did he have in making it?
3. What is the style of the painting (see above, no. 6)?
4. How does the painting make you feel?
5. What do you think the artist is expressing in the painting?

PROCEDURE (Continued)

- Each group will do a presentation about Albert Bierstadt and two paintings.
- The Presentation should clearly cover the questions outlined.
- On the day of the presentations, assemble the groups with their reproductions and arrange an exhibition in classroom or other space
- Allow time for the entire class to walk around and view the exhibition, then have the groups present the reports as a "gallery talk" that refers to the painting.

ASSESSMENT

At the conclusion of the reports, each student should write an exhibition label for two paintings. One painting should be the one the student reported on and the other should be a painting reported on by another group. The label should include the artist's name and the title of the painting. It should have one sentence about the biography of the artist and one sentence analyzing the painting.

EXTENTION

- Visit a museum in your area with landscape paintings. Plan a visit that will allow opportunities for students to look at landscape paintings and analyze them.

- Invite an artist who paints landscapes to your class. Ask him/her to discuss background, education, and ideas about art and the land. If possible, have the artist give a painting demonstration.