

Albert Bierstadt

Biography

Paintings

Historical Context



Slide Show

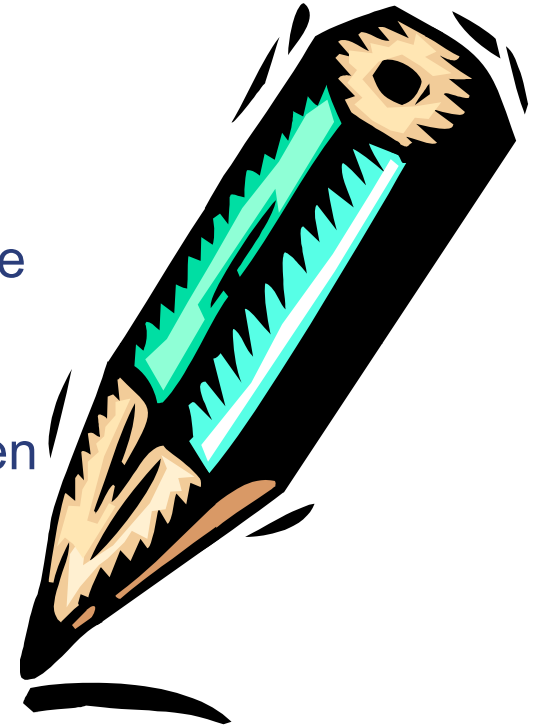
Influences

Accomplishments



Agenda:

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Thesis

- Albert Bierstadt reflects the personality of the Hudson River School of artists because of his influences and his life in the Hudson River Valley. His paintings of the West reflect all of the knowledge he gained in the Hudson River School.

Biography

- Born in 1830 near Dusseldorf, Germany.
- Family moved to America & settled in New Bedford, MA.
- At 20- decided on an artistic career.
- Went back to Dusseldorf to received training in painting.
- Returned to MA, at 27, with a passion for visualizing landscapes on a pretentious scale
- Organized an exhibition in New Bedford of 150 paintings
- 1857- The Boston Athenaeum bought *The Portico of Octavia Rome*
- 1858- joined the expedition along the Oregon Trail
- Went on five subsequent westward treks, sketching mountain scenery in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska
- 1869- “Glen House”, work on *Emerald Pool*
- Exhibited at Boston Athenaeum from 1859-1864, at the Brooklyn Art Association from 1861-1879, and at the Boston Art Club from 1873-1880
- 1860-1902- National Academy of Design, kept a studio in NYC from 1861-1879



Albert Bierstadt



Emerald Pool

Chrysler Collection, Norfolk, Virginia, USA

1870

Biography...



- Created romantic visions of wonderment in the minds of Easterners
- Fulfilled America's needs for new awareness of the romance of the western frontier
- "He filled his canvases with subliminal magnificence, which left the viewer in little doubt that all that is beautiful in nature is a manifestation of what's divine."
- Captured public imagination.
- 1870's- the height of Bierstadt's popularity.
- 1898- was elected as a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters.
- Popularity and wealth rose to tremendous heights only to fade as the interest in the Boston School and impressionism turned public interest away from his highly detailed landscapes.
- 1895- declared himself bankrupt.
- Albert Bierstadt died in NYC in 1902 at the age of 72.

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Manifest Destiny

1840's

- Continental expansion
- “mission” or national destiny
- Extend “boundaries of freedom”
- Land taken from Indians
- Ex. Oregon Trail





American Renaissance

1876-1917

- Art and architecture of capitalism
- Escape physically and vicariously into artwork
- Setting of leisured elegance

Romanticism

18th to mid 19th Century

- Deepened appreciation for beauties of nature
- Emotion over reason and intellect
- Simplicity and naturalness
- Dark mysticism
- Reaction to rational ideas and skepticism
- Ex. A Stream in the Rocky Mountains



Transcendentalism

1835-1880

- Rebellling against current situation
- Trying to be different **Last of the Buffalo**



Luminist Movement

1850-1875

- Offshoot of American Romanticism
- Light realistically on canvas
- Capture specific effects of light in particular places
- Hiding visible brush strokes
- Small figures w/ nature
- Contrast—diff. color layering and positioning



Buffalo Hunt



Landscape Painting 19th Century

- Reflect Romantic & Transcendentalist movements
- Nature: manifestation of divine spirit
- Sweeping power, beauty or majesty of nature



Clouds Coming
Over the Plains

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PAINTINGS



<http://gort.ucsd.edu/sj/timken/t-brsdt.html>



<http://www.kidsart.com/IS/430.html>



<http://www.inter-art.com/en/1025.htm>

- **“Beginning in 1859 Bierstadt made three trips west, each time making oil sketches on paper.**
(<http://www.xmissions.com/~emailbox/glenda/bierstadt/bierstadt.html>)
- **Beautiful landscaping**
- **Native Americans in their natural setting.**
- **This painting is of Yosemite Fall, he captures the light falling upon the meadow bordering the Merced River.**
- **To the right is Yosemite Valley and below is the sunset there.**

THE OREGON TRAIL



<http://www.wilderness.net/wmdep/images/jpegs/ORtrail.jpg>

*This painting of of emigrants, animals, and wagons underway
On the Oregon Trail.

- **Native Americans in their natural setting”**
- **Expedition that crossed Nebraska into western Wyoming. “Fort Kearney with their 150 wagons”**
- **The Oregon trail**
(http://www.butlerart.com/pc_book/pages/albert_bierstadt_1830.htm)

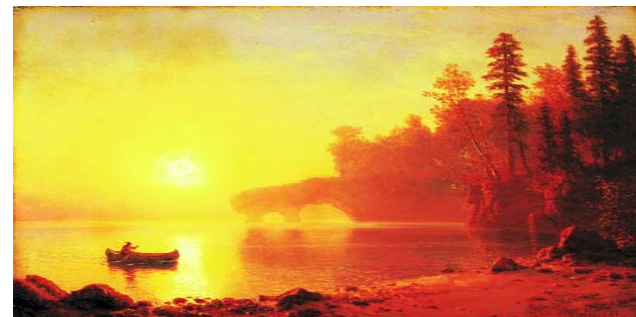
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Influences

- Establish as own purpose, authority and law.
- Hudson River School.
- Realization of the American Dream.
- Harmony and Nature
- Ralph Waldo Emerson
- The Hudson River Valley
- The West



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(<http://www.vincent.nl>)



Albert Bierstadt's Accomplishments

- Became well known around the world for his large landscape paintings of the American West.
- Studied at the Düsseldorf Art Academy in Germany.
- Commissioned to do paintings for the U.S. House chambers.
- Received an invitation to present his work to the queen of England.
- Influential in formation of the Metropolitan Museum of art.



The Highest Paid American artist!

- ALBERT BEIRSTADT'S 1866 DRAMATIC YOSEMITE VALLEY, A NEW RECORD FOR THE ARTIST, SELLING FOR \$7,176,000!!
- The top selling lot in today's sale was Yosemite Valley
- Advertised himself as an instructor in monochromatic paintings in New Bedford in 1850
- That same year he exhibited 13 of his works and one drawing in Boston.
- Became New Bedford's prominent artist,
- In 1858 he organized a large exhibition of paintings that brought him to national attention.

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VIEW ON THE HUDSON



- “This picture is looking west across the Tappan Zee and the Palisades towards a stormy sunset sky”

■ The Hudson River and it's Painters, American Legacy Press 1983 NY

■ http://images.google.com/images?q=tbn:rorE57xFu34J:www.artrenewal.org/images/artists/b/Bierstadt_Albert/large/View_of_the_Hudson.jpg

ENTRANCE INTO MONTEREY



- These paintings illustrate the European discovery of the West coast.
- We see the focus on the white European explorer who has been led by God to this savage land to civilize it.
- <http://images.google.com/images?q=tb:GCyLpfcYutEJ:xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/NATURE/monterey.jpg>

Looking Up the Yosemite Valley c. 1865-67



- **The Haggin Museum, Stockton, California**
- **Seasons/Weather, Clouds, Landscape, Mountains, Trees, Rocks, Water, Figures, Animals, Horses.**

Emigrants Crossing the Plains

1867

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/B/bierstadt/emigrants.jpg.html>



- National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak 1863

<http://aradergalleries.com/gallery/Other/Images/BierstadtRockyMountainsLander'sPeak.JPG>





A Storm in the Rocky Mountains - Mount Rosalie

1866

http://www.artchive.com/artchive/B/bierstadt/bierstadt_storm.jpg.html

- The Brooklyn Museum, New York



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Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to:

- Identify Albert Bierstadt, who has painted American landscapes and two works that he has painted.
- State biographical facts about Albert Bierstadt.
- Analyze two works of art by Albert Bierstadt.

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).



(<http://www.binggallery.com/images/bierstadt.jpg>)

PROCEDURE

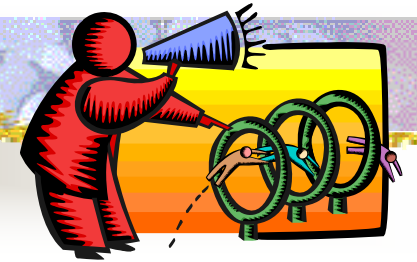
- ❑ Discuss landscape art with your students. Divide the class into groups of three students.
- ❑ Have each group do separate research. Allow time for research outside the classroom.
- ❑ Each group should study the artist's biography and works of art. Each group should choose one of the artist's landscape 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.



(<http://www.vincent.nl>)

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 and Extension



- 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.
- EXTENSION
- 1. 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.
- 2. 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.

Itinerary:

Irvington-on-Hudson

- Married Rosalie Ludlow
- Built mansion along the Hudson River, called Malkasten. This overlooks the river at Irvington-on-Hudson, NY (Westchester County)
- Spent 16yrs of his life, where he lived and worked.
- In 1882 his mansion was destroyed by a fire, along with many valuable pictures.
- He only did a few paintings of the Hudson Valley, such as, *View on the Hudson*, *Sailboats on the Hudson*, *Along the Hudson*, & *On the Hudson*.



View of the Hudson

This painting is overlooking the Tappan Zee in the direction of Hook Mountain



Sailboats on the Hudson



Along on the Hudson

1860 Sold to Private Owner



On the Hudson

Out West: California



Looking Up the Yosemite Valley

The Haggin Museum, Stockton,
California 1865-67



Sunrise, Yosemite Valley

Amon Carter Museum,
Fort Worth



*Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains,
California*

National Museum of American Art,
Washington

1868



Sunset in the Yosemite Valley

The Haggin Museum, Stockton, California

1868



Conclusion

- Albert Bierstadt was well known for his romantic landscapes from out West. He traveled to the West Coast and saw the vast region, then went back to his studio and painted what he saw. Bierstadt was a transcendentalist and painted his paintings in an unprecedented scale with inaccurate topography and pictured destiny as well as nature. His romantic landscapes remain majestic with the natural beauty of the West.



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