

Artist of the Week, or “Watch Out, Jay Leno!”

Premise:

Each week, before any art lesson is introduced, the teacher presents a new artist to the students. The name and information are on an 8.5”x11” poster. Usually this will be one person for the whole school, but it could be grade-specific sometimes. The artist could relate to one of the week’s lessons, or to a season, or just be of general interest.

At the end of each week, the poster is displayed with the others, where students can readily see them and refer back to them. (“Are we ever going to talk about any live artists?”) By the end of the year, a wall is covered.

BE SURE YOU KNOW HOW TO PRONOUNCE THEIR NAMES!

For example, in association with a Kindergarten lesson on “family” (perhaps a family portrait), the artist-of-the-week is Joshua Johnston, (*Mrs. Grace Allison McCurdy and her Daughters*), John Singleton Copley (*The Copley Family*), or Horace Pippin (*The Domino Players*). Even though the other grades might not be doing a related lesson, the artist would be the same for all.

Pertinent points:

Name; nationality; birth and death dates; age; type of art; subject of art; one or two most famous images AND portrait, preferably a self-portrait.

GILBERT STUART:

“The artist this week is Gilbert Stuart. What country was he from? When was he born? When did he die? How old was he when he died? He was portrait painter (what is a portrait?) and his most famous portrait was of this person (George Washington)—who is this?”

CURRIER AND IVES:

“The artist of the week this week was actually a company—Currier and Ives. Nathaniel Currier and James Merritt Ives were owners of a printmaking firm, making lithographs (explain “lithographs”). They were based in New York from 1834-1907. They employed artists to create the images first as a painting, that was then converted as a black and white print. Teams of women hand-colored each print in an assembly-line process (explain the term “assembly-line”). They women were paid \$6 each 100 prints. They described their lithographs as “colored engravings for the people”. These were so inexpensive everyone could own one, if just for a few pennies. Sometimes they would create images of important new events, like the Chicago fire, or might be reminiscent of simpler times. They employed many of the well-known artists of the day, Like Thomas Nast.

NOTE: You could just say they made prints, which were copies of drawings made for the company by artists. These were in black ink, and then hand-painted.

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Show images and/or artifacts, discuss lyrics to *Sleighride* “It’ll nearly be like a picture print by Currier and Ives”—still famous, and pertinent, today.

EDMONIA LEWIS:

“The artist this week is Edmonia Lewis. What country was she born in? When was she born? die? How old was she when she died? What do you notice about her dates? What war have you been studying?”

EDVARD MUNCH:

The original German title given to the work by Munch was *Der Schrei der Natur* (The Scream of Nature). The Norwegian word *skrik* is usually translated as scream, but is cognate with the English shriek. Occasionally, the painting has been called *The Cry*.

In a page in his diary headed Nice 22.01.1892, Munch described his inspiration for the image thus:

“I was walking along a path with two friends — the sun was setting — suddenly the sky turned blood red — I paused, feeling exhausted, and leaned on the fence — there was blood and tongues of fire above the blue-black fjord and the city — my friends walked on, and I stood there trembling with anxiety — and I sensed an infinite scream passing through nature.”

One theory advanced to account for the reddish sky in the background is that Munch had observed an effect of the powerful volcanic eruption of Krakatoa in 1883: the ash that was ejected from the volcano left the sky tinted red in much of eastern United States and most of Europe and Asia from the end of November 1883 to mid February 1884.[3] This explanation has been disputed by scholars who note that Munch was an expressive, rather than descriptive painter, and was therefore not primarily responsive to literal rendering. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the proximity to the site of the painting of both a slaughterhouse and a madhouse may have offered inspiration.[4]

(from Wikipedia)

Take the 6 year plan view; think of what you want them to know in 5 years, then each year rotate the artists accordingly. Do not be afraid to repeat some artists.

Thanksgiving and Christmas:

Norman Rockwell, Currier and Ives, Thomas Nast, Raphael Sanzio (Madonnas)

July 4, First World War:

Childe Hassam (any of his flag paintings, even though they are not necessarily of July 4th), John Singer Sargent (*Gassed*)

Environment:

Andy Goldsworthy, Christo, Henri Rousseau (*The Sleeping Gypsy*, jungle paintings), William “Snowflake” Bentley

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Flowers/Plants/Insects/Birds:

Georgia O’Keeffe, Margaret Mees, Maria Sybilla Merian, Martin Johnson Heade, John James Audubon

Weather:

El Greco (*View of Toledo*), Constable (any), Rousseau (*Tiger in a Storm*), Hiroshige’s (certain images from *53 Stations of the Tokaido*)

Vocanoes, Tsunamis:

Hokusai (*Great Wave off Kanagawa*, from his *36 Views of Mount Fuji*), Edvard Munch (*The Scream*)

Family:

Henry Tanner (*The Banjo Lesson*), Joshua Johnston (*Grace Allison McCurdy and her Daughters*), John Singleton Copley (*The Copley Family*), Raphael (any of his Mother and Child paintings)

History:

John Singleton Copley (*Watson and the Shark*), Charles Willson Peale (*Exhumation of the Mastadon*)

Civil War:

Currier and Ives, Frederick Remington

Four High Renaissance artists (aka the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles)

Leonardo, Michelangelo, Donatello, Raphael