

Joslyn Art Museum Comprehensive Study Lesson Plan

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2nd Semester – Ashcan School

Focus: Robert Henri and *Portrait of Fi*

Objectives – Students will:

- Learn about Robert Henri and his philosophy of art through his paintings and involvement with the informal Ashcan School.
- Discover realism through Henri's artworks as well as study of "their world."
- Understand the importance of a town's history through research and then by creating the story of their own fictitious community.
- Recognize the significance of supply and demand.

Common Core Standards available on online version at www.joslyn.org/education/teachers/thursdays-for-teachers

Resources: Check out the **Teacher Support Materials** online, and <http://www.joslyn.org/education/teachers> for additional resources

Suggested Materials: Henri teaching poster, Nebraska map, Henri's *The Art Spirit* book, Sharpies (extra fine black and multiple colors), colored pencils, construction paper scraps, magazines, newspapers, glue sticks, gel pens, mural examples, tempera paint (red, yellow, blue, white), 1" square paint brushes, water cups, paper palettes.

Vocabulary: Ashcan School, meridian, portraits, realism, supply and demand, vaudeville

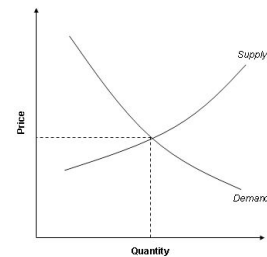
Procedure:

- **Engage:** Infer from the Picture. Show students a number of Henri's portraits. Who are they? For elementary students, write down words. Middle school, write three sentences or a paragraph. High school, write a concept for a story.
- **Art Talk:** Share passages from Henri's *The Art Spirit* book. Trace where Henri lived on a map. Discuss how the influences in his upbringing and cultures are reflected in his paintings.
- **History:** Who was Robert Henri, and what is his story? Refer to the teaching poster and additional information in Teacher Support Materials.
- **Aesthetics:** Individualistic style. Henri wanted to maintain his own perspective. Discuss the qualities – subjects and techniques – of artists who belonged to the informal Ashcan School. How did the moniker originate? Emphasize that this is realism. Refer to the Henri teaching poster for additional information.
- **Production 1:** Engaging the Young Artist. Refer to the workshop lead by Andrea Jenkins at the March 2013 Thursdays for Teachers.
- **Production 2:** Alter Your View. Refer to the workshop lead by Kim Stroberg at the March 2013 Thursdays for Teachers.

- **Close:** Share the Picture. Work on the stories created in the Engage section after learning more about Henri and have students share with each other.

Extensions:

- **Cultural Connections:** Nebraska Connection. Henri lived in Cozad, Nebraska, a community established by his father. Discuss the history and founding of this town. Then looking at a Nebraska map, students should select a town to study and learn its history including how it received its name. Be clever with how students pick their towns.
- **Fine Arts 1:** Students should snap a picture of their neighborhood – something they will turn into an Ashcan School style artwork. This will be used as the cover for a story created in Language Arts.
- **Fine Arts 2:** Performance Art. What were Ashcan School artists doing in their spare time? Many were in cafes watching vaudeville acts. Have students develop simple vaudeville-style acts (i.e. juggling, dancing, magic) and perhaps do it as a flash mob in school.
- **Language Arts:** Building your own City. Using the artwork created in Fine Arts 1 as inspiration, have students think about a town they would establish. What would they name it? Write its history (selecting the appropriate level of writing for the grade you teach).
- **Math:** Supply and Demand. After the passing of Henri, his sister-in-law made the decision to destroy many, *many* paintings because she felt with less out there for sale would drive the prices up. Describe supply and demand to your students. As supply increases, demand decreases. What is the effect of supply and demand? List and discuss real world examples. By burning and destroying Henri's works, did the value of his works indeed change because there is now a limited supply?
- **Science:** 100th Meridian. Henri's father founded Cozad, Nebraska, on the 100th Meridian. Why is that important? Have students research other things that are found along it. What are some other significant meridians?



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ASHCAN ARTISTS – Art Talk – *Wind of Change* –

Ashcan Artist Robert Henri

Presenter: Amy Kunz

Amy is an adjunct instructor in the Theatre department at the University of Nebraska at Omaha; she is the primary voice instructor. She is a Visual Art's and Theatre specialist for Why Arts? and an Artist in the Schools with the Nebraska Art's Council. During her years as staff actor - instructor at The Rose Theatre and as Education Director for The Brigit Saint Brigit Theatre Company, Amy conducted workshops for schools in Nebraska and across the country. Amy played principle roles for eight years with The Nebraska Shakespeare Festival and toured with their educational program.

“REAL AS MUD”

Robert Henri bravely turned his back on the established *National Academy of Design* because he did not believe the work of his fellow artists was appropriately recognized; so “the eight” put on their own show! He and his colleagues portrayed a tough New York City, rough and sometimes frayed round the edges. Seeing Art as akin to Journalism, “real as Mud” Henri would say...a new chapter in the art scene was born; Though the work of the Ashcan Artists would not be viewed as particularly “gritty” by today’s standards, for their mannered era, they brought a true wind of change.

Points to explore with students:

- Discuss The Gilded Age: how might the focus on excessive wealth in New York City have influenced The Ashcan Artists? The sinking of the Titanic similarly caused a real backlash to romanticizing the “very rich”. This can be an interesting point of discussion.
- A great deal was changing in NYC and the country during the late 19th and early 20th century: Women’s Suffrage, Vaudeville, Ragtime, and the growth of baseball as a national pastime; all of these were cultural changes that may have influenced the Ashcan Artists work.
- Are there changes in culture, entertainment and world events that may influence artists today? What are changes that students have observed in their own life time?
- The Ashcan Artists were “journalists” of a sort...if your students could paint something that would reflect “Omaha” in 20013 for people 100 years in the future to reflect on, what might it be? Take a photograph that might be used as the basis for a painting.

Projects with students:

- Bring photographs from late 19th century and early 20th century New York City. Observe differences. What may life have been like? If possible, bring a top hat, cane, a long skirt and parasol...what did it feel like to dress in these clothes? Would you have enjoyed living in this time? (Could also bring the Omaha History books. They have wonderful photos from this time).
- “Feel” the period a little by playing some ragtime music, creating a vaudeville act, selling newspapers on the street...etc...
- Bring photocopied prints of Renoirs, Monet’s or any Impressionist painting that portrays people as “perfect”. Bring these copies in black and white. With colored pencils, crayons, or markers, allow the student to add realistic Ashcan artist touches to the photos...try to have them focus on the believable aspects (not just giving someone a larger nose); ex. dirtying the hems on skirts, darkening fingernails, adding a rip to a shirt, a scratch on someone’s face or a darkened tooth...all fun ways to think about the “journalistic” way of looking at things.
- Create an improvisation in which one group represents a “norm”, and the other group finds reasons to grow, change, and express things in a different way. Teachers can give several possible scenarios, or students can create them on their own...it should involve “reasoning and clear ideas” to avoid digressing into silly banter.
- Exchange ideas about what you might paint in Omaha that would well represent 2013 to an audience 100 years in the future. The Ashcan Artists wanted to capture the “real” New York.
- Show photographs of New York in the late 19th and early 20th century. Observe the differences between