

LESSON PLAN

Children in Art: Creating More Than a Likeness

Inspired by William Sidney Mount's *The Blackberry Girls*

Created by Tafadzwa Ndoda, artist, tafadzwandoda@gmail.com

Overview

Students will create artwork with children as the main subject matter. They will also create a background that will enhance the overall piece

Anticipatory Set

William Sidney Mount painted everyday people doing everyday things in rural New York. What would his paintings look like if done today? Imagine the world you live in and what a snapshot of that might look like. Cellphones, t shirts and tall buildings are just a few examples of things that are commonplace now but were not in the 1800s



Objectives

- Students will create artwork of children.
- Students will learn what is unique about rendering children.
- Students will learn how to scale and proportion figures.
- Students will learn how to balance what is in the frame by being deliberate about what they include in the background.

Supplies

- 9 x 12 Drawing or watercolor paper.
- Black and colored markers
- Colored Pencils
- Paints and brushes
- William Sidney Mount Teaching Poster

Vocabulary

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| • Foreground, background | • Detail |
| • Scale | • Expression |
| • Composition | • Pose |

Lesson Outline

- 1) Before they start to draw/paint, have students take a moment to look around and observe each other. They can make mental notes or draw thumbnail drawing of their environment and the commonplace items therein.
- 2) They can choose to either work from their imagination, from observation or a little of both
- 3) They should plan their artwork by lightly outlining where they would like to have their figure be then balance that out with what background will appear in the frame.
- 4) Pose the figure so they appear natural as opposed to sitting for a picture.
- 5) Take care when creating the image of the child to not make harsh lines when detailing the face, those look like wrinkles and make children appear older.
- 6) Include also details such as shirts, hats and any devices, objects, toys etc. that are timely and can add to the story that the image tells.

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Extensions

Understanding how when looking at art, we are informed not only by what we see as the focal point but everything within the frame of view, students can take that knowledge and apply it similarly to other artistic disciplines.

About the Artwork

Mount studied briefly with portraitist Henry Inman and, in 1826, was one of the first students admitted to New York's National Academy of Design. While his earliest works imitated European history painting, in 1830 Mount exhibited his first scene of Long Island country life. So enthusiastically was this received that rural themes occupied the artist for the remainder of his career and earned him international fame. *The Blackberry Girls* demonstrates Mount's interest in seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting and direct observation of nature — confirmed here by the exquisite foreground detail and the sophisticated tonal range of the background — while the idealized depiction of rural peasantry reveals the young nation's optimistic agrarian ideology.

IMAGE: William Sidney Mount (American, 1807–1868), *The Blackberry Girls*, 1840, oil on panel, 15 7/8 x 13 7/8 in., Museum Purchase with Funds Provided by Susan Storz Butler, 2001.1