PORTAIT OF THE TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILROAD

Inspired by Travels with Brian Floca, on view October 14, 2017–January 14, 2018 at Joslyn Art Museum
Created by Carey Hernandez
Grade Level 3rd-12th grade (works well with 4th grade Nebraska History)

OVERVIEW
Create a pen and watercolor portrait collage of the
transcontinental railroad. Using Brian Floca’s illustrations from
his 2014 Caldecott Medal book Locomotive as inspiration,
students will create portraits of the people and machinery of
the first transcontinental railroad. The portraits will be collaged
with maps and text to bring the portrait of the railroad to life.

ANTICIPATORY SET
Start with a discussion of train travel. Ask if any students have
ever been on a train. What sounds did they hear? What did it
look like? How did the landscape look? Then read Brian Floca’s
Locomotive.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
• Students will create an artwork that represents the perspective of a worker or passenger on the
  transcontinental railroad.
• Students will be introduced to basic knowledge about the first transcontinental railroad in 1869.
• Students will be able to understand the process that an illustrator goes through to research and
  complete a project.

VOCABULARY:
• Transcontinental Railroad
• Industrial Revolution

MATERIALS:
• Brian Floca’s, Locomotive
• Smooth Bristol or Watercolor Paper 11” x 14” Paper (1 sheet per student)
• Scissors
• Pencils (one each)
• Rulers (one each or share in pairs)
• Black permanent fine tip ink pens (such as Micron)
• Watercolor sets
• Watercolor pencils (optional)
• Ranger Brand Distress Spray Stain
• Mini spray water bottles
• 1-2 rolls paper towels
• Small paint brushes
• Water cups
• Glue sticks or rubber cement
LESSON OUTLINE

• Read Brian Floca’s, *Locomotive*

• Discuss how the train changed America. How long did it take to go across country before the train? (as fast as your horse or feet could walk, months) How quickly could you get across the country once the transcontinental railroad was built? (a week or less) How did this change or impact our country?


• For 3rd–6th grades discuss how Brian Floca’s book took 4 years to make and how he had to do research on the web, in person, and by talking to people. Even when he was discouraged he pushed on to create his book. His book changed as he learned more.

• Look at reference images of trains from 1869, and images that Floca created. Pick a character to portray; this could be a person riding the train, a worker on the train, a crew building the track, or even a Native American’s view of the train.

• Now pick an image of the train itself to use as inspiration for a train drawing.

• Explain the procedure of how we are going to draw both the image of the person and of the train (or parts of the train) on the same paper. Show example artwork and show images from *Locomotive* again. Students will also have the opportunity to collage artifacts and text onto the drawing/painting.

• Begin by laying out and drawing the images on the paper with pencil and plan if you are going to use any artifacts or text.

• Go over pencil lines with black, fine tip permanent pens.

• Use distress spray inks to make the paper look old. Water can be used to mottle the inks. Blot with paper towels. Let dry until next class or 15 minutes.

• Begin adding watercolor washes to the people and machinery. Watercolor pencils could also be used and then blended with a wet brush.

• Cut out collage elements (if using) and glue to paper. Collage elements could also be distressed with the spray inks.

• Have students present their art to the class or write artist statements explaining who they chose to represent in their artwork.

EXTENSIONS

• A Curriculum Guide to *Locomotive* by Brian Floca. Simon and Schuster has lesson plans, discussion questions and activities that relate to social studies, reading, and writing. [https://goo.gl/GJMSRF](https://goo.gl/GJMSRF)
CONTENT STANDARDS
NEBRASKA CONTENT AREA STANDARDS
IOWA CORE STANDARDS

This lesson fits well with Nebraska Visual Fine Art Standards, depending on which grade level you look:

Grades 3-5
- FA 5.2.1.a Develop ideas using a variety of materials (glossary).
- FA 5.2.1.e Apply various techniques to develop craftsmanship (glossary) skills (e.g., use cutting and gluing techniques to produce clean edges without visible glue).
- FA 5.2.2.a Communicate artistic statements (glossary) using art terminology (e.g., product, process).
- FA 5.2.3.c Interpret the message communicated by a work of art, using knowledge of visual elements (glossary), subject matter (glossary), and mood.
- FA 5.2.4.d Explore how images and objects are used to convey a story, familiar experience, or connection to the world.

Grades 9-12
- FA 12.2.4.a Investigate how artists define, shape, and empower their lives (e.g., personal life, lifelong opportunities, careers).
- FA 12.2.3.a Identify and describe works of art that reveal different ideas (e.g., cultures, individuals).
- FA 12.2.2.a Design a personal artist statement (glossary) by choosing from a variety of methods (e.g., poetry, multimedia).
- FA 12.2.1.a Analyze multiple ideas and materials (glossary) to demonstrate planning and refining.