

AMERICAN SPECTACLE



Educator Guide & Lesson Plan

Learning Target

Students will analyze American art from historical, geographic, and economic perspectives to propose solutions to a current, local challenge.

Student Outcomes

Students will

- Identify natural resources in the U.S. and explain their significance to the American economy, both in the past and the present.
- Understand how humans interact with the world around them and how that interaction influences the development of economies, both in the past and the present.
- Discover how art can reveal diverse perspectives about themes throughout history.
- Develop strategies to address a current and local economic challenge related to natural resources.

Michigan Social Studies Standards Alignment

Sixth Grade

6 – G1.2.4

6 – G1.2.6

6 – P3.1.1

Seventh Grade

7 – H1.4.3

7 – G2.2.2

7 – G4.4.1

Eighth Grade

8 – U4.2.1

8 – U4.2.4

8 – U6.2.1

(See curriculum standards at end of guide)

21st Century Learning Skills Alignment

- Critical Thinking And Problem Solving
- Global Awareness
- Civic Literacy



★ *Statue of Liberty Celebration*, about 1886
Frederick Rondel, American, 1826–92
Oil on canvas
Nancy and Sean Cotton Collection

This educational resource was developed by the DIA Education Programs team in collaboration with social studies curriculum specialists representing the Michigan Department of Education, Genesee Intermediate School District, Wayne RESA, Eastpointe Community Schools, and Southfield Public Schools.

This guide is made possible through the Art Bridges + Terra Foundation Initiative.



★ *The Great Cave, Pictured Rocks, Lake Superior, Michigan, 1837*
Thomas Moran, American, 1837–1926
Oil on canvas
Nancy and Sean Cotton Collection

Lesson Plan

Part One

For this portion of the lesson, the objective is to help your students become comfortable looking at and interpreting works of art.

Spend some time looking together at the objects from the exhibition and reading the accompanying text. What do you notice? How does this connect with your social studies curriculum?

Lead a discussion about what students notice in the art. Below are some possible questions to guide students through a conversation about the art. Model an open-ended discussion about one object (a good option from this collection might be the painting *American Circus in Brittany* by Frederic Arthur Bridgman because it is less likely to be used as evidence during the course of this lesson) so that students have experience engaging in dialogue about a work of art.

- What do you notice about this picture?
- What questions does this picture raise for you?
- What assumptions do you have about this picture?

Part Two

For this portion of the lesson, the objective is to support your students in analyzing art.

Following your discussion, break students into groups to explore art from this collection by taking two different perspectives – one group from the perspective of a historian and the other from the perspective of a geographer. Ask groups to be prepared to report out on the questions below:

- What might a historian or geographer think is important about these pictures and why?
- How might the passage of time change what is important to a historian or geographer?
- Can a work of art be considered a primary source? Why or why not?

Bring the class back together to report out on their discussions.

This educational resource was developed by the DIA Education Programs team in collaboration with social studies curriculum specialists representing the Michigan Department of Education, Genesee Intermediate School District, Wayne RESA, Eastpointe Community Schools, and Southfield Public Schools.

This guide is made possible through the Art Bridges + Terra Foundation Initiative.

Part Three

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

1. What natural resources does the U.S. have and where are they located?
2. Has the significance of water as a resource changed over time? Why or why not?
3. How does our learning about the use of resources in the past help us to understand current day use of physical resources?
4. How are the Great Lakes a resource?
5. How has technology evolved over time?
6. How is technology a resource?
7. How are people resources?
8. How have societies acquired labor resources throughout history?
9. What should be produced? How will it be produced? How will it be distributed? Who will receive the benefits of production?

Part Three

For this portion of the lesson, the objective is to challenge your students to use art from the collection as primary sources to identify representations of the American economy over time.

Lead the class through a whole group discussion to explore art from the collection taking the perspective of an economist.

- What might an economist think is important about these pictures and why?
- **Compelling Question:** How significant were natural resources to the evolution of the American economy?

(See sidebar for supporting questions)

Part Four

For this part of the lesson, the objective is to help students see how history, geography, and economies are connected to a current, local issue involving natural resources.

Scratch the Surface – Using current events, generate a list of current, local issues involving natural resources.

Dig a Little Deeper – Using current events, assign student groups to do preliminary research on one local issue involving natural resources.

Mine for Gold – Individually or in small groups and using current events, research one local issue, take a stand, and develop an action plan (for example, debate, craft a letter writing campaign or letter to the editor, etc.).

This educational resource was developed by the DIA Education Programs team in collaboration with social studies curriculum specialists representing the Michigan Department of Education, Genesee Intermediate School District, Wayne RESA, Eastpointe Community Schools, and Southfield Public Schools.

This guide is made possible through the Art Bridges + Terra Foundation Initiative.

Curriculum Standards

Sixth Grade

6 – G1.2.4 Use observations from air photos, photographs (print and CD) or films (VCR and DVD) as the basis for answering geographic questions about the human and physical characteristics of places and regions.

6 – G1.2.6 Apply the skills of geographic inquiry (asking geographic questions, acquiring, organizing, analyzing, and answering geographic questions) to analyze a problem or issue of importance to a region of the Western Hemisphere.

6 – P3.1.1 Clearly state an issue as a question or public policy, trace the origins of an issue, analyze various perspectives, and generate and evaluate alternative resolutions. Deeply examine policy issues in group discussions and debates to make reasoned and informed decisions. Write persuasive/argumentative essays expressing and justifying decisions on public policy issues. Plan and conduct activities intended to advance views on matters of public policy, report the results, and evaluate effectiveness.

Seventh Grade

7 – H1.4.3 Use historical perspectives to analyze global issues faced by humans long ago and today.

7 – G2.2.2 Explain that communities are affected positively or negatively by changes in technology (e.g., increased manufacturing resulting in rural to urban migration in China, increased farming of fish, hydroelectric power generation at Three Gorges, pollution resulting from increased manufacturing and automobiles).

7 – G4.4.1 Identify and explain factors that contribute to conflict and cooperation between and among cultural groups (e.g., natural resources, power, culture, wealth).

Eighth Grade

8 – U4.2.1 Comparing Northeast and the South – Compare and contrast the social and economic systems of the Northeast and the South with respect to geography and climate and the development of:

- Agriculture, including changes in productivity, technology, supply and demand, and price (E1.3,1.4) (National Geography Standard 14, p. 171)
- Industry, including entrepreneurial development of new industries, such as textiles (E1.1)
- The labor force, including labor incentives and changes in labor forces (E1.2)
- Transportation, including changes in transportation (steamboats and canal barges) and impact on economic markets and prices (E1.2,1.3) (National Geography Standard 3, p. 148)
- Immigration and the growth of nativism (National Geography Standard 9, p. 160)
- Race relations
- Class relations

8 – U4.2.4 Consequences of Expansion – Develop an argument based on evidence about the positive and negative consequences of territorial and economic expansion on American Indians, the institution of slavery, and the relations between free and slaveholding states. (C2) (National Geography Standard 13, p. 169)

8 – U6.2.1 United States History Investigation Topic and Issue Analysis, Past and Present – Use historical perspectives to analyze issues in the United States from the past and the present; conduct research on a historical issue or topic, identify a connection to a contemporary issue, and present findings (e.g., oral, visual, video, or electronic presentation, persuasive essay, or research paper); include causes and consequences of the historical action and predict possible consequences of the contemporary action. (National Geography Standards 9 and 10, pp. 160 and 162)

Examples of Investigation Topics and Questions (and examples from United States History)

Movement of People – How has the nation addressed the movement of people into and within the United States? (e.g., Native Americans, enslaved people, freed men, immigrants, etc.)

- How movement of people impacts economies
- How human Interaction with natural resources impacts economies