

The Sick Chicken, Winslow Homer, 1874

Winslow Homer had been working as an artist for nearly two decades when he began using watercolors. Long the domain of amateur painters, watercolors had gained professional respectability in 1866 with the formation of the American Water Color Society. Homer recognized their potential for profit—for he could produce and sell them quickly—but he also liked the way watercolor allowed him to experiment more easily than oil.

Homer first worked as an illustrator. He sent back illustrations from the battlefields of the Civil War. After the war he traveled the countryside and painted men, women, and children in many different climates and circumstances. Homer is known for the roughness of his style which reflected 19th Century America. His finished work appears oddly unfinished, as if he were painting on the run and implying that what you see is about to change.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Homer was known for his rough style which appeared almost unfinished. What in this painting seems unfinished or rough?
2. Discuss Homer's use of the color red in this painting.
3. Look at the light and shadow in this painting. Where is the sun?
4. What is the center of interest?
5. How did Homer divide this scene?
6. What does the painting tell you about 19th Century America?
7. Write a story about what you see in this painting.

P.A.S.S. for these activities

- Grade 3: Visual Art - 1.1,2,3; 2.1,3. Social Studies - 3.2. Writing - 2.2,3ab,6abc. Visual Literacy - 2.1
- Grade 4: 1.1,2,3,4; 2.1,2. Writing - 2.1abcd,2. Visual Literacy - 2.1,4
- Grade 5: 1.1,2,3,4; 2.1,2,5. Writing - 2.2. Visual Literacy - 2.1
- Grade 6: 1.1,2; 2.2,5. Writing - 2.1abc,2abc,4a,7. Visual Literacy - 1.1
- Grade 7:1.4; 2.2. Writing - 2.4b. Visual Literacy - 1.1
- Grade 8: 1.4; 2.2. Social Studies - 1.2; 2.4. Writing - 2.5a. Visual Literacy - 1.2