

PICTURING AMERICA LESSON

Seeing History through the Eyes of the Artist

Historical periods or moments can be appreciated in many forms. A video clip or audio file provides context, as does a well-documented historical text. Works of art can also provide a lens into the past, documenting events and issues of the time through the eyes of the artist who produced it. This lesson compares paintings that commemorate similar historical periods, allowing the student to note similarities and differences through the eyes of the artist.



Mr. Prejudice, 1943
Horace Pippin, American
Oil on canvas
18 1/8 x 14 1/8 inches (46 x 35.9 cm)
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Matthew T. Moore, 1984
1984-108-1

Grade Level

For grades 6–12

Common Core Academic Standards

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies: Key Ideas and Details #2; Craft and Structure #6; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas #7
- Listening and Speaking and Comprehension and Collaboration: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively #1; Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally #2
- Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies: Text Types and Purposes #2; Production and Distribution #6

Art Images Required

Click on the Museum object title below to view a high-resolution photograph on the Philadelphia Museum of Art website. Click on the Picturing America object title to view that resource on the National Endowment for the Humanities website. Images that are also available in the ARTstor Digital Library are indicated by an ID number or search phrase. Entering that number or phrase into the ARTstor search bar will direct you to the corresponding image in that database.

RELATED PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART OBJECT:

- [Mr. Prejudice](#), 1943, by Horace Pippin
ARTstor search: 1984-108-1

For more information, please contact Division of Education and Public Programs: School and Teacher Programs by phone at 215-684-7580, by fax at 215-236-4063, or by e-mail at educate@philamuseum.org.

PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART

RELATED PICTURING AMERICA OBJECT:

- [Freedom of Speech, The Saturday Evening Post](#), 1943, by Norman Rockwell
ARTstor search: rockwell freedom of speech

Lesson Process

1. Take some time, either as a class or in small groups, to look closely at each work, reading the background information provided online. (Be sure to review the “Teacher Resources” on the Museum website.) Discuss what you have discovered, including any questions you may still have about the paintings.
2. Examine *Mr. Prejudice* (1943) by Horace Pippin. Describe what you see. Who is in the image? What are they wearing? What are they doing? How has the artist composed (or organized) the painting? From these observations, can you determine a theme or message of the painting?
3. Follow the same process with *Freedom of Speech* (1943) by Norman Rockwell.
4. Compare *Mr. Prejudice* and *Freedom of Speech* (both painted in the same year by artists who served in World War I). What words describe the emotional tone of each painting? What do you observe in the paintings to support your conclusions?
5. Discuss the First Amendment’s protection of free speech. What is meant by “free speech?” What connections can you see with the idea of free speech and the paintings by Pippin and Rockwell? Considering that *Mr. Prejudice* was painted during a time of war (World War II), do you think Pippin’s theme or message would be altered, censored, or even allowed if the First Amendment did not exist?
6. How might the man speaking in Rockwell’s painting react to Pippin’s painting? How would the man in the front/center of Pippin’s painting react to Rockwell’s painting? Why do you think so?

Assessment

1. Research the conditions for African Americans serving in the armed forces during World War I and World War II. Write an essay (or create a PowerPoint presentation) connecting your observations from *Mr. Prejudice* with these conditions.

Enrichment

1. Imagine you work for the art department of a textbook company. You have been asked to create an image that expresses the right to freedom of speech. Create your own work of art (collage, photograph, painting, drawing, or other) that reflects this theme. Alternatively, create a description of the proposed image (consider: theme, props, costume, setting, and composition).