A HUNTSMAN AND DOGS

A rugged young hunter pauses after a successful deer hunt as his dogs bark and jump around him excitedly. He stands motionless, his serious gaze turned downward and his bent leg resting on the root of a large, sawed-off tree stump. A deerskin and rifle are slung over his shoulders, and antlers dangle from one hand. His hunting skills are key to his survival because he will sell the skin and antlers. This somber scene is set in the Adirondack Mountains of New York State. The sky is gray and overcast, with just a hint of sun and blue sky shining through the clouds. The distant mountains look cold and dark, and the oranges, yellows, and golds of autumn in the nearby trees and underbrush are fading to wintry browns. The only living creatures in this lonely landscape are the huntsman and his dogs.

Winslow Homer became an artist after working as a magazine illustrator. He was a great admirer of nature and took hunting vacations in the Adirondacks with his brother for forty years. Because he wanted to capture the mood and feeling of being in nature, Homer patiently observed the natural world and recorded it as realistically as possible. When he made this painting, the unspoiled wilderness that he loved was quickly disappearing due to the spread of modern cities, railroads, and factories. In fact, it was painted just one year before the establishment of the Adirondack National Park, which helps protect millions of acres of mountainous land whose natural beauty can still be enjoyed today.