

MY STORY AND HISTORY

Peeking into the Past with Paintings

ART AND SOCIAL STUDIES

GRADES: 4–12

BASED ON

Many paintings from the Art Museum's collection will be used.

Focus Image:

Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) (France)

Mother and Child, 1889

Oil on Canvas

John J. Emery Fund, 1928.222

OBJECTIVES

- Student will demonstrate knowledge of historical research by defining the terms primary source and secondary source.
- Student will demonstrate comprehension of historical research by identifying different types of primary and secondary sources.
- Student will demonstrate comprehension of historical research by identifying visual sources of historical information.
- Student will demonstrate application skills by interpreting a portrait or genre painting from the Cincinnati Art Museum.
- Student will demonstrate analysis skills by comparing the painting to a personal photograph.

CONCEPT

Paintings are a wonderful visual resource to use when learning about the past. Portraits and genre paintings can be used as visual primary sources, allowing the viewer to learn about the culture of a particular time period. These paintings can also be used to help students connect the past to their everyday lives, here in the present.

VOCABULARY

genre painting
portrait

primary source
secondary source

MATERIALS/PROCEDURE

- colored cardstock
- scissors
- glue or double-sided tape

- personal photograph (provided by student)
- Worksheet 1: Peeking into the Past with Paintings
- Worksheet 2: Just Like Them: Comparing My Story with History

Preparation:

- Go to the museum's website, www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org.
- Find 10 to 20 examples of portraits and/or genre paintings, and print them, along with any information provided about the painting.

Discussion:

- Divide students into Think, Pair, Share groups.
 - Think: Students think individually about a given question.
 - Pair: Students turn to a partner and explain their thoughts.
 - Share: Two partnerships join to create a group of four. Each group will share one answer with the class.
- Think, Pair, Share Question 1:
 - How do we get information about what happened in the past?
- After a short discussion, define the terms primary source and secondary source:
 - Primary source: historical source that was written or created by people who lived during a historical event. (add specific definition from "A Student's Guide to History")
 - Examples: diaries, newspaper articles, autobiographies, speeches, etc.
 - Secondary source: historical source that was written or created by people who were not present at the event described. Information for primary sources is usually found in secondary sources.
 - Examples: history books, essays, biographies
 - It may be helpful to have several examples of each type of source to share with the students. For example, compare a secondary source on World War II with *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Have the students distinguish which is primary and which is secondary.
- Think, Pair, Share Question 2:
 - Which type of historical source do you think is the best to use and why?
- After a short discussion, describe the pros and cons of using both types of sources.
 - Primary Sources:
 - Pro: Written by eyewitnesses
 - Con: May be biased, based on author's opinion; may be hard to read, depending on original language or translation
 - Secondary Sources:
 - Pro: May be easier to read; easier to acquire
 - Con: Not written by eyewitnesses
- Think, Pair, Share Question 3:
 - What are some other types of sources we can use to learn about the past?
- After a short discussion, describe how visual resources can help us learn about the past. Give some examples: political cartoons, photographs, paintings, architecture, sculpture, etc.

Application:

- Define the terms genre painting and portrait
- The students choose an image from the collection of portraits and genre paintings. Ask them to choose a picture that feels familiar to them.
- The students complete the Worksheet 1: Peeking into the Past with Paintings.
- After a discussion of their worksheet answers, distribute Worksheet 2: Just Like Them: Comparing My Story with History.

ASSESSMENT

- The following should be considered when calculating a final grade:
 - Participation in Think, Pair, Share activities
 - Completion of Worksheet 1: Peeking into the Past with Paintings
 - Completion of Painting/Photograph Comparison on cardstock
- For older students, a writing component may be added. Some example essay prompts:
 - What can you learn about the past by analyzing a visual primary source such as a painting, drawing, or photograph?
 - Your photographs will be used one day to study life in the twenty-first century. How does that make you feel?
 - Has this exercise made you feel more connected with the people of the past, featured in your painting? Why or why not?

NATIONAL STANDARDS

Visual Arts

4.2: Understands the historical and cultural contexts of a variety of art objects.

Historical Understanding

2.1: Knows how to view the past in terms of the norms and values of the time.

Historical Understanding

2.6: Knows different types of primary and secondary sources and the motives, interests, and bias expressed.



Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) (France)
Mother and Child, 1889
Oil on Canvas
John J. Emery Fund, 1928.222