

## **Unit: Lowell and the Industrial Revolution**

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**Lesson Topic:** Literary and Artistic Responses to Industrialization

**Lesson Title:** Early American Art

**Grade Level:** High School

**State Standards:** New York State History Standards 1, 3, and 4

**Class Time:** One to two class periods

**Objectives:** Students will be able to identify the characteristics of Early American Art and how changes in American economics, politics and society were reflected.

### **Primary Source Bibliography:**

Website: Annenberg site  
[WWW.learner.org/channel/workshops/primarysources/lowell/introduction.html](http://WWW.learner.org/channel/workshops/primarysources/lowell/introduction.html)

Book: *The Annotated Mona Lisa* by Carol Strickland

### **Materials:**

-Students will receive two sets of folders of 8x11 reproductions of Early American Neoclassicism Paintings and the Hudson school paintings.

**Vocabulary:** Neoclassicism, Portraiture, Romanticism, Transcendentalism, The Moral Landscape.

### **Procedure:**

Bell Ringer: Students will in small groups analyze a small number of works from the early American painters Gilbert Stuart and John Singleton Copley, and Charles Wilson Peale for its characteristics, similarities and etc. and will answer the following questions. [The students will have already had some exposure to these artists in previous lesson on The Young Republic (1770-1815)]

- What images of nature do the paintings show?
- Speculate why there is lack of nature shown in these paintings?
- What does this tell us about the early American view of nature?

Transition: Early Americans considered nature something to be feared (a dangerous land of thick forest with savage Native Americans), conquered (Burned, cleared, mined or fished) and exploited (used for its resources like lumber, wildlife, fertile soil and minerals). Over time this view changed to see nature as something positive and indeed beautiful.

Lesson: Introduce Thomas Cole and the Hudson school (almost a visual representation of Transcendentalist thought) and terms such as The Moral Landscape.

Class Activity: Students will in small groups analyze Thomas Cole's painting *The Oxbow (the Connecticut River near Northampton)*, 1836. including blown-up details and answer the following questions

- How does this picture show nature?
- How is *The Oxbow* constructed/laid out?
- What role does light and shadow play in its construction?
- What is the symbolism of the lightning blasted tree?
- How is mankind depicted in this landscape?
- Why has Cole put himself in the picture, where is he shown?
- What is the meaning of the question mark that the Oxbow forms?
- What is the significance of the Hebrew sayings in the hillside?
- What is it that Cole seems to be saying?

Wrap up: Students will view more images from other Hudson School painters such as Asher B. Durand, John F. Kensett and Thomas Doughty, as well as Albert Beirstadt, Frederic Edwin Church (the Lewis and Clark of painting) and discuss the key points of these paintings.

- How do these paintings reflect changes occurring in American society at this time?
- How do the paintings of Beirstadt and Church reflect the demographic shifts in America?
- What changes in the population were taking place at this time?
- How is the economy changing at this time?
- How do these paintings tie in with the Transcendentalist movement of Emerson and Thoreau?

**Assessment:** Students will write an essay on the next test.

- How did early American forms of expression such as the Hudson School paintings reflect the changes in 19<sup>th</sup> century American?