

Pre-Visit Lesson #2: Your Own Neck of the Woods

For standards in your state see: <http://www.educationworld.com/standards/state/toc/index.shtml#math>

Grade level: 2-4

Time Required: 1-2 class periods

National Curriculum Standards:

- NA-VA.K-4.4 UNDERSTANDING THE VISUAL ARTS IN RELATION TO HISTORY AND CULTURES
- NSS-USH.K-4.2 THE HISTORY OF STUDENTS' OWN STATE OR REGION
- NL-ENG.K-12.4 COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Objectives:

- Students will gain an understanding of how American's perception of the environment has changed over time.
- Students will research a regional place of environmental significance.

Materials:

- 8 1/2 x 11" piece of heavy card stock paper for each student
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.
- Scissors and glue sticks (optional)
- Computer use (internet access)

Student Instruction:

1. Explain to students that they will be taking a field trip to their local museum to view an exhibit called *Wild Land: Thomas Cole and the Birth of American Landscape Painting*.
2. Explain who Thomas Cole was with the following dialogue: *Thomas Cole was a painter lived in New York over 150 years ago. He was a landscape painter. Can you guess what a landscape painter paints? What is a landscape?*
3. Define **landscape painting**. Landscape painting depicts a scene from nature. It usually shows a wide view of earth abounding with natural things like trees, rocks, mountains, valleys, creeks and rivers.
4. Continue with the following information: *Before Thomas Cole's time, many people who came to America to settle its lands were afraid of the wilderness. They saw it as dark and mysterious and even full of savage beasts. They believed that the best trees should be cut down for building materials and that the best land was land that could be farmed. Thomas Cole's paintings and poems helped to changed the way Americans thought about the natural world around them. Through his paintings and writing, Cole introduced the idea that there is beauty in nature and this beauty had the ability to stir up strong feelings.*
5. Ask students to think about a time that they were in nature. Ask them how they felt and write these feeling words on the board or overhead.

6. Inform students that *one of Cole's most treasured places to explore the beauty of nature was in the Catskill Mountains of New York. He painted and sketched scenes from the Catskills dozens of times and was continuously amazed by the beauty of nature. He worried that factories and railroads would destroy his beloved Catskills and wrote about this too. He believed that nature should be preserved and that spending time in nature was good for human beings.* You can explore Cole's Catskill paintings here: <http://www.explorethomascole.org/landscape>
7. Invite your students to give examples of places close to your city/town/region that are treasured because of their natural beauty. Explore the idea that just as Cole cherished the Catskills, there are local and regional landforms that we love.
8. Instruct students to make a brochure about a regional natural treasure. If you can, have sample travel brochures on hand to pass around as examples. Instruct students to include the following in the brochure:
 - The name and location of the natural treasure
 - Why is it treasured? Why is it important to your state?
 - What will people see when they go there? What can they do?
 - Why should this place be preserved/taken care of?
 - Pictures, drawings, photos, or illustrations that capture the beauty of the place

For resources, you can direct your students to the following websites:

National Park List: <http://www.nationalparks.org/discover-parks/?fa=complete-list>

State Park List: <http://www.stateparks.com/usa.html>

Note: The place students choose does not have to be a park. It could be a favorite tree in their backyard, a grandparent's farm, a fishing pond. The idea is that students will have different responses to different places.

9. Give students an opportunity to present their brochures to the class. Ask who would like to or who already has visited the place displayed in each brochure and why they would like to go there.
10. **Extension:** Students can draw or paint their version of their natural treasure.