

Nature and the American Vision: The Hudson River School

“The painter of American scenery has indeed privileges superior to any other;
all nature here is new to Art.”

—Thomas Cole

Nature and the American Vision: The Hudson River School is designed as a grand tour of the nineteenth-century American landscape, and the paintings on view reveal much about issues of national identity, westward expansion, mistreatment of the native population, and the beginnings of environmentalism in the United States. These curriculum materials are intended to help teachers discuss the paintings of the Hudson River School, in hopes that the works explored here can be used to create lessons in social science, language arts, geography, natural history, and science, among other subjects.

The Hudson River School, which emerged by 1825 and continued to thrive until the end of the nineteenth century, was the first truly American art movement. While the term “Hudson River School” originated as a dismissive nickname referring to the perceived provincialism of its members, in time it came to represent a distinctive and vibrant movement devoted to the depiction of untamed American scenery as a symbol of America’s independent spirit. In Europe, writers and painters were exploring landscape as a vehicle through which to communicate universal truths, and landscape painting was acquiring more prestige as nature was increasingly associated with spirituality and the divine in Western culture. As these ideas spread to the United States, landscape acquired new connotations within American culture. The Hudson River School celebrated the exploration of the natural world as a source of spiritual renewal and an expression of national identity. Combining rigorous specificity achieved through the direct observation of nature with a romantic enthusiasm for the beauty and inherent nobility of the American landscape, the painters of the Hudson River School presented scenes seemingly untouched by modernization, in spite of rising tourism. If Europe, with its historic battle sites and ancient ruins, represented the past, then America, with its virgin forests and sweeping vistas, represented the future.

The success of the Hudson River School was made possible by the increasing prosperity and growing national confidence in the United States in the early nineteenth century. As American cities grew, urban populations developed a taste for regional landscape subjects linked to picturesque touring routes. Originating high in the Adirondack Mountains and emptying in the Atlantic Ocean, the Hudson River, for which the art movement was named, served as an important military and commercial waterway, shifting from Native American control to the Dutch and then to the English before American independence. Key battles of the American Revolution were fought along its banks

and that history seemed to bestow even greater significance upon the river's natural beauty. In 1825, the completion of the Erie Canal linked the Hudson with the Great Lakes, making it an even busier commercial route. With the advent of steamboats, a new tourism industry emerged. Boats carried visitors past serene, picturesque landscapes and delivered them to hotels along the river's shores. Literature and travel prints fed the growth of this tourism, which came to be known as the American Grand Tour. Even before this new rush of attention, the artists of the Hudson River School were drawn to the waterway to paint its magnificent views of unspoiled nature. Peaceful pastoral scenes were celebrated, along with the awe-inspiring majesty of sites like Niagara Falls, depicted by Louisa Davis Minot in 1818 as a churning, majestic symbol of the power of nature.

The Hudson River School consisted of primarily New York City-based landscape painters led by Thomas Cole (1801–1848), an English émigré whose crowning masterpiece, *The Course of Empire* (c. 1834–36), is addressed in these curriculum materials. Cole immigrated to the United States in 1818 at the age of seventeen, and, soon after making his first journey up the Hudson River in 1825, developed a reputation as one of the country's most innovative landscape painters. He went on to influence artists like his friend Asher B. Durand (1796–1886), who advocated the therapeutic effects of American landscape paintings on city dwellers (and whose *White Mountain Scenery, Franconia Notch, New Hampshire* [1857] can also be found in this packet), as well as his talented pupil, Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900). Successive painters would continue to portray the same landscapes as Cole and his contemporaries under different light and seasonal conditions, and, in doing so, championed nature's value as an endless source of inspiration.

While the first generation of Hudson River School painters made the expected journey to Europe to learn from the Old Masters and be exposed to European taste and culture, second-generation American painters no longer felt obligated to travel there. Instead, they turned to the unfamiliar landscapes of the American West, which had become more accessible with the development of the railroad, as a source of inspiration and also expanded their travels even farther, to South America and the Arctic. Church combined the fundamental values he had adapted from Cole with a new interest in science and a passion for exploration. His *Cayambe* (1858), painted after a sketch from his second expedition to South America, marks a new chapter for the Hudson River School, having broadened its scope to encompass the farthest reaches of "American" landscape.

After the Civil War, the Hudson River School began to wane in popularity as Americans became enamored of imported European styles, notably the French Barbizon School of landscape painting. From 1825 to 1876, however, the Hudson River School represented much more than a style of painting. In these seemingly serene landscape paintings, a growing tension is evident, between the desire to conserve the pristine American wilderness and the powerful drive for the young nation to prove itself by pushing for progress, expansion, and industrialization. These curriculum materials are intended to facilitate the use of these paintings as primary sources in the classroom. Close observation, together with the in-depth investigation of the works of art in this exhibition, will reveal issues of history, politics, ecology, and identity, all of which remain startlingly relevant today.

Works Cited

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Credits

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NIAGARA FALLS, 1818

Louisa Davis Minot

Louisa Davis Minot (1788–1858), daughter of the solicitor general of Massachusetts, married a Boston lawyer in 1810 and, as was typical for the time, proceeded to bear five children. However, unlike most women of her era, in addition to being a wife and mother, she was also a published writer and an accomplished artist. It is not known how or where Louisa received her artistic training but there are two paintings attributed to her in existence, both depicting Niagara Falls, and, in 1815, her essay entitled “Sketches of Scenery on the Niagara River” was published in the *North American Review*, the first literary magazine in the United States. Based on her travels, during which she made studies for the canvases painted three years later, including *Niagara Falls* (1818), Minot’s essay details her awed response in the face of the majestic falls. “The roar deepened,” she wrote, “the rock shook over my head, the earth trembled . . . It was sometime before I could command my pencil.”

Straddling the border between New York State and Canada, Niagara Falls is one of the world’s greatest natural spectacles. Formed by the Niagara River where it plunges over cliffs and down 170 feet, Niagara Falls became a great tourist attraction after the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. However, the falls already had a long history of depiction by both visual artists and writers by the time of Minot’s visit in 1815, and nearly every major American landscape painter of the period painted the falls, including Frederic Edwin Church.

While many tourists and artists were drawn to the dazzling effect of the falls, few painters depicted them with such power and fury as Minot did. In her painting the sky is overcast with deep purple clouds blocking out the sun. The diagonals of these eerily-colored clouds echo the violence of the falling water as it collides with the churning river below. Depicted from the vantage point of a viewer at the foot of the falls,

the crashing collision of water occurs at eye level, a bit too close for comfort. When compared to Alvan Fisher’s depiction of the same site, *Niagara Falls: The American Falls* (c. 1821), which also hangs in this exhibition, the difference is striking. In contrast to the immediacy of Minot’s view, Fisher instead depicts the falls from a safe distance, so that they appear vast but relatively tame. If this is the cultivated tourist’s version of the falls, Minot’s vision is the dramatic uncensored version conveying the terror of being suspended in the gorge at close proximity to the roaring waters. This more dramatic, frightening version of nature was referred to within landscape painting as the “sublime,” which had been defined by the English philosopher Edmund Burke in his *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in 1757 as the sense of awe and even terror at the overwhelming power of nature. This was in direct opposition to the idea of the “beautiful,” which depicted the tranquil and picturesque aspects of nature.

Minot’s decision to depict the sublime aspect of the falls may have been influenced by the timing of her visit. The War of 1812, a two-and-a-half year conflict between England, America, and their Native American allies, had wrought devastation upon the Niagara region just months before her visit. Minot was deeply mindful of this context when she viewed the falls, and she commented on the struggle over the land in her 1815 essay. When she painted the falls in all of their violence, she referenced a tradition of landscape painting that adopted stormy seas, volcanic eruptions, and crashing waterfalls as metaphors for man-made war and destruction. Minot also included a few Native American figures in the lower right corner of the painting, along with well-dressed tourists and a rustic type on the left, and it is possible that these figures could refer to the various factions that had so recently fought over this land.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- How does Minot create a sense of drama and awe in this painting?
- Write a poem about this painting and how it makes you feel, and then compare your poem with those of your peers. How does your reaction compare to theirs? Do the differences and similarities in your reactions surprise you? Why or why not?



NIAGARA FALLS, 1818

Louisa Davis Minot (American, 1788–1858)

Oil on linen, 30 × 40 5/8 in. (76.2 × 103.2 cm)

New-York Historical Society, Gift of Mrs. Waldron Phoenix Belknap, Sr., to the Waldron Phoenix Belknap, Jr., Collection, 1956.4

WHITE MOUNTAIN SCENERY, FRANCONIA NOTCH, NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1857

Asher B. Durand

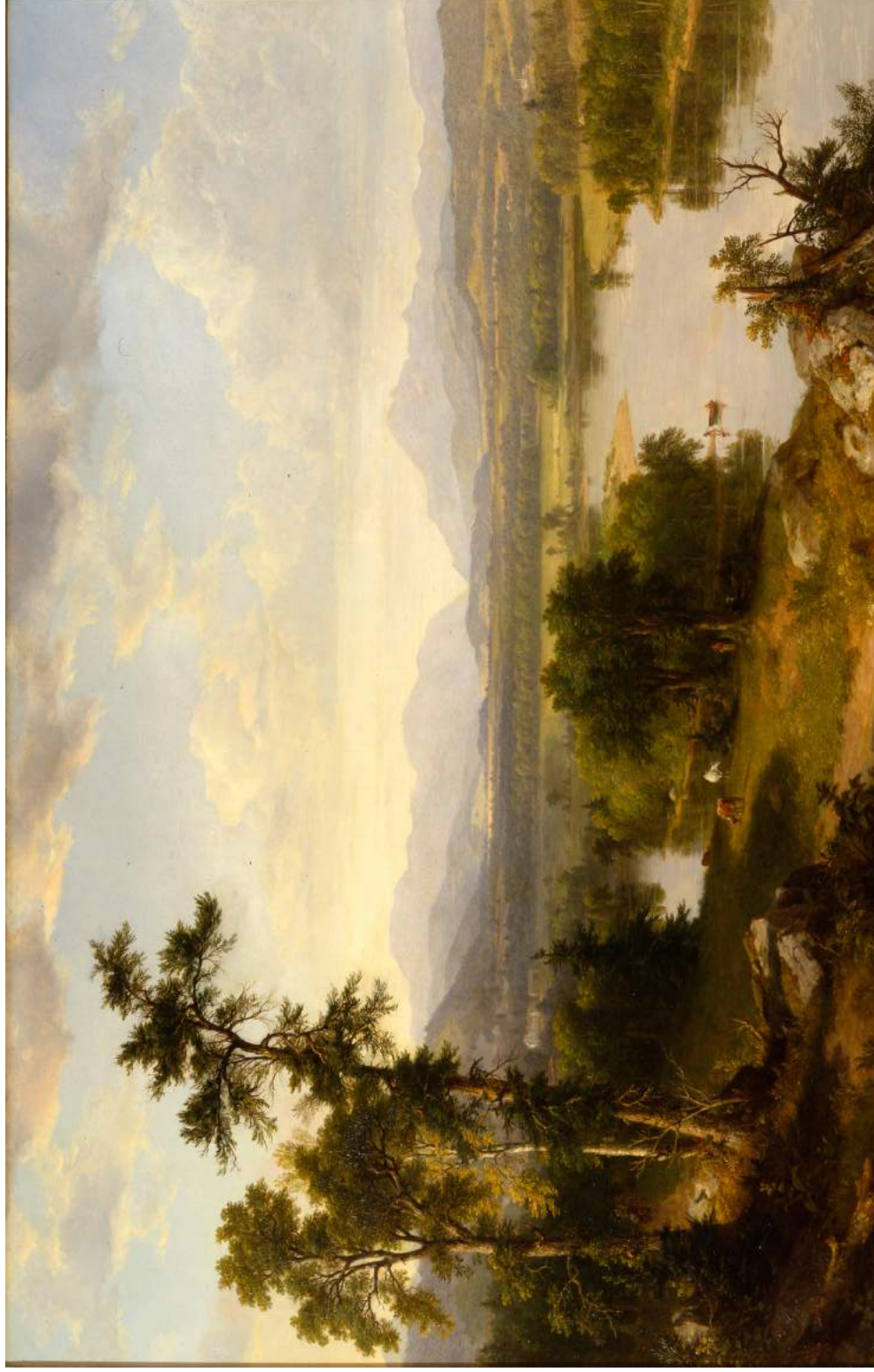
Asher B. Durand (1796–1886) began his career as an engraver specializing in patriotic subjects, but he later developed into a portraitist (depicting presidents among others) and eventually became one of the foremost American landscape painters under the influence of his contemporary, Thomas Cole, around 1837. In 1840 he traveled to Europe to study the Old Masters in museums and private collections since such paintings were then unavailable in the United States. He described his time in Europe as a “year of toilsome exile,” and he found European-style landscapes (in which every component was carefully arranged to present a harmonious, balanced, and timeless effect) lacked the power and immediacy of the more naturalist landscapes then being painted in America. However, despite his apparent lack of enthusiasm, his later paintings show the influence of the low horizons and luminous atmospheres characteristic of Dutch and English landscape painters.

Upon his return to America in 1841, Durand strove to combine the pictorial conventions he had seen on his tour with the direct observation of nature, completing pencil and oil sketches outdoors. For his studies he chose only the most beautiful and characteristic trees and rocks, and then placed them within carefully arranged compositions. While he created oil sketches outside in nature, his finished paintings were always executed in his studio. After Cole’s death in 1848, Durand assumed a leadership role among American painters, and in 1855, at the age of fifty-nine, he published a manifesto entitled “Letters on Landscape Painting” in a prominent American art journal. In his letters he advocated learning to paint from nature before studying the Old Masters, and cautioned against the “picturesque” model that followed the European prototype. He also defended the landscape of the American East Coast as a worthy subject in response to a growing trend among young artists like Frederic Edwin Church, who chose to travel to the West and even to South America in search of exotic subject matter. Durand’s 1857 painting *White Mountain Scenery, Franconia Notch, New Hampshire* embodies these ideals.

Located in the center of New Hampshire, the White Mountains are the highest peaks in the northeastern range, and, after an 1826 avalanche buried a family alive, they were believed to be among the most inhospitable American environments. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the area was a remote wilderness, but by 1850 the site could be reached by railroad, and by 1900 the mountains had become an established tourist destination. Named for American presidents, the range includes Mounts Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Monroe, and Madison, along with Mount Chocorua, named for a legendary Native American chief who leapt to his death from White Mountain in order to avoid white settlers. These presidential names conferred national significance on the region, and the legend of Chief Chocorua serves as a reminder of the continuing encroachment of European civilization on native lands. The painting, completed after years of on-site observation, was commissioned by New York collector Robert Stuart, who was so pleased with Durand’s painting that he offered to pay the artist more than the agreed-upon fee.

The scene, depicted from an elevated viewpoint high above the Pemigewasset River Valley, shows the pass between the two peaks of the White Mountains known as Franconia Notch (in the center distance). Several large trees in the foreground frame the composition from the left, curving toward the center, while a placid river leads the viewer’s eye up through the valley and deep into the middle ground of the painting. A small tourist coach or carriage in the lower left references the burgeoning tourist trade in the region, and a small group of people and cattle near the center of the foreground offers a sense of the vast scale of the landscape. The tone is soothing and reflective despite the deep sense of panoramic space created by the bird’s eye view and reinforced by the shift from warm greens and browns in the foreground to cool blues and violets in the distance.

There are a few buildings, but they fade into the background, lacking the clarity of the natural landscape surrounding them. A suffusive golden light lends the picture a soft, hazy quality, and the trees' shadows form deep undulating shapes across the grass. The effect is that of a peaceful pastoral, and the large canvas seems to envelop the viewer, inviting him or her inward. One can imagine the immense pride such an image would have generated in contemporary Americans, as well as the sense of calm and serenity the painting might have bestowed upon its busy, city-dwelling owner.



WHITE MOUNTAIN SCENERY, FRANCONIA NOTCH, NEW HAMPSHIRE, 1857

Asher B. Durand (American, 1796–1886)

Oil on canvas, 48 1/4 × 72 1/2 in. (122.6 × 184.2 cm)

New-York Historical Society, The Robert L. Stuart Collection, the gift of his widow Mrs. Mary Stuart, S-105

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Spend a moment looking at the painting. What, if any, feelings does this painting inspire in you? What elements of the painting (i.e. color, composition, subject) contribute to this effect?
- How does this painting differ from Louisa Davis Minot's landscape *Niagara Falls*?

CAYAMBE, 1858

Frederic Edwin Church

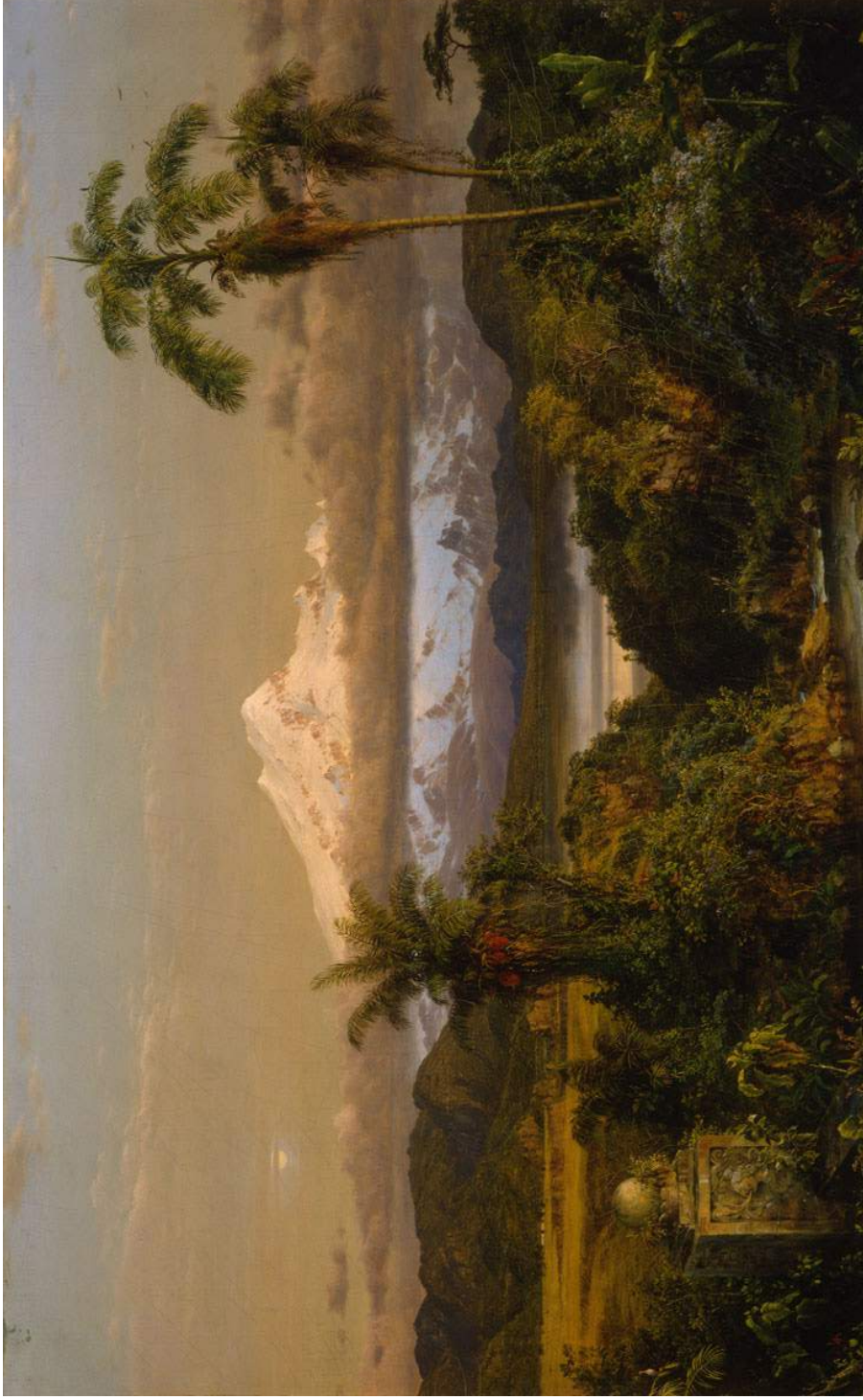
Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900) studied with Thomas Cole in the 1840s. Shortly thereafter, in the late 1850s, he rose to spectacular national and international fame, and by the 1860s he was widely regarded as the most renowned American landscape painter. Like Cole and Durand before him, Church traveled to Europe in 1867, but he is far better known for his paintings of the American West and South America. Church was particularly known for his panoramic canvases of exotic locales. The popular demand for these paintings, which were referred to as “Great Pictures” and were often displayed in theatrical settings, was so strong that Church was able to charge admission to see them in private galleries before they were sold to private collectors. In fact, a year after *Cayambe* was completed, the New York exhibition of his ten-foot canvas *Heart of the Andes* (1859) was the most well-attended display of a single artwork in the Civil War era, attracting twelve thousand people in three weeks.

Aside from Cole, Church’s greatest influence was the German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859). Humboldt had spent five years exploring South America as a part of his quest to map the world and catalogue its life forms, and his writings encouraged painters to join expeditions in order to capture the beauty and grandeur of the tropical world. The popularity of Humboldt’s ideas in the United States paralleled the influence of other writers advocating the honest depiction of nature, such as John Ruskin (1819–1900), of whom Church was also a devoted fan. Both Humboldt and Ruskin believed that painters should transform the details of nature into compositions conveying the majesty of creation. Adopting this mindset, Church began by completing oil sketches during his travels, maintaining a naturalist’s scientific approach with botanical and geological specificity. He then completed his larger, finished paintings back in his studio, where he could create compositions worthy of Humboldt and Ruskin’s theories.

Church followed Humboldt’s itinerary on his first trip to South America in 1853, and in 1857 returned to South America armed with commissions that had resulted from his first visit. His decision to depict *Cayambe*, a volcano in the Ecuadorian Andes, was no coincidence. Humboldt had designated *Cayambe* one of the most

beautiful volcanoes in South America. *Cayambe* lies directly on the equator, and Humboldt described it as “one of these eternal monuments by which nature has marked the great division of the terrestrial globe.” Church composed the South American scene under the influence of traditional European landscapes, but his careful attention to the local flora and fauna is evident in the abundant and crisply detailed foliage in the foreground of the painting. Trees often frame conventional European and American landscape paintings, but the exotic palm trees framing *Cayambe* would have been completely foreign to most American audiences. The vantage point is high above the landscape, as if the viewer were looking down into the tropical valley, and a river leads the eye back to the volcano in the distance. Majestic, it looms over the lush landscape, a potent symbol of both creation and destruction. The volcano towers so high above the surrounding tropical landscape that its peaks are capped in snow, and the moon rises to the left of the volcano, despite the fact that the scene is still bathed in the light of the setting sun. These jarring juxtapositions give the painting a sense of otherworldliness.

The scene seems long abandoned, as evidenced by the ancient ruins in the lower left corner of the painting. Church included these structural remains as a symbol of and memorial to the once-great civilizations that inhabited the Andes long before the arrival of Europeans. Their presence gives the viewer a sense of visiting a pre-modern time. The ruins reference the inclusion of ancient artifacts interspersed with landscape views in Humboldt’s illustrated atlas, *Views of the Cordilleras*, a combination that visually ties landscapes to the civilizations they fostered. They also allude to the interests of *Cayambe*’s owner, Robert L. Stuart, who owned sugar refineries with trade interests in Latin America. Stuart had a strong interest in archaeology and was the first president of the American Museum of Natural History as well as a major collector of American art and artifacts. Church shared this interest in American artifacts. He later collected Aztec reliefs that, as a founding trustee, he bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the hope of promoting awareness of American antiquities.



CAYAMBE, 1858

Frederic Edwin Church (American, 1826–1900)

Oil on canvas, 30 × 48 1/8 in. (76.2 × 122.2 cm)

New-York Historical Society, The Robert L. Stuart Collection, the gift of his widow Mrs. Mary Stuart, S-91.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Describe the setting. How would you characterize the structure visible in the painting? Why do you think the artist chose to include it? How does the lack of people contribute to the painting's overall effect?
- In 1859, thousands of people paid admission to see a single painting. What types of entertainment do people pay admission to see today? How has modern technology changed our approach to entertainment and the fine arts?
- Is it warm or cold in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Frederic Edwin Church created many sketches while traveling and then made paintings from those sketches to show people what he had seen. How do you document or preserve memories of your trips?

THE COURSE OF EMPIRE: DESOLATION, 1836

Thomas Cole

Thomas Cole (1801–1848) has been credited with establishing landscape painting as the predominant genre of art made in the United States in the nineteenth century. Having emigrated from England to the United States at the age of seventeen, Cole made his first journey up the Hudson River in 1825. By 1833 he was known as one of the country's most innovative landscape painters and the founder of the first American school of painting, a loose association of mostly New York-based artists who came to be known as The Hudson River School. It was Cole's goal to encourage the establishment of a serious American culture worthy of international regard.

The Course of Empire was Cole's most ambitious and complex series. According to his letters, he first began thinking of this theme during an 1829 trip to Europe, where he saw evidence of the continent's turbulent recent history, most notably the French Revolution, Napoleon's exploits, and the industrial revolution, as well as more ancient examples of fallen empires like Rome. What he saw in Europe seemed to demonstrate the truth of the then-dominant theory of history in which all civilizations (most notably the Roman Empire) are born, prosper, and then die. It was believed that all societies were subject to the same inevitable cycle of growth and decay. However it remained to be seen whether the United States, a country modeled after republican Rome, would follow this pattern or prove its superiority to the Old Country and break free from the cycle.

While Cole's work celebrated the American landscape, his outlook for the new country had grown pessimistic. New York City was growing rapidly and fortunes could be made, and lost, quickly. Living on the shores of the Hudson River, Cole was amazed by the speed of deforestation as the railroad encroached, and he mourned the rapid disappearance of the American wilderness. Having once celebrated the approach of civilization and progress, he lamented the loss of the pristine landscapes that had inspired his early success. Considered in this context, *The Course of Empire* is Cole's American take on history painting as well as a warning for the United States.

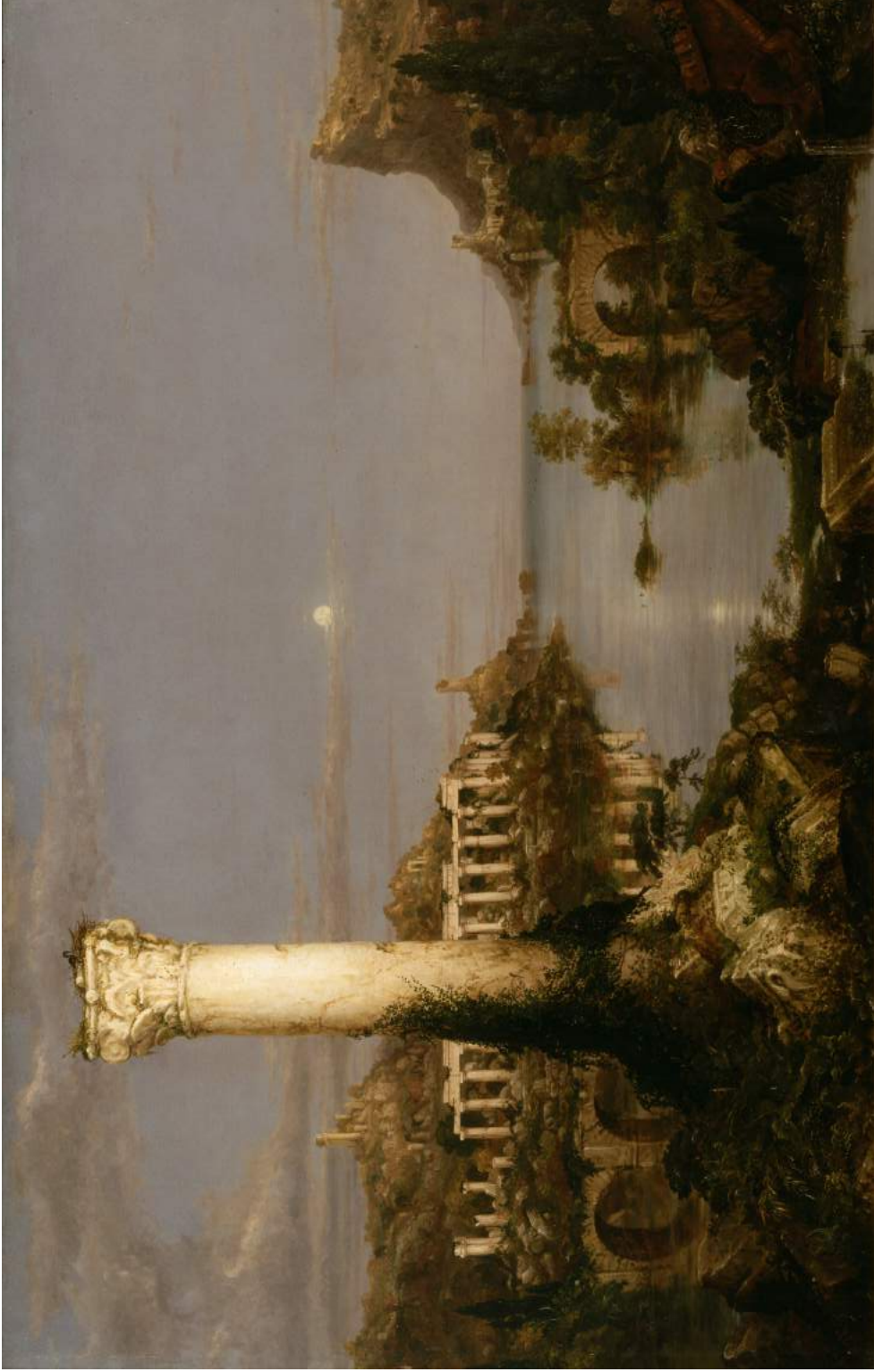
Cole planned *The Course of Empire* over several years and then finally began the project in earnest in 1833, when he secured the commission of Luman Reed, a wealthy New York City merchant and major patron of the arts. Reed would not live to see the completion of the series in 1836, but the paintings joined his collection in one of the first semipublic galleries in the United States. Through this display, the paintings became famous and were immediately recognized as Cole's masterpiece.

To achieve this ambitious series, Cole drew on established landscape aesthetics and art historical precedent as well as literary sources. Each of the five paintings presents a different time of day to illustrate a specific phase of civilization, from the dawn of its birth to the dusk of its fall. The series begins with *The Savage State* (c. 1834), in which indigenous hunters roam at the dawn of a stormy day. Next is the ideal mid-morning scene of *The Arcadian or Pastoral State* (c. 1834); in which a temple has been built and civilized mankind seems to live in harmony with nature. The progress of civilization peaks in the lavish high noon scene of *The Consummation of Empire* (1835). Here nature is barely visible, overwhelmed by buildings, processions, and overall decadence, and the republican way of life has fallen under the control of a tyrant. This concentration of power and the rise of the corrupt empire are represented in the painting by a red-cloaked conqueror (visible on a bridge in the foreground of the work), who is often interpreted as a stand-in for then president and former general Andrew Jackson, of whom Cole was no admirer. Civilization begins its descent in earnest with *Destruction* (1836). Here the empire, weakened and lazy with luxury as described in Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–89), falls to barbarian invaders. The depiction of a city engulfed in flames would have resonated with New Yorkers who had survived the Great Fire of 1835, in which roughly six hundred buildings were destroyed.

Nature reasserts itself in the final painting of the series, *Desolation* (1836). Of this painting Cole wrote, it “must be a sunset—the city a desolate ruin—columns standing isolated amid the encroaching waters—ruined temples, broken bridges, fountains, sarcophagi, . . . no human figure—a solitary bird perhaps: a calm and silent effect. This picture must be as the funeral knell of departed greatness, and may be called the state of desolation . . . Violence and time have crumbled the works of man . . . The gorgeous pageant has passed, and the roar of the battle has ceased—the multitude has sunk into dust—the empire is extinct.” In this last work of the series, day has ended. Moonlight illuminates the vast sky, and the still waters below give the painting a sense of tranquility. Herons nest on the remaining column, and lush greenery has overtaken the classical ruins of the now fallen civilization. The colors in *Desolation* are muted in comparison with the vibrant tones of *Consummation* and the soothing pastels of *The Pastoral State*. A lone column stands in the foreground, a reminder of a once proud civilization and its steep decline, and a warning to Cole’s contemporary audience.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Write down three words you would use to describe *Desolation*, and then compare your words with those of a partner in your class. What do the words you chose reveal about the painting? What do they reveal about your own feelings about nature?
- Thinking about American politics and society today, how do you think the United States has fulfilled or not fulfilled Cole's prediction? Or do you think the outcome has yet to be determined? How so?



THE COURSE OF EMPIRE: DESOLATION, 1836

Thomas Cole (American, 1801–1848)

Oil on canvas, 39 1/4 × 63 1/4 in. (99.7 × 160.7 cm)

New-York Historical Society, Gift of The New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts, 1858.5

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

SHIFTING THE HORIZON

ESSENTIAL QUESTION	How do artists use the horizon line to create a sense of space when creating an image of a landscape?
GRADES	K–4
TIME	One or more class periods
ART CONCEPTS	Line, horizon line, point of view, perspective, depth, landscape, foreground, middle ground, background, layering
MATERIALS	140 lb watercolor paper, pencils, erasers, tempera paint, paint brushes, water, cups, paper towels; optional: colored pencils instead of paint
TALKING ABOUT ART	Compare and contrast the printed images of <i>White Mountain Scenery</i> , <i>Franconia Notch</i> , <i>New Hampshire</i> by Asher Brown Durand and <i>Niagara Falls</i> by Louisa Minot

On a piece of paper draw a line down the center creating two vertical columns. At the top of one column write the letters WM for White Mountain and at the top of the other column write the letters NF for Niagara Falls. Working in pairs, catalogue your observations about White Mountain on the WM side of the paper and have your partner catalogue their observations of Niagara Falls on the NF side of the paper. Next identify the elements in each column that are very different from one another, in other words how the paintings contrast one another. Not only are the environments of the landscape very different from one another, but the point of view, where the painter or viewer is positioned in the painting, and the horizon line, a line where the land and sky meet, are very different. Think of a time when you have noticed the horizon line- when is it easiest to see? When might it be hard for us to see?

MAKING ART

Explore how to create the illusion of space within a composition by sketching and painting your own series of landscapes inspired by the artists of the Hudson River School. How will you transform this two-dimensional space using the horizon line?

1. Fan-fold a sturdy sheet of painting or drawing paper (depending on the media you wish to use) into thirds to create the form of a double-sided accordion.

2. Draw a continuous line from the left side of the paper to the right side, dipping your line down and raising it up to different levels. Do the same on the other side of the paper as well.



MAKING ART

3. Demonstrate how to add color to the background first using colored pencils or paints. If you're using paint, wet the paper first, and then add dark and light tones to the sky and blend. The areas where the horizon line dips lower will show more sky and areas where the horizon line climbs higher will show less sky. Look at each panel as an opportunity to try a different kind of sky. What would a morning sky look like? Sunset sky? Night sky? How does the light change at those different times of day? How does that affect the colors that we choose to use for the sky?

4. After adding color to the background of the sky, add color to the middle ground where the horizon line is located. Browns could be used to paint in mountains or rocky cliffs, greens could be used for grassy hills and blues could be used to create waterfalls or rivers. Encourage students to paint all the way to the bottom of the page.



5. Lastly add details in the foreground such as trees, rocks, bushes, flowers, even animals.



REFLECTION

Display the screens in the classroom and have a gallery walk. Reflect on the art-making experience by responding to the following questions orally or in written form:

What kinds of environments did you paint in your landscapes?
(Show examples from your own artwork.)

Identify the foreground, middle ground, and background of your landscape.

How did you use color to define space in your landscape?

Describe in what way(s) your painting is similar and different from the Durand and Minot paintings?

**CURRICULUM
CONNECTION**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.K-4.1

Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners. Language. K-2.6. Use words and phrases acquired through conversation. Language. 3.6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships.

CCSS.MATH-MEASUREMENT AND DATA.K.2

Directly compare two objects with measurable attribute in common, to see which object has “more of”/”less of” the attribute, and describe the difference.

CCSS.MATH-NUMBER AND OPERATIONS.3.1

Understand a fraction a/b as the quantity formed by a part of size $1/b$.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

NATURE IN LOS ANGELES LANDSCAPES

ESSENTIAL QUESTION	What part of the Los Angeles natural landscape do you most identify with?
GRADES	3-8
TIME	One class period and a preview
ART CONCEPTS	Geography, landmarks, place, and identity
MATERIALS	Pencils, colored pencils, and drawing paper, and individual mementos provided by the students (a memento from the ocean/beaches, deserts, or mountains of Los Angeles, or an item that one would need when visiting one of those places).
TALKING ABOUT ART	<p>View the painting by Asher Brown Durand, <i>White Mountain Scenery, Franconia Notch, New Hampshire</i>, 1857, and make observations about the painting using the open-ended phrase, “I see...” Inventory the responses on the board, moving towards more and more detailed responses through close looking. Make sure to use all your senses in your descriptions.</p> <p>Named for American presidents, the range includes peaks named Mount Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Monroe, and Madison along with Mount Chocorua, named for a legendary Native American chief. Can you think of any areas of Los Angeles that memorialize important people or peoples?</p> <p>One can imagine the immense pride such an image would generate in contemporary Americans, as well as the sense of calm and serenity this painting might have bestowed upon its busy, city-dwelling owner. How do you feel when looking at Durand’s landscape? How are the natural landscapes of Los Angeles different from those depicted by Durand?</p> <p>Many of Durand’s contemporaries traveled further abroad in search of exotic locations, but Durand defended his local landscape as a worthy subject of art, telling young artists to embrace the familiar. Can you think of a Los Angeles view that generates the same feelings of pride and familiarity for you?</p> <p>Angelenos and visitors to Los Angeles are often inspired by the diverse geography of the city and its surroundings. Remember a favorite moment when you experienced the natural world in Los Angeles.</p>

MAKING ART

Using your memory and inspiration from your memento, capture your favorite place in Los Angeles where you have experienced a connection with nature. What are the characteristic features of that place? Write those features down. On the same piece of paper, create quick sketches of the individual features on the list.

Durand strove to capture what he witnessed by completing pencil sketches and color studies, choosing only the most beautiful and characteristic features, whether the trees, rocks, or other elements of the landscape. While he created the sketches outside in nature, his paintings were executed in his studio. Just as Durand assembled his landscapes in his studio, use your sketches to compose a remembered (or imaginary) view of an ocean-, desert- or mountain-view in the classroom incorporating yourself as a traveler in the image.

REFLECTION

Display the completed artworks in the classroom. Invite the students to walk around and view each example. Have volunteers share the story of their artwork. Invite them to identify the location and why they chose it. Ask the students to explain the choices they made in putting it together. How does your artwork express your feelings about Los Angeles?

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.3-8

3-8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners. 5.2. Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. 6-8.2. Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

CCSS.HISTORY SOCIAL SCIENCE CONTENT STANDARDS.3-8

3.1 Students describe the physical and human geography and use maps, tables, graphs, photographs, and charts to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context. 4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

POST-APOCALYPTIC VISIONS

ESSENTIAL QUESTION	How can landscape painting address social and environmental changes, and the possible future human outcomes of these changes?
GRADES	6-12
TIME	One class period
ART CONCEPTS	Landscape painting, composition, realism, shading, light, narrative-based art
CULTURAL CONCEPTS	Social issues, war, cycles of time, environmental change
MATERIALS	color markers, pencils, color pencils, collage materials (i.e. photos of buildings, streets, trees, mountains, and deserts), bristol paper or watercolor paper, glue sticks, scissors
TALKING ABOUT ART	<p>Thomas Cole created <i>The Course of Empire</i> series of paintings as a warning to the growing American nation of the cost of human greed, war and violence.</p> <p>What human-made elements can be seen in <i>The Course of Empire: Desolation</i>?</p> <p>What feelings does the painting evoke?</p> <p>How does the painting serve as a warning?</p>
MAKING ART	<p>Begin by writing a short story (at least one paragraph) describing a landscape after a human-caused apocalyptic event has wiped out all human inhabitants of Earth; examples could be: world war (full scale nuclear destruction) or an environmental disaster like the melting of the polar ice caps due to global warming and/or greenhouse gases or a massive chemical spill that destroys all food crops worldwide. What do cities look like? What sounds can be heard? Is anything still alive? If so, what? How did this happen, and how could it have been prevented?</p> <p>Then, using books, magazines, or images from the internet, choose photographs of famous landmarks, government buildings, and important bridges as well as natural elements like trees, mountains, deserts, and oceans and human-made elements like waste, plastic, machinery, and smog to illustrate what remains. Use scissors to cut out the photographs and scratch onto the images to make them appear aged and partially destroyed. Using pencils, color pencils and/or markers, further the aged and destroyed look by coloring on top of the images. Show evidence of what caused these changes – either war or environmental disaster.</p>

MAKING ART

Lay out your images on a piece of paper to create a landscape composition, filling the paper as much as possible. Fill in the rest of the landscape with colored pencils. Then glue your images onto the paper. Now look back at your story – does it need a revision to include elements from your artwork that were not in your initial story? Add more descriptions to your story if necessary, then title your artwork using words selected from the story you wrote.

REFLECTION

Arrange a display of all the artworks and stories around the room. Ask students to walk around looking at the artworks and reading the accompanying stories. In the stories, what are the different reasons for the destruction of human civilization? In any of the artworks, are there indications that humans or some form of life could return sometime in the future? How does this exercise make you think about humanity's impact on nature? Do you think a work of art is more or less effective than an essay cautioning people against the behavior that might lead to such an apocalyptic event? Why?

**CURRICULUM
CONNECTION**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.6-12

6-8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners. 6.2. Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

CCSS. ELA-LITERACY. WRITING STANDARDS.6-12

6-12.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS. ELA-LITERACY. LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES.6

6.7. Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

NATURE AND THE AMERICAN VISION: THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL

ONLINE RESOURCES

THOMAS COLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

<http://www.thomascole.org/learn-menu/>
Information about the life and work of Thomas Cole can be found on this website.

FREDERIC CHURCH'S WORLD

<http://www.olana.org/explore/churchs-world/>
The Olana State Historic Site
This site supplies information about the life and work of Frederic Edwin Church from the museum housed in Church's former home and studio.

HEILBRUNN TIMELINE OF ART HISTORY: THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL

http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/hurs/hd_hurs.htm
Metropolitan Museum of Art
This website provides an introduction to the Hudson River School by the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Department of American Painting and Sculptures.

BOOKS FOR STUDENTS

RIVER OF DREAMS: THE STORY OF THE HUDSON RIVER

Talbott, Hudson.
Intended for 6-8 year olds, this book masterfully presents information about the Hudson River in a manner appropriate for a younger audience. It traces the Hudson's role in the colonization of New York, the Revolution, the era of steamboats, and the building of the Erie Canal as well as its fate as railroads eclipsed shipping's importance, its environmental degradation, and its rebirth.

HUDSON: THE STORY OF A RIVER

Locker, Thomas and Robert C Baron.
This conservation-focused book is geared for students ages 8 and up. Featuring luminescent paintings reminiscent of the Hudson River School, the text describes life along the Hudson River.

BOOKS FOR TEACHERS

THE HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL: NATURE AND THE AMERICAN VISION

Ferber, Linda S.
The catalogue for the exhibition focuses on how landscape imagery shaped both national and cultural identity in 19th century America and reflects on early awareness of the importance of preserving natural sites for future generations.

KINDRED SPIRITS: ASHER B. DURAND AND THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

Ferber, Linda S.
This exceptional survey includes a comprehensive biography of Asher B. Durand as well as an assessment of his work.

HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL: MASTERWORKS FROM THE WADSWORTH ATHENAEUM

Kornhauser, Elizabeth Mankin and Amy Ellis.
This book features a selection of Hudson River School paintings from the Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum of Art. An introduction to nineteenth century American landscape painting gives context, and brief artist biographies supplement the catalogue entries.

DIFFERENT VIEWS IN HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL PAINTING

O'Toole, Judith Hansen.
By examining the Hudson River School artists' practice of creating thematically related pairs and series of paintings, this book illuminates the aesthetic and philosophical principles of the Hudson River School painters.