

## **PIONEER IMAGES OF UTAH**

**ARTIST:** C. C. A. Christensen (1831-1912) Ephraim  
**TITLE:** *Handcart Pioneers' First View of the Salt Lake Valley* 1890  
**MEDIA:** oil on canvas  
**SIZE:** 16" x 12"

**TITLE:** Winter Quarters 1891  
**MEDIA:** *oil on canvas*  
**SIZE:** 14" x 22"

### **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

Carl Christian Anton Christensen was born in Denmark in 1832. He studied painting and toy making at the Academy of Art in Copenhagen. In 1850, he became a member of the Latter-day Saint (LDS) Church and served an LDS mission to Vest-Sjælland, Denmark. After returning home, he joined an emigrant company that took him to England and

eventually to New York. From New York, he and his wife, Elsie Scheel, traveled to Nauvoo, Illinois, where they purchased a handcart and traveled by foot to Utah. He arrived in Utah with the "Danish flag flying from his cart, his trousers flapping in tatters about his legs."

During his trek, Christensen made many sketches of the American scenery and the events that happened along the journey, but it was not until the 1860s that he had the opportunity to paint again. Little about C. C. A. Christensen's first years in Utah is known. Many years passed between his arrival in 1857 and any public exhibition of his paintings.

LDS pioneer and religious themes dominate Christensen's work. Perhaps his greatest achievement is Mormon Panorama, a monumental narrative that tells in twenty-two 8' x 12' scenes about the history of the LDS Church from Joseph Smith's vision in Palmyra, New York, to the arrival of the LDS pioneers in the Great Salt Lake Valley. To make transportation of the panorama easier, the scenes were attached in sequence as a continuous scroll on a roller, and the artist and panorama toured in Arizona, Idaho, Colorado, and Utah (1869-1890).

The pioneer experience was a favorite theme of Christensen's in smaller works as well. Typical are two paintings from the 1890s: *Handcart Pioneer's First View of Salt Lake Valley* (1890, SMA) and *Winter Quarters* (1891, SMA).

"C. C. A.," as he was called by historians in his later life and after his death, was one of the first artists employed to paint scenery for the Salt Lake Theater. He also worked on decoration for the St. George, Manti, and Logan LDS temples.

Christensen's work has a naive, or primitive, quality that stems from his simple treatment of anatomy and perspective, which he learned during his early artistic training in Denmark. A genre artist by nature, his paintings, or scenes from daily life, reflect great narrative skill that earns him respect as a visual historian of his people.

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**SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**  
**For Handcart Pioneers' First View of the Salt Lake Valley**

**TITLE:** *Handcart Pioneers' First View of the Salt Lake Valley* 1890

**MEDIA:** oil on canvas

**SIZE:** 16" x 12"

### **QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING (History, Aesthetics, Criticism)**

Sometimes the past is regarded idealistically rather than realistically, and this idealism is reflected in the folktales, folk songs, and paintings about the past. Contrast the excerpts from the biography describing what this artist really looked like upon arrival in Salt Lake with his later portrayal of this event. Especially notice the clothing.

An artist often uses a focal point to capture viewers' attention and hold their interest. What do you think the focal point is in this painting? (The boy's red shirt)

Notice how many people are wearing hats or other head coverings. Why do you suppose that might be? (sun, protection) Notice the contrast or how the artist draws attention to the man who isn't wearing a hat. Why isn't he wearing his hat? (waving, greeting) What might he be thinking or feeling? (joy, relief, happiness)

What is the general mood of this painting? What clues make you think that?

### **ACTIVITIES**

#### **Art**

**Objective:** The students will create a narrative picture of an event from a trip or outing.

A narrative painting tells a story. Have the students brainstorm ideas and events they could use for a theme for their own narrative picture. Show examples of narrative art works from other cultures and discuss how they differ from this painting. (For example, Chinese paintings were meant to be read from left to right, Native American works displayed elaborate symbols that were used to tell a story, Egyptian works also used extensive symbols and narrative qualities). In addition, use contemporary examples of cartoons, comic books, and children's illustrated books.

**Variation:** Have the class do a group mural of a class outing.

#### **Language Arts**

**Objective:** The students will recreate the pioneer experience by imagining they are

members of a handcart company and describing, in a journal, their feelings and observations.

Visit the library and copy entries from personal journals written by pioneers. Share selected entries with the students, and show the slide of *Handcart Pioneers*. Let the students discuss what they heard and saw and their related feelings and ideas. Allow students time to think and mentally visualize what the life and times might have been like for the people journeying west. Then have students write a journal entry describing their observations and their personal feelings.

### **Social Studies**

**Objective:** The students will understand the importance of prioritizing by deciding what supplies to take on a handcart.

Do some research to find out the size and measurements of authentic handcarts. Also research the average length of the handcart treks and the availability of collecting supplies along the way.

Show the class the slide of Handcart Pioneers and discuss handcart treks. Have the students decide what they would consider essential to take with them on a handcart trip. Have the students determine weight, size and amounts of the supplies they will need for a trip.

You could fashion the bed of a handcart out of cardboard boxes and use boxes and bags of appropriate size so the students can actually see what the size limits and prioritizing were like.

Because the Sesquicentennial Celebration of the LDS pioneers' arrival in the Salt Lake Valley (1997) involved various reenactments of the treks west, you may be able to find and borrow one of the authentic handcart replications that were used. In addition, there may be members of your community who participated in one of the reenactments and would come to your class and help with the activity or talk about their experiences as an introduction or culmination of the activity.

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## **SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES For Winter Quarters**

**TITLE:** Winter Quarters 1891  
**MEDIA:** oil on canvas  
**SIZE:** 14" x 22"

**QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING**  
**(History, Aesthetics, Criticism)**

What is this painting of? Do you think it's a fairly accurate representation? Why? How would you describe the style of this painting? What other works by this artist have you seen? What other artists do you know whose works seem similar in style?

What aesthetic category does this work fit best in? Justify your answer. What would be the best use of this artwork? Where should it be displayed?

Would this painting be better if the artist had had more or better art training? How? What makes this painting valuable? Who would it be most valuable to?

**ACTIVITIES**

**Art**

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate an understanding of the differing effects of value by discussing, identifying, and by drawing using a chosen value range.

Before you begin this activity, explain or be sure your class already understands the following terms:

value--how dark or light a color is

low-key--a high percentage of light values used

high-key--a high percentage of dark values used

full range--a full range of values from black to white used

Show the class the slide of *Winter Quarters* as well as slides, posters, or reproductions of artworks using various ranges of values. Ask the students to compare the effects of low-key, high-key, and a full range of values. Have the students decide what kind of art works might best utilize each value range.

Show the students other artworks and have them individually, or as a class, identify the value range of the work. The activity can end here, with the number of correct responses as a class or as an individual serving as the activity's evaluation.

For the production section of this activity, you will need good quality drawing paper, a range of hard and soft drawing pencils and a variety of objects for the students to draw. (These should range from delicate items like a feather or head of grass to rough rocks, pieces of interesting wood, fruit, plants, etc.) Each student should choose an item to draw

and should decide on the best value range for the drawing they will make. Then give the students at least two to three hours over several days to finish their drawings. Display the finished drawings and give the class a chance to comment on the successfulness of the works (or the successfulness of sections of some works), on the effects of the different value ranges, and on the results of the differing combinations of subject and value range. Or, have the students write a critique of their own work, using the same criteria.

Variation for young children: Although young children can learn to recognize value range and discuss the different results, they will not have the skill nor attention span to do a sustained value drawing. Either have them create a simple value scale, or have them create a simple drawing. They can choose to draw with white crayon or chalk (tends to smear easily) on black paper, with black crayon on white paper, or with black and gray crayons on white paper.

Or, use construction paper--white, gray, and black--and have the students decide whether their designs will be low-key, high-key, or have a balance of the three values. Then the students can cut simple shapes and by gluing the shapes to one sheet of paper, make a non-objective value design. You may be able to buy construction paper in several shades of gray, if so, the students will have a broader range of values to choose from and will be able to make subtler designs.

## **Art**

**Objective:** The students will demonstrate their understanding of warm and cool colors by identifying both in artworks and by describing their effects.

Show the class an assortment of artworks including C. C. A. Christensen's *Winter Quarters*. Have the students identify which colors in the artworks are warm and which are cool. Let the students respond about both the visual and emotional effects the different colors have on them as viewers. For example, warm colors usually project or come forward while cool colors recede. Cool colors evoke a sense of serenity, peace, quiet, and contentment. They also can be used to show time of day, to create atmospheric perspective, and to contrast with warm colors. Warm colors basically create the opposite of what cool colors achieve.

If your class is young enough to not have the usable vocabulary to describe the color effects readily, you can make a list or matching game that contains words the students can understand, at least with a little review or explanation, and can then match with the appropriate color choice.

Another possibility is to ask questions such as the following:

What colors would you use to show \_\_\_\_\_? Fill in the blank with a variety of feelings or effects the students will understand such as it was a hot day.

Use this activity as an evaluation of another lesson on warm and cool colors, to introduce the idea of warm and cool colors, or to give the students experience in discussing the

effects of color choices on viewers of the artworks.

### **Social Studies/Science**

**Objective:** The students will understand the changes in lifestyle that have occurred because of cultural changes, scientific discoveries, and technological innovations that have occurred since pioneer times.

Show the class the slides of *Winter Quarters*, *Pioneer Home*, and *Tepees*. Ask the students what life would have been like for people living in those situations. What would they have done, especially in the wintertime when it was cold and the days were short? (Several other activities in this and previous packets focus on entertainment and cultural activities like singing and dancing.)

Now show the class magazine pictures or art featuring modern-day activities and lifestyles. Ask the students to identify ways their lives are different from people in pioneer times and then to identify what cultural changes, scientific discoveries, and technological innovations have made those changes possible. The activity can stay general or the focus can be directed at a specific area that matches your science or social studies curriculum.

You may want to point out or elicit the information that we sometimes choose activities such as camping, mountain man rendezvous, backpacking, hunting, pottery, weaving, knitting, etc., which are similar to everyday activities for pioneers and Native Americans of the time; however, we choose them for sport, recreation, or for hobbies; they usually are not necessities. Have the students think about how that makes our lives different from the pioneersí.

You can limit the activity to the preceding class discussion, or you can continue. Some ideas follow:

1. Have someone with mountain-man knowledge and skills come and demonstrate skills and crafts like lighting fires with steel and flint or with bow and stick, curing and making clothing out of deer hide, making knives, braiding leather, etc. Also, or instead, have someone come who can demonstrate a traditional feminine skill such as carding, spinning, and weaving. You may want to have several people come. (Also, see activities for Minerva Teichert's painting *Spinning*, in the Art of the West, Oct. 1995 pkt.)
2. Have each of the students identify one change in lifestyle they appreciate or enjoy and research the history of the invention or technology that made the change possible. The result can be a short report or presentation to the class. The students may want to include illustrations in their reports.
3. Choose an area of your science curriculum such as electricity and have the students do research, teach them a science lesson on electricity, have the students do experiments that demonstrate the properties of electricity, make a class list of all the ways we use

electricity today, or have each student make a list over a given period of time--one day, a week--of the things he or she did that required the use of electricity. Have the class compare lists. Use any one or combination of the activities suggested above.

4. Using the example above to spur ideas, structure an activity around a social studies chapter or topic.

### **Science** Meteorology

**Objectives:** The students will learn how people in the 1800s forecast weather, how we do today, how weather affected travel and farming, what preparations were necessary for winter, or a combination of these objectives.

Show the students the slide of *Winter Quarters* and of *Tepees*. Ask the students what ways the pioneers and the Indians forecast the weather. If they don't know of any ways you will have to help them explore the possibilities. For example: What could animal behavior tell people about the coming weather? How would records of previous years' weather help predict the future weather?

Ask the students how we forecast weather today. This section could include a trip to a TV station, research in encyclopedias or on the internet, or the recording of the methods television weather forecasters use to predict the weather. For young students, you may want to tape several segments of weather reports and have the class watch the reports on video; and as a class, identify the methods used. (With a recording, you can ensure you have included all the ways used.)

If you are interested, the other objectives can be used in a class discussion, or can be the focus of research, assigned reading in your social studies text, or a teacher presentation.

### **Art/Social Science**

**Objective:** The students will explore art as a way to document historic events.

Show the class the slide of *Winter Quarters* and, if desired, other slides or reproductions of artworks that record an event.

Have the students examine the artwork(s) as historical documents. Where was *Winter Quarters*? Why was it set up? What was life like in *Winter Quarters*?

Tell the students someone once said "a picture is worth a thousand words." Ask the students questions such as the following: Do you agree or disagree and why? What are some ways a painting, print, or photograph may be successful in conveying historic information? What kinds of information is an artwork most likely to convey? What have you learned from viewing this painting?

End the activity with the class discussion or assign the students to document a historic event from your social studies curriculum or from their own lives. Display the finished artworks.

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