

POSTCARDS FROM UTAH ARTISTS

THEME: THERE IS ART IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES

Objectives:

1. **Art History:** Students will discuss how artists have used everyday life as the subject of artworks and will be able to identify those artworks as Genre scenes.
2. **Aesthetics:** Students will be able to explain the Realist theory of art and the Expressivist theory of art and identify the two kinds of artworks.
3. **Art Production:** Students will choose an everyday scene to portray in an artwork. They will demonstrate their understanding of expressivist and realist by choosing one approach and making their genre scene fit that approach.
4. **Art Criticism:** Students will be able to critique their artworks as Realist art or as Expressivist art, using a 5-step criticism model.

Materials

- 2nd Grade postcards from the set:
Keeper of the Gate, Wash Day In Brigham City, Youthful Games.
- Other postcards from the set:
Handcart Pioneers' First View of Salt Lake, Riders of the Range, Richards' Camp
- Other 2nd Grade artworks from the Masterworks list:
Peasant Dance, I and the Village, The Gleaners, Parade or substitute *Dance Around the Maypole* by Pieter Bruegel the Younger, an UMFA Elementary poster, for *Peasant Dance*.
- Postcards that are not genre scenes:
Chelsea VI, Rhinoceros, Road to the River, Moonrise in the Canyon, Cockscomb, John Hancock, Paul Revere, Boy with a Cat, etc.
- Sketch paper
- Good-quality drawing paper
- Pencils
- Colored pencils, paints, or crayons, and oil or hard pastels (you will need one medium such as paint or pastels, that lends itself to expressive drawing)



Gary Smith
Youthful Games

1. Art History: Students will discuss how artists have used everyday life as the subject of artworks and will be able to identify those artworks as genre scenes.

Show the class the poster of *Washday in Brigham City*. Ask what the woman in the painting is doing. Ask the students if their family ever hangs laundry on the line. (Even children whose families do not regularly hang out laundry may do so with particular items or when camping or may have a neighbor who does.) Ask the students why the artist might have chosen to make a painting of just everyday life.

Tell the students that art that shows a scene from our everyday lives, like this one, is called a Genre Scene. (Genre is pronounced 'zhän-re) Write the word on the board and pronounce it for the children: have them say the word several times.



Calvin Fletcher
Wash Day in Brigham City

Divide the class into groups and give each group an assortment of postcards, some of which are genre scenes and some of which are not. Each child should choose a postcard and say why it is or isn't a genre scene, and place it in one of two piles—Yes and No. When all the postcards have been sorted, allow students time to discuss the division and make changes if the other members of the group can convince the child who made the decision to change his mind. Ask the class if some artworks are hard to classify as genre or not genre. They may not agree about *Keeper of the Gate*. Sometimes, information about the artwork might help you decide how to classify it. For example, because *Keeper of the Gate* is about the area the artist was allowed to wander as a child, and it shows him on a bicycle, some people might be influenced to say it's a genre scene because of the idea behind the painting. Students do not need to agree. Do help them to articulate the reasons for their choices.

Extension: The students will learn to identify landscapes, genre scenes, and portraits. Add to the lesson above by showing the students a poster of a landscape such as *Sunrise North Rim of Grand Canyon*. (Landscapes show all or mostly just the land; any figures are small and not very important.) Then show the class the poster of *Sacajewea* and explain that portraits concentrate on a person or small group of people, not on an activity.)

[There are, of course, artworks that blur or cross over the lines, but start with simple definitions. As the students learn more or as they identify the ways artworks cross the lines, help them explore the complexities of artworks that do not fit just one category.]

2. Aesthetics: Students will be able to explain the Realist theory of art and the Expressivist theory of art and identify the two kinds of artworks.

Introduce the aesthetic theories or approaches of Realism and Expressivism. Aesthetic theories

explain different ideas people have about what art should be like. The Realist approach is that art should look like the person, place, or thing depicted. How good an artwork is is based on how “real” it looks. On the other hand, the Expressivist approach is that art should express an emotion or feeling. The artwork is judged on how well it expresses the artist’s feelings or invokes those feelings in the viewer. Most genre scenes are realistic, but a few artworks that can be classified as genre scenes are more expressive, such as *Keeper of the Gate*, *I and the Village*, and *Parade*.



Jacob Lawrence
Parade

Image from allposters.com

Simplified Variation: Limit the lesson to Realism, which means you do not need postcards of *I and the Village* and *Parade*.

Have students, in their groups, classify the postcards according to whether they are Expressivist or Realist. All students do not have to agree. Have students find words that help explain the differences between the two approaches to art. Make a list of the words on the board.

3. Art Production: Students will choose an everyday scene to portray in an artwork. They will demonstrate their understanding of expressivist and realist by choosing one approach and making their genre scene fit that approach.

Have students choose a scene from everyday life to portray in an artwork. Students should choose whether to make their artwork Realistic or Expressivist.

Give each student a piece of inexpensive paper. The students should fold the paper in half one way and then in half the other way so the folds indicate four “thinking” spaces. In each space, the students should sketch an idea for their artwork. They should consider the overall design as well as individual elements and how they can make their artwork expressive or realistic. Have the students review the genre scenes to see that artists make choices about how they portray scenes—even realist artists don’t just make exact copies from real life.

Each sketch in a thinking space must have some changes from the previous one. When all four sketches are complete, students can choose one and make a light sketch on a large sheet of good drawing paper. Allow students to choose an appropriate medium and complete their artwork. Mount the artworks on larger sheets of colored paper, or display them in mats or frames which you have. Display the artworks after the critique is finished.

4. Art Criticism: Students will be able to critique their artworks as Realist art or as Expressivist art, using a 5–step criticism model.

Have students use the 5-step criticism model below to critique their artworks. Remember, art criticism is talking about art, not just saying how good it is.

1. "What is your immediate reaction?" (initial reaction)
2. "What do you see?" (description)
3. "How has the artist put things together?" (analysis)
4. "What is the artist telling you?" (interpretation)
5. "What is your opinion of the artwork, and why?" (informed preference)
"How successful were you at making your artwork expressive or realistic?" (evaluation of personal work)

Have students write a sentence about their artwork and display the writing with the work. For example: "I wanted to show how much fun we have when we go camping."

Sources

I and the Village, Parade, and Peasant Dance, can be found at barewalls.com

For *I and the Village*, go to the artists list, click on C, find Chagall, click, go to page 3

The other two artworks can be found through the artist list: Jacob Lawrence and Pieter Bruegel
You can purchase the prints for \$15 or less or can make your own postcards following the directions in the appendix.

You can access an image of *Dance Around the Maypole* at utah.edu/umfa and go to *Education*, then *Elementary Posters*

You can access an image of *The Gleaners*, by Jean-Francois Millet, at allposters.com.

Assessment

Use the chart on page 9 for both formative and summative assessment of this lesson.



Pieter Bruegel the Younger, *Dance Around the Maypole*
UMFA Elementary Poster