

# Madonnas *of THE PRAIRIE*



## **LESSON PLAN** **GRADES K-6**

## **Introduction**

The legend of the American West is typically seen as cowboys and Indians - guns and horses. A “new way to see” our story of Westward Expansion is through the eyes of a woman - mothers, grandmothers, sisters, friends. Many of these women were artists, writers, farmers, and adventurers, whose works passed on to us a unique story. These women were hard-working, brave and faithful pioneers.

This lesson will give students the opportunity to learn more about how women shaped the American West and ways visual narratives of their lives provide us with a more complete and accurate perspective of this facet of US history. Students will also create their own journal, allowing them to express their individual ideas of the West through writing and illustration.

## **Objectives**

Students will

- ★ Discover how artists have told the story of the development of the American West in a unique way.
- ★ Explore the specific ways women are symbolic of this narrative through composition - line, color, emotion.
- ★ Make their own journals to portray their own unique viewpoint of the American West.

## **Learners**

This lesson is designed for kindergarten through sixth graders with an emphasis on Social Studies, Visual Arts and English Language Arts.

## **Content Standards**

### **Social Studies**

Process and Literacy Skills

- 1-B.5 Describe the overall structure of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text.
- 2-A.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, or clear event sequences.

### **Language Arts**

3-2.D Inferences and Interpretation - Participate in creative responses to text (i.e., art, drama, and oral presentation).

### **Modes and Forms of Writing**

2-1 Communicate through a variety of written modes and for various audiences to inform, persuade, entertain, and reflect.

### **Visual Literacy**

1-Interpret Meaning - The student will interpret and evaluate the various ways visual image-makers, including graphic artists, illustrators, and news photographers, represent meaning and distinguish fact, opinion, and fiction in print and non-print media.

2-2 Compare and contrast print, visual, and electronic media, such as film, with a written story.

3-Compose Visual Messages - The student will create a visual message that effectively communicates an idea, selects, organizes, or produces visuals to complement and extend ideas (e.g., book posters, multimedia projects, books, or advertisements).

### **Visual Arts**

1-1-4 Communicate art terms such as materials, media and technique.

2-1-5 Recognize the development of visual art from an historical and cultural perspective.

3-2 Use observation, memory and imagination in creating original works of art.

4-1-4 Appreciate and utilize visual art to make interdisciplinary connections and informed aesthetic decisions.

### **Lesson Activities**

#### *Part I—Pre-Visit – in the classroom*

To begin the lesson, project a map of Westward Expansion in the United States ([click here](#) or see Credits and References for a link to the map). Discuss, briefly, the chronology and reasons behind Manifest Destiny.

Ask students the following questions:

- ★ What were some of the challenges of frontier life?
- ★ What do you think a woman's day-to-day responsibilities were on the frontier?
- ★ How do you think women's lives on the Western frontier compared to those who remained in the "civilized" East?

Discuss how many of the women living in the West wrote in journals, telling about their daily lives, and how these writings left behind evidence of how frontier experiences shaped our country and state. Read from an example of a pioneer story (See Credits and References for suggestions).

Tell the students about the exhibit they are getting ready to view, "Madonnas of the Prairie." They will see how artists have depicted women of the American West and learn how they often symbolize Manifest Destiny. Discuss elements such as line, balance and color in art. Ask them to look for these things as they view the artwork and to be thinking of ways these elements work together to tell us a unique story.

#### *Part II—Visit the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum*

Tour "Madonnas of the Prairie"

Possible exhibit questions:

- ★ What story do you think the artist is trying to tell us?
- ★ What is the woman doing in the artwork?
- ★ What is the largest thing you see in the picture?
- ★ What colors did the artist use? Do you like these colors?
- ★ Is the woman placed in the foreground or background?
- ★ In what ways do these works of art challenge the typical story of the American West?

*Part III—Post-Visit – in the classroom*

Materials Needed

- ★ Brown card stock
- ★ Drawing paper
- ★ Hole punch
- ★ Twine
- ★ Drawing pencils

Journal Activity

- ★ Take a piece of brown craft paper and three pieces of drawing paper.
- ★ Fold each in half and place the drawing paper inside of the brown craft paper.
- ★ Punch or poke two holes, each one equidistant from the top and bottom of the journal.
- ★ Thread the twine through the holes and tie.
- ★ Compare and contrast the paintings, *Target Practice*, by Tom Lovell and *Untitled* [Madonna of the Windmill], by Remington Schuyler, through writing and illustration with drawing pencils.



**Target Practice**  
Tom Lovell  
1986, Oil



**Untitled [Madonna of the Windmill]**  
Remington Schuyler  
c. 1915, Oil on Canvas

## **Vocabulary Terms**

<i>Background</i>	the most distant part of a scene
<i>Balance</i>	the ways in which the elements (lines, shapes, colors, textures, etc.)
<i>Cool colors</i>	colors that contain more blue tones
<i>Foreground</i>	the nearest part of a scene
<i>Frontier</i>	a distant area where few people live
<i>Line</i>	an identifiable path created by a point moving in space
<i>Manifest Destiny</i>	idea during the 19th century period of American expansion that the United States not only could, but was destined to, stretch from coast to coast.
<i>Warm colors</i>	colors that contain more red tones

## **Credits and References**

Indian Pioneer Collection. Digital Collections. Western History Collections. University of Oklahoma.

Volume 32, Interview with Lillie Gordon Franks

<http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer/papers/12005%20Franks.pdf>

Volume 71, Interview with Mary Alice Crosby Pittenger

<http://digital.libraries.ou.edu/whc/pioneer/papers/4697%20Pittenger.pdf>

Jetcyk, Frances E. Lesson Plan, "Pioneer Women and the American Frontier."

<https://www.chatham.edu/pti/curriculum/units/2005/Jetcyk.pdf>

The Library of Congress. *Women Pioneers in the American Memory*

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/women-pioneers/>

Myres, Sandra L. *Westering Women and the Pioneer Experience, 1800-1915*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982.

<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=vN22pP4-gpAC&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=Women+frontier+diaries&ots=ZukeIxTzJO&sig=KohjNMUtKmfanV9BNsEbJJKZ2y4#v=onepage&q=Women%20frontier%20diaries&f=false>

Westward Expansion Map and Teaching Modules

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united\\_states/territory.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united_states/territory.jpg)

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(Cover Left) Philip R. Goodwin (1881-1935). *The Cowgirl Takes the Lead*. 1910. Oil on canvas, 24 x 36 in. Private Collection.

(Cover Center) William Henry Dethlef Koerner (1873-1938). *He's a Professional Gunfighter. His Job is Shooting People*. 1909. Oil on canvas, 30 x 24 in. Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum. Purchase funded by the Ralph H. and Ruth J. McCullough Foundation in memory of Bill Foran: Mert and Betty Cooper; Bob and Nancy Josserand; George and Jane Arrington; Lois K. Hull; Sterling Adams and Mary Bearden; Robbin and Alice Dawson; Bob and Lanna Hatton; J. B. Lane; and George and Janie Prichard.

(Cover Right) Remington Schuyler (1884-1955). *Untitled* [Madonna of the Windmill]. circa 1915. Oil on canvas, 39 5/8 x 26 5/8 in. Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Bugbee-Reaugh Acquisition Fund purchase.