

Teacher's Guide COBBLESTONE: *Art and the Civil War*

February 2008

Teacher Guide prepared by Lisa Greenberg. Lisa taught in international schools in Japan, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia. Her most recent publications are a coffee table book SAUDI ARABIA, photographed by Mohammed Babelli and written by Lisa, and "Flying Like a Djinn" (Cricket, September 2007)

Introduce the issue by having students examine the cover. What does this reproduction show them about the Civil War? Have they seen other art that deals with war? Just as stories are told from a point of view, often paintings present a point of view. What is the painter's point of view about the Civil War as seen in this painting?

The Weeklies Go to War

CRITICAL READING

1. Why does the author say the weeklies were part newspaper, part magazine? (They included current news, but they also offered other types of literature, such as poetry, fiction, book reviews, and they were illustrated.)
2. Why were weeklies more expensive to reproduce? (They were illustrated, so had to use a new process called electrotyping for printing.)
3. Why did only three illustrated weeklies survive in the 1860's? (The expense of printing them meant that each weekly needed many readers to buy it.)
4. What is the modern equivalent of the "special"? (The idea of an observer living with the troops is what the "embedded journalist" did in the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts; currently photojournalists often follow the same method of living with/following a group closely in order to photograph both work and the recreational images.)
5. What personal characteristics were important for a "special"? (Observation skills, speed of drawing, alertness to details, ability to travel and camp out, ability to engage, understanding of their audience, etc.)

MATH CONNECTION: Homework assignment: have students list the magazines and newspapers that their families get every day/week/month. Have them work in groups of five to sort their lists, make a bar graph to show numbers of daily, weekly, monthly sources of print information coming into their homes. Extension: Make another graph showing the categories of information (e.g., current events, sports, celebrity, fashion, etc.) received within each group of five.

SCIENCE/LANGUAGE CONNECTION: Make a poster illustrating the process of electrotyping.

COMPARE and CONTRAST ESSAY: Have students choose two or more of the noted "specials" and write an essay showing how they were similar in their art and careers and how they were different.

Wanted: Good Maps

READ FOR UNDERSTANDING:

1. What problem did the Union Army face at Bull Run? (They didn't know where to cross the river.)
2. Why did the Union Army particularly need good maps? (They were fighting mostly in the South and didn't know the terrain.)
3. How were the army maps different from other maps? (They showed specific details, such as river fords, road widths, grades and surfaces, hills and mountains, and food sources that would show how the military could move their troops and where the army could position troops most effectively.)
4. Explain why the author thinks that Civil War maps are both practical and beautiful. (They helped the army figure out the best strategy and they were beautifully colored and detailed, often showing small pictures of buildings, farms, etc.)

Photo by Brady

CREATIVE PROJECTS:

1. Write and illustrate a story about the Alexander Gardner photo of President Abraham Lincoln visiting Antietam. You may want to put Mr. Gardner in the story too!
2. Write a diary entry for Gardner or Gibson after they have photographed the Battle of Antietam.
3. Write a letter from a New York City child who sees the exhibit, "The Dead of Antietam", to a friend or relative far away.
4. Write a short essay on Matthew Brady, showing how he was important in the field of photography.

The "What-is-it?" Wagon

Explain why the new rolling darkrooms were so essential to documenting the war.

Larger Than Life: St. Gaudens's Style; Vinnie Ream: Capturing Lincoln; Edmonia Lewis: American Sculptor

Discussion:

1. What innovations did St. Gaudens introduce in sculpture? (St. Gaudens often sculpted his subjects in contemporary costumes and places, rather than classic togas; he often showed his subjects in dramatic settings, as if in the midst of an action; he sculpted realistically, showing the weary African-American 54th regiment marching after their leader Robert Gould Shaw.)
2. What was his purpose in sculpting? (to portray the heroes of the Civil War as deserving of respect and admiration; to commemorate their service to the country)
3. What do you think is most impressive about Vinnie Ream and why? (personal opinion substantiated by text)
4. How do you think Edmonia Lewis's early experiences affected her artistic style and choices?
5. Which of the sculptures on these pages do you like the best and why?

The Power of Paintings

Cooperative learning: Divide the class into five groups. Have each group take one painting, read the information, and discuss what message the artist is presenting to the viewer. Then have groups share their ideas and have class respond.

Mort Kunstler: Painting the Unexpected

Questions for Discussion:

1. Which answer from Mort Kunstler surprised you the most? Why?
2. What kind of research does Mort Kunstler do for his historic paintings? Why do you think he does research? Have you ever done research for a painting or drawing? If so, why?
3. How is Mort Kunstler's choice of what to paint different from that of the "specials" working for the weekly illustrated papers? (The "specials" were sent out by their editors to cover specific events/military groups; Kunstler gets to choose his pictures and usually finds the Southern soldiers more interesting.)
4. What did Kunstler learn as he painted more Civil War paintings? (That the events beyond the battlefield often had more interest for the viewer; that different scenes required different canvases, depending on complexity; that painting often makes your painting better; that historical paintings require research; etc.)
5. Do you think you could become an artist? Why or why not? What interests or skills do you share with Kunstler?
6. Which of Kunstler's paintings do you like the best and why?

In the Thick of It and Mascot Mania

Non-fiction writing topics:

1. Explain how the cyclorama was the "IMAX" of its day. How are they similar and how are they different?
2. Research the life and art of Paul Philippoteaux and write a short bio or artistic appreciation.
3. Compare how Kunstler and Philippoteaux researched their paintings.
4. Tell the story of the cyclorama of the Battle of Gettysburg – how was it painted, how did it come to the Gettysburg Museum, how was it restored, etc.
5. Research the Civil War mascots (<http://oha.alexandriava.gov/fortward/special-sections/mascots/> is a good Internet source, but there are many others) and write an appreciation of what the mascots meant to the soldiers.