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**What is significant about Benjamin West's painting The death of general Wolfe?**

This picture is very dramatic in its depiction of the death of general Wolfe. The lighting, arrangement of the people and their poses contribute to this.

According to Wikipedia, the painting shows Wolfe dying after winning the battle of Quebec. Because it shows him basically giving his life for victory, the suggestion of martyrdom is very clear. It is also significant that this shows people that were not present at the scene, breaking with standards of historical painting.

**What aspect of American life does Benjamin West's painting Treaty of Penn with Indians present? How is this aspect presented?**

The painting shows a group of settlers and natives meeting under a tree. In the background we can see colonial houses and ongoing construction, probably a settlement. The group is split, with the settlers on the left and the natives on the right side of the painting. In the middle men from both groups talk, while onlookers watch from the left and right sides of the painting. The group in the middle and thus their activity is the focus of the painting.

The painting depicts the two groups entering into a peace treaty (Wikipedia). This shows that the two groups could interact with each other in a peaceful manner (even though they were at war before).

The painting depicts this in a balanced manner, both sides are given a similar amount of space and neither is portrayed with an obvious bias (at least to me).

**Compare the two paintings by John Trumbull The death of general Montgomery and The sortie made by the British garrison of Gibraltar. What paradox does the comparison reveal?**

Both paintings are very similar in their composition. The background or sky is very dark and lacks detail. The light in the pictures comes from the left side and is focused on the object of the painting. These details combined make the object of the painting stand out from everything else (Montgomery and the British garrison/the dying soldier).

The paradox here is that, as an American artist, Trumbull painted a heroic American general (as one might expect), but also a victory of the British troops in the Independence War. This is not something that I would have expected because the British were enemies of the Americans. One explanation might be that the focus of the painting is on the Spanish officer and not the British (Wikipedia), thus depicting heroism and maybe martyrdom. This would be consistent with the first painting, which shows a general dying in the fight against British troops.

**Compare the portraits of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart, John Trumbull, Charles Peale. Which is the most popular in the US? Why?**

In all three pictures Washington stands in a similar pose, mostly upright and looking to the left. In Trumbull and Stuart's pictures he also has his right arm stretched out, holding a telescope. In Peale and Trumbull's pictures he is wearing a military uniform because those pictures show him at the sight of a battle, while Stuart paints him dressed formally and in a richly decorated room.

I would say that the portrait by Stuart is the most popular portrait of Washington because it shows the kind of statesman America wanted to see at the time of its creation. Maybe they did not want a general anymore, but a statesman that would lead the new country successfully. Because Stuart's painting shows that, it became the most popular one of the three.

**What is the story behind John Vanderlyn's painting The death of Jane McCrea? How can his painting be interpreted?**

The painting shows two native Americans killing a non-native woman with tomahawks. The woman is kneeling on the ground being held down by the two attackers. Just looking at the painting one would assume that the woman is being killed for no good reason because the picture does not show any and that the natives are unquestionably to blame.

According to Wikipedia though, this might not have been the case. While one version of the story fits the impression this picture gives, another version of the events describes McCrea being killed by bullets fired at the three of them by pursuing American soldiers. There is also uncertainty about why she was with the native warriors in the first place, either because they kidnapped her, or because her fiancé asked them to escort her. This painting only depicts one specific version of these events and sends a pretty clear message by doing so.

### **How can you interpret J. Vanderlyne's painting Landing of Columbus?**

This painting focuses on Columbus and his men, shortly after they arrive on land. He is standing in a very noble pose, with his sword by his side and a flag raised towards the sky. He is also looking towards the sky. The clothes or armor of the men is shiny and clean, making them look noble and imposing. In the background the artist shows natives cowering and fleeing from Columbus and his men.

This painting glorifies the journey and arrival of Columbus and his men. The focus of the painting is completely on them and not the natives or the actual land they discovered. They are depicted as noble in shining armor and standing upright, while the natives (in the background) are naked, cowering and fleeing.

### **What are the story, art style, and reception of John Vanderlyn's painting Ariadne on the Island of Naxos?**

The painting shows a naked Ariadne sleeping under a tree. The whole scene is pretty dark, maybe because it takes place at dusk or dawn. Ariadne is the daughter of King Minos of Crete from Greek mythology. She fell in love with Theseus from Athens and ran with him to the island of Naxos. There, he abandoned her while she slept.

The painting has a classical reference and theme. This conformed to the taste of Napoleonic France and he hoped to make money with this painting. There was an exhibition of female nudes where he was successful in getting attention. While there was an outcry of disapproval, people would pay to see it anyways.

### **What are the differences between the Federal and the Colonial period?**

The colonial period mostly had portraits of rich merchants as there was little else to do and there were no American subjects. Most of the artists were British and all foreign because there was no art schooling in America.

As that began to change, American born artists began to emerge, but they were still trained in Europe. Now they had more American subjects to paint, so they started doing that. The War of Independence created new subjects and a need for art and I'd assume it made some artists want to distance themselves from the old colonial masters. Now we see portraits of politicians and battles that were American in artist and subject. As we said, art needs stimulus - the war was one for sure.

### **Why was the landscape genre popular in the United States around the middle of the 19th century?**

The landscape genre of painting was popular in the US at that time because of multiple factors. Firstly, the landscape of the US was something that set it apart from Europe through its untouched beauty. The potential of this untouched land that settlers saw and its beauty may have made people want to paint it or own paintings of it. Especially for people that would probably never see it for themselves this seems desirable.

Another factor is that people in the eastern US started to reminisce about how the land there used to look before humans started changing it. Thus pictures that showed untouched land and provided contrast to the present were popular.

### **How can you interpret Thomas Cole's allegoric series of paintings by Cole Course of Empire and The Voyage of Life. Which of the two was more understandable to broad American public and why? What is the meaning and the tone of these two series?**

The Course of Empire, a series of 5 paintings, shows the stages that an empire progresses through in Cole's opinion. This series was inspired by ruins of empires Cole saw when traveling Europe in 1829. The five stages are Savage, Pastoral, Consummation of the Empire, Destruction of the Empire, and Desolation. All 5 pictures show the same distinct mountain that allows the viewer to easily see that all pictures show the same place at different times.

The series describes the path an empire might take, starting at Savage. The progress starts at undeveloped, unwelcoming lands and continues to welcoming, peaceful settlements. The next step shows a sprawling empire with Greek or Roman architecture celebrating in abundance. Destruction shows the same city being burned and plundered resulting in Desolation, where nature starts to reclaim the land. These paintings could be seen as Cole's impression of the ruins of Europe that he saw during his travels and possibly a warning to the US not to go down the same path. It represents the life cycle as Cole perceived it.

The Voyage of Life, a series of 4 paintings, Childhood, Youth, Manhood, and Old Age, illustrate 4 stages of life. It starts out with Childhood, where an angel is seen steering a boat with a small child in it down a river. The landscape is green, the sun is rising and the whole scene looks almost like a dream. Progressing to Youth, the boy has now taken over the boat and left the angel at the side of the river, it is now day (maybe late morning) and he is gesturing towards a literal castle in the sky far off in the distance. Manhood shows the man approaching rapids, praying for help while his angel watches from up high. the scene is very gloomy and it's now dusk. Old Age shows the now old man arriving at a calm ocean while the angel is pointing towards the lit-up sky, as if to show him the way. Here we have another description of a life cycle, but this time it's the human life that is being described.

Both series of paintings are metaphors and contain many visual metaphors too. The symbolism of The Voyage of Life is a lot clearer and easier to understand because one human lifetime is something that a lot of people will experience themselves and they can see all stages of it around them. The life cycle of an empire takes hundreds of years and is not something that the average person can really emphasize with. This means that The Voyage of Life was more understandable for the average person because they could easily understand what it was describing and thus it became more popular.

**What is similar to Cole, Church, and Bierstadt in painting nature? And what makes them different in terms what landscape they painted?**

They all depict epic or memorable landscapes using dramatic lighting. Cole sometimes had some kind of moral message in his paintings, for example in his two big series. He showed people and stories to make the paintings more like history paintings, which he saw as superior art. Furthermore, he painted fictional landscapes.

Bierstadt was more focused on the landscape itself and making it as magnificent and large as he could, he placed animals and people in the pictures to give the viewer a sense of their scale. He painted real landscapes and often ones he saw himself.

Church (judging from the pictures on e-course) painted landscapes that had no visible living things in them and in the two pictures we have on e-course the lighting is even more dramatic than other paintings.

**Kensett, Bingham and Gifford used the luminist approach in the paintings uploaded in this section. What is characteristic of this approach?**

Luminism focuses on the effects that light has on a landscape. It was an American painting style from the 1850s to 1870s. Their paintings show calm landscapes and water with soft skies and the interactions of light with them. Their style is relatively realistic and doesn't really show who painted it (to me it seems like it would be hard to recognize specific artists).

**What kind of America emerges in this painting by Bingham?**

In this relatively gloomy painting Bingham shows two fur traders going down the river Missouri in a small canoe. They also have their cat on a leash with them. An old man is sitting at the back steering the boat while a young man, possibly a native tracker, lays on a stack of fur.

In this picture two normal, probably relatively poor people are painted going about their daily lives and nothing about it is magnificent. The focus is also not on the relatively uneventful landscape. This is new because earlier pictures focused on rich people, significant people and their deeds, and scenic landscapes. This picture doesn't have any of that, making it different. I would say that the kind of America emerging in this picture is that of the normal people that didn't do anything heroic or historically significant in order to be painted.

**Comment on an American landscape painting by an American artist from the 19th century**

New England Scenery is a 1851 painting by Frederic E. Church. I chose this painting because of the high level of detail, idyllic, mostly untouched landscape, and the depiction of human influence on this landscape. I would like to elaborate on this in class.

- Frederic Edwin Church
- May 4, 1826 - April 7, 1900
- American landscape painter
- generally painted mountains, waterfalls, sunsets
- realistic detail, dramatic lighting, panoramic views

- rich family allowed him to pursue art
- at 18 became pupil of Thomas Cole
- finest eye in the world according to Cole
- highly successful painter, most famous in his time
- even made a lot of money with his paintings
- Hudson River school, like Thomas Cole
- idealized nature, richness and beauty
- highly detailed
- wanted to capture the wild, unsettled America
- pastoral settings were very prominent
- he made sketches in nature and later developed paintings in his studio
- 1851
- his first true composite landscape
- has mountains, nice lighting, panoramic views
- close resemblance to Cole's Pastoral Stage
  - woman in the foreground
  - mountain in the background
  - lots of sky
  - trees to the right
  - very green
- bridge with woman, dog, and wagon in the foreground
- water mill to the left
- old gnarled trees to the right
- water with a lot of reflection in the center
- hill in the middle back
- middle right back has a small town with a church – Church was religious
- shows old, untouched nature
- but human influence on it is starting to show
- looks like living in harmony
- the build roads, houses, and towns, signalling a new era
- feels idyllic, as far as the lighting and weather goes
- connected to the manifest destiny spirit of the time – the wagon is *the* symbol of that – hope and progress

**What Is The Content Of Mount's Art?/What Kind Of America Emerges In His Art? What Does He Want To Convey To The Viewer? What Does The Popularity Of His Art Tell Us About Americans?**

Mount is generally known for his genre paintings, which mean that he painted scenes from the everyday life of Americans living in rural areas. This includes markets, parties, and street scenes. This means that Mount is showing the America that most people are experiencing, an America that people can empathize with because they have experienced similar things. The fact that his art was popular means that Americans wanted to see themselves or people like themselves represented in art. If artists only paint rich, important people in glamorous settings this cannot happen. But when people see a market with normal people going about their daily business they could imagine themselves doing these same things.

**Horatio Greenough's sculpture of George Washington. What was the attitude and the fate of this piece of art?**

This sculpture was commissioned by the US government to be shown in the rotunda of the Capitol in Washington DC. The marble statue should show the father of the country in the appropriate manner. Greenough, in his classical style, took inspiration from the famous ancient Greek Zeus statue and used a bust of Washington's head as a model for his sculpture's head.

The finished marble statue showed Washington in a neoclassical style, wearing ancient Greek clothing, holding a Greek sword, and basically having Zeus's torso, which was bare. This was not the Washington people expected and most of them had absolutely no connection to the Greek elements in the picture. Some also thought that Washington didn't need anyone to represent himself. The statue, even though the craftsmanship was superb, was ridiculed and ultimately removed from the rotunda and placed outside where the weather got to it.

**Why was *Washington Crossing the Delaware* so popular? What are the inaccuracies in it that the critics point out? Are they really important?**

This painting showed an undeniable American hero, George Washington, committing a heroic deed. The military tactic was successful and the enemy forces were routed. Washington, as the father of the nation and accomplished general, was portrayed here as a brave general leading his troops into battle and outsmarting the enemy. I can imagine this portrayal of the national hero being well received because it makes him look heroic.

Some of the inaccuracies include a cross section of the American population being represented on the boats, the usage of an American flag that did not exist at the time of the crossing, and that his stance is possibly not the best one to have in that kind of row boat.

These inaccuracies are not that important in my opinion. The painting does show a historic event and thus it would be ideal if it also accurately represented the whole scene and wouldn't take liberties with the details. Nonetheless, I think that Leutze was not aiming for complete historical accuracy with this painting. I think he wanted to represent the idea of heroism and pride that were associated with this event and that is certainly the case.

Furthermore, considering that this painting was created 76 years after the actual event, that the painter was not present, and that he painted this in Germany and not in the US I could also imagine that these were accidents that Leutze did not intend. Especially the flag being changed is very understandable because the historically accurate Grand Union Flag still had the Union Jack on it, which would not have been popular at all.

**Read the stories *The Outcast of the Poker Flat* by Bret Harte and *Love of Life* by Jack London. Which of these two stories can be described as an example of romanticism and which of realism/naturalism?**

*Love of Life* by Jack London can be called an example of romanticism because it focuses on individualism, emotion, and nature. This is a contrast to the focus on the realistic speech and life in the American West in *The Outcasts of Poker Flat*. I don't think these text fit perfectly into these categories because people like the protagonist in *Love of Life* would probably call starvation and misfortune part of the life of gold seekers, while being expelled from a town under the threat of death might not have been extremely common for most people.

All in all, *The Outcasts of Poker flat* does fit the label of realism because it tell the tale of a gambler, a drunk (and suspected thief), and two possible prostitutes that are expelled from their town after some money went missing and a couple people got hanged. The use of slang in this story and the fact that the outcasts meet two young people running away to get married after the brides father does not give them his blessing makes if feel realistic.

In *Love of Life*, the gold seeker is stranded in the wilderness after he sprains his ankle and his companion Bill deserts him. Through sheer force of will he survives and soldiers on. The only thing that keeps him going is life itself, he is no longer in control of his body. The difficulty of his journey forces him to let go of the gold that he found because it is too heavy and at the end he can only crawl towards a ship he spies on the horizon, trailed by a wolf as close to death as he is. In the end he cannot think anymore and relies on his instincts to survive, killing the wolf with his teeth and crawling towards the ship whose crew find him and nurse him back to health. These elements of the story fit the individualism, emotion, and focus on nature that romanticism had.

**Consider Mary Cassatt's art and life history and answer the following question: Why does Mary Cassatt occupy a special place in the American art of the 19th century?**

Born in Pennsylvania, Mary Cassatt traveled to Europe early in life and started studying art at 15. Because of the patronizing attitude of male students and teachers, she decided to study art on her own. She moved to Paris, where she privately studied with many well known artists. Even her own father was not convinced she should paint to make a living.

I think what makes her special is that she, as a woman in that time, went ahead and followed her passion and became recognized as a great artists despite the odds. She also painted women and their children frequently, emphasizing them and the bonds between them.

**James Whistler, an American artist, lived in Europe at a time when Europe was ready for major changes in art. Why is his art often referred to as "art for art's sake"?**

Whistler was one of the leading proponents of the motto "art for art's sake". In many of his paintings he did not attempt to convey a moral message or to accurately depict reality as it was. Rather, he experimented with

colors and application of paint and to me seemed to have fun painting pictures like Nocturne in black and gold:the falling rocket. To me he does not seem concerned with accurate depictions but with exploring art free from those arbitrary concerns.

**James Whistler's painting Nocturne in black and gold became known in the history of art primarily because of the scandal it caused. Explain briefly what happened.**

This painting was condemned by the famous art critic John Ruskin after he saw it being exhibited. Because of his fame and reputation, this condemnation caused Whistler to lose customers and commissions. In 1877 Whistler sued him for libel and hoped to recover a decent amount of money by doing so. One major point of contention was the asking price of 200 guineas for what Ruskin called "flinging a pot of paint into the public's face". Whistler said that not the painting itself warranted that asking price, but the lifetime of knowledge needed to paint it. He ultimately won the trial, but was only awarded a minute amount of money, having to pay half of the court costs too. The trial is still important for art because it highlights that art lies in the eye of the beholder and an artists career should not be destroyed because of his choice of painting style.

**What is the Series of flags by American artist Childe Hassam devoted to?**

The flag series by Childe Hassam is a series of about 30 paintings starting in 1916. The inspiration came from a "Preparedness Parade" in New York (the movement advocated for American preparedness to join WWI in Europe) of which Hassam was in favor of. He wanted his flag set to sell as a war memorial set whose profits could contribute to the war effort, but he only sold individual pictures, The picture make obviously patriotic statements because they show flags, but they rarely show soldiers or other patriotic symbols.

**What features of Impressionism are evident in Hassam's paintings The Union Square in Spring and in The Avenue in the Rain**

Both pictures show the characteristic visible brush strokes of Impressionism that do not form strict lines. Furthermore they show specific lighting conditions, Union Square appearing to be in sunlight and The Avenue having a very gray-blue hue to it, like one might expect on a rainy day. Additionally, the American flags reflect in the water on the street. The paintings also show pretty ordinary subjects, Union Square is just a public place populated by normal people and The Avenue shows American flags and some pedestrians with umbrellas waling beneath them.

**Compare Eakins's Dr. Gross clinic and Hassam' Avenue in the rain. What is similar and what is different in the artistic approach?**

The biggest difference between the two paintings is the style, especially concerning the brush strokes. Avenue in the Rain is impressionistic and the brush strokes are very obvious and basically a feature of the painting. It also shows people, but only as silhouettes carrying umbrellas in the rain. The only other recognizable elements in the picture are the myriad of American flags, some tall buildings and a lamp post. The only thing in the picture that can be identified is the American flag, all other elements are heavily stylized.

Eakins on the other hand takes a very realistic approach to painting. Brush strokes are less obvious and especially the people in the foreground are recognizable and have specific features. The students shown in the background have less detail, but are still detailed enough to be recognized as specific people.

Regardless, both paintings only really focus on what the artists wants to show (American flag and operating doctors) and the other elements are painted with less detail. They also both put emphasis on light, in Eakins's painting light very clearly illuminates the doctors, while the watching students sit in darkness and Hassam puts great emphasis on the reflections of light on the wet street.

**Why are the works of Kenyon Cox referred to as Renaissance? Find another painting by Kenyon Cox in this style in the Internet and post here with your brief comment.**

Book of Pictures by Kenyon Cox is a painting from 1910-1917 is a painting inspired by Raphael. The painting also has a very realistic style that fits the Renaissance style. It shows a mother teaching her child through the use of a book filled with pictures is similar to how many Americans learned about European art at that time. Cox was in favor of this kind of learning and depicted it here.

**What attitude towards women do Thayer's and Dewing's paintings reveal?**

Dewing painted aristocratic women in Renaissance gowns that are situated in dreamlike settings. Thayer painted women as embodiments of virtue with angel's wings and in tunics. Both suggest that women are seen as noble, pure and virtuous. They are portrayed like higher beings. What set them apart is that Thayer seemed to idealize women more than Dewing did. This can be seen in the wings and just the fact that women are painted as angels.

**What is common to the art of Dewing and James Whistler?**

Both James Whistler and Dewing painted idealized women in a way that showed what they considered to be their beauty and femininity.

**find a painting by American impressionist artist in the Internet and briefly comment on it—what does it show and how? post it in the forum.**

**How can you characterize the relationship between American and European art in the period that we covered in our course?**

The relationship between Europe and the US in the periods we covered was very one-sided. Since colonial times, painters who wanted to learn their craft travelled to Europe to study there. In Europe one could learn from the old masters and be exposed to new trends in art. Even though the areas of Europe artists went to changed over time, they kept coming. Thus, a lot of American art was influenced and shaped by European art. One undeniable trend is that American artists started to become more independent from Europe over time. For example landscape painters took pride in the fact that they could paint landscapes that simply did not exist in Europe. A different aspect is the fact that the US started to develop its own institutions where you artists could study. Furthermore, many American artists who went to Europe for at least some time encouraged other Americans to follow them.