



Early American Portraits: A Strategy for Learning about Artists and Their Works

Guide for Curriculum Unit 89.05.03
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As an Art teacher I seek new and interesting ways of bringing more Art History into my lessons so that I may increase my students' knowledge of Art, and give more meaning to their own artwork. This unit was designed with the following four components in mind; Art History—the study of artists and their works, Art Criticism—learning to compare and contrast artworks and give opinions, Aesthetics—learning to give emotional as well as intellectual reasons for why we like or dislike certain artworks, and Art Production—the actual hands-on making of artwork. This unit intends to involve the “whole” students in their learning, introducing them to lessons which will expand emotional, intellectual, and creative abilities.

The unit is written for the third through fifth grade student, and will introduce them to early American portrait painting. The students will first learn about the earliest known portrait painters in America, the limners, followed by a study of the life and work of John Singleton Copley, one of our nation's first and possibly finest portraitists. Also included is a study of the western artist George Catlin, for I not only admire his outstanding skill, I also respect his humanitarian motivation for depicting the American Indian.

(Recommended for American History and Art classes, grades 3-5)

Key Words

Art American Painting Portraits Catlin George Copley John Singleton Artist History

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