

Portrait II

Overview: Students will identify the essential elements of a place, of landforms, ecosystems and/or of continents.

Goals: This lesson will

Support concepts & skills: use geographic terms correctly; recognize significant landforms and ecosystems; recognize continents, recognize landforms, continents and ecosystems on a map; identify essential elements.

Fulfill Learning Standards: ELA 9,13, 19; Visual Art 2, 3, 5; History and Social Sciences 6.1 and 2 for all regions.

Practice: identifying essential elements in several domains.

Familiarize students with: landscape paintings, use of elements and principles of design to create an effect, geographic concepts and terms.



Platte River, Colorado
William Chapman

Objectives for Students: Students will

Be able to: identify the essential elements of a place, and create a portrait of it in some medium

Understand: that the essential elements of a place or type of place is what makes it recognizable and unique.

Key Questions (to be answered by students):

1. What is it that makes this thing / or place unique?
2. In what ways do artists reveal information or create an impression about a place in a painting?
3. What details can I include in a “portrait” description that will communicate the essential elements of a place?

Materials Needed: Favorite Place worksheet; Portrait of a Place worksheet

Museum Objects: A variety of landscapes, including the following:

- *Platte River, Colorado* by William Chapman, oil on canvas, c. 1894, Gift of Anthony Battelle (1982.9)

Pre-Museum Visit – The goal of the My Favorite Place activity is to focus the students on identifying the essential elements that make up a place. Ask students to think of a favorite place, a place where they feel comfortable, that they are familiar with, and that they like being in. It could be indoors or outdoors. The Favorite Place Worksheet will help them fill in the details and essential elements of their place. “Share your favorite place with a partner.”

Reflection: “What kinds of things make a place unique? How do we distinguish one place from another?” (The look of it, the physical characteristics, but also our relationship to it.)

Ask for a definition of “portrait,” and pull out the idea that a portrait is not just a picture of a person, but a picture of a specific person; a portrait shows the important characteristics of a person. “If you were going to make a “portrait” of your favorite place what characteristics would you want to show? You cannot show everything, so you must decide what you want to tell people about your place through your portrait.”

Option: work with the Art teacher to actually create portraits of their places. The portraits should include not just a physical depiction of the place, but the affect of the place on the student, and their attitude toward it or feelings about it.

At the Museum – Ask the students to work with a partner and choose a painting to focus on. Choose from paintings by Norcross (*My Studio*), Burchfield, Chapman, Kent, Dufy, Hassam, Webster, or Stella in the Landscape or Modern galleries. You may want to do one as a whole group to get their thinking going. Use the Portrait of a Place worksheet.

Ask a Museum staff person to meet with your class to talk about the landscapes and how the artist created a mood or impression of the particular place. The Webster and the Stella paintings are particularly interesting because what they convey about the place is not as straightforward as in the more traditional landscape paintings. These contemporary artists use color and composition to create a more subjective portrait.

Post-Museum Visit – Continue the idea of a place being identified by its essential elements. If you are working on landforms, continents, or ecosystems, you can let the students (in partners or in small groups) pick one example to work with and use the resources provided to identify the essential elements of their landform (or continent, ecosystem), and then create a portrait of it (in whatever medium they wish) that they will present to the class.

Landforms: delta, mountain, hill, plain, plateau, river, lake, pond, island, isthmus, peninsula, ocean.

Ecosystem: tropics, rain forest, plains, tundra, desert, glacier, woodlands.

Supportive Material: Favorite Place worksheet; Portrait of a Place worksheet

Documentation and Assessment Options: Pre- and post-test: What is a portrait?

As they progress through the successive activities they will get better at identifying the essential elements. Keep records of the number and quality of their elements they identify in their favorite place, in the landscape painting, and in their landform, and analyze their progress.

Other Works of Art in the Museum that can connect to this lesson:

Paintings of Egyptian reliefs by Joseph Lindon Smith: “What clues can you find in the paintings about what is unique to this place?”

Links to Other Curriculum:

ELA: Read and discuss poems about places. How do you think the poet feels about this place? What is your evidence in the piece? How did the author’s choices (about words, line length, imagery, sound of the words, etc.) affect your impression of the place? Write a poem about your favorite place. Interview others about their favorite place. Notice place descriptions in literature and drama.

Visual Art: Create a portrait of their favorite place. Focus on the choices about color, line, texture, composition, etc. as a way of communicating the important characteristics of their place,

and their feeling about it. Look at paintings and photographs of places, and analyze which essential characteristics of that place the artist wanted you to notice.

Music: Listen to music that describes a place (such as “Appalachian Spring” by Aaron Copeland) and discuss how the music creates a portrait of the place. Listen to songs that have a strong location, and notice what details the writer chose to include to tell you about that place.

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Favorite Place Worksheet

Think of a favorite place of yours, a place that you are familiar with and that you like being in. It could be indoors or outdoors. Write about your place using the guide below.

My Favorite Place is _____

1. The look of it; what I see when I am there, the colors and textures that I see.
2. The sounds; what I hear when I am there.
3. The feeling or mood of the place, the feelings that I often have when I am there.
4. What it smells like there.
5. The physical feel of it; the textures, things you can touch.
6. What is the most important thing to say about this place?
7. Why is this your favorite place?
8. What makes it unique? (Not just a pretty lake, but THIS lake.)

Portrait of a Place Worksheet

Landscape or Modern Gallery

Choose a painting to look at. Discuss with your partner the answers to the following questions, and write the answers that the two of you can agree on. If you cannot agree, write both answers.

1. What details about the place did the artist decide to include?
2. Why do you think the artist picked these?
3. What do you think is unique about this place?
4. What do you think the artist is saying about this place? What is your evidence?
5. How do you think the artist felt about this place? What is your evidence?
6. How did the artist use the elements and principles of art to speak about this place? (color, line, texture, shapes, composition, repetition, contrast, etc.)