

## **Thomas Cole**

Born: 1801, Bolton-le-Moor, Lancashire, England

Died: 1848, Catskill, New York, United States of America

Gender: Male

### **Biography:**

Thomas Cole was famous during his lifetime for his unparalleled portrayals of American wilderness, which were extraordinary feats of poetic and allegorical invention. Cole has been designated as the founding figure of the Hudson River school, whose practitioners created a uniquely American landscape style by combining a nationalist pictorial rhetoric with the conventions of English aesthetic theory on the sublime and the picturesque.

Trained as an engraver in England, Cole received sporadic artistic training in America that culminated with drawing classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. By 1825 he was living in New York, and the rugged vistas of the Hudson River Valley inspired him to focus on the natural splendor of the United States as a subject. He in turn inspired a subsequent generation of American painters to do the same. Influenced by European artists who faced similar struggles in their efforts to elevate landscape painting in the eyes of the public, critics, and academics, Cole instilled his depictions of nature with grand themes—spirituality, the frailty of human beings, and the greatness or the inevitable end of civilization. His theoretical approach contributed to the transformation of landscape painting from documentary and picturesque views to sublime views that were also discourses on the human experience set against the enduring forces of nature. At the time of his death, Cole was beloved by his fellow American artists, who celebrated his genius in fusing nature and symbolism in landscape art.