

## Lesson Plan

**Title of Lesson:** Art and Propaganda

**Topic or Theme of Unit that Lesson is Part of:**

The American Revolution and/or Westward Expansion  
(May be included in either and both parts of US history.)

**Subject Areas:** Social Studies/Language Arts

**Schedule:** 8 class periods

### Lesson Summary:

Through this unit, students will analyze a legendary event from American history. Students will compare the narrative text with the representation in a famous work of art about the event. Students will also examine how this Revolutionary War image was used in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to promote national unity and Manifest Destiny. Ideally, this artwork will be studied during a unit on the American Revolution, and revisited when covering 19<sup>th</sup> -century Westward Expansion.

### American Artwork on Which Lesson is Based:



Emanuel Leutze (1816-1868)  
*Washington Crossing the Delaware*  
(1851)  
Oil on canvas, 149 x 255 in.  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art,  
Gift of John S. Kennedy, 1897  
(97.34)

## Secondary Artwork for Lesson



Emanuel Leutze (1816-1868)  
*Westward the Course of Empire  
Takes Its Way* (mural study)  
Oil on canvas, 33 1/4 x 43 3/8 in.  
Smithsonian American Art Museum  
SAAM.1931.6.1

### Big or Main Ideas Students Will Understand:

- The event depicted by *Washington Crossing the Delaware* had great symbolic importance in American history.
- Artists may use historical events to comment on current issues.
- We retell the past to help us understand the present.
- Inaccuracies in works of art may be done intentionally to communicate a message.
- In mid-19<sup>th</sup> century America, western expansion was seen as vital to solving social, economic, and political problems.
- Applying an historical context to a work of art results in a fuller understanding of the artist's intentions and the meanings of a work of art.

**National Standards:**National Center for History in Schools

Historical Comprehension Standard 2A: Differentiate between historical facts and interpretations.

Historical Analysis and Interpretation Standard 3B: Consider multiple perspectives

**Illinois Learning Standards:**

## Social Science

14 F Analyze historical influences on the development of political ideas and practices.

14 F Describe how United States political ideas and traditions were instituted in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

16 A Make inferences about historical events and eras using historical sources.

16 A Identify the differences between historical fact and interpretation.

16 B Describe how historians use models for organizing historical interpretation (e.g., biographies, political events, issues and conflicts).

Language Arts

I.C Use information to form, explain and support questions and predictions.

**Chicago Reading Initiative Correlation:**

  X   word knowledge     X   comprehension     X   writing     X   fluency

**Student Objectives: Students will...**

- Compare and contrast an historic event depicted in an American work of art with facts as presented in narrative accounts
- Interpret the artist's intentions in his depiction of the crossing of the Delaware in this painting
- Evaluate the causes and effects of 19<sup>th</sup> century westward expansion in the U.S.
- Appreciate the significance of a celebrated American masterpiece.

**Vocabulary Students Will Learn:**

History: anachronism, *E Pluribus Unum*, historical context, history painting, ideal, "Manifest Destiny", mercenaries, monarch(y), values, western expansion

Art Interpretation: cliché, historical context, inaccuracy, metaphor, scale, symbolism

**Assessments:**

Students produce and explain their own artwork that communicates an idea.

Students write to explain what they have learned.

## Information about the Artwork that is Important to Students' Understanding:

### Relevant Information about the Time Period

*(Note: The following information is important for social studies learning outcomes; for a language arts lesson, teachers should select information that will enable students to comprehend the context of the painting.)*

Information that will help students understand the theme and main ideas of your lesson.

- In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the American Revolution was a touchstone of political ideals for both Americans and Germans.
- Manifest Destiny: In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, longstanding Euro-American convictions of their Christian duty and God-given right to expand their territory and influence were codified in the doctrine of "Manifest Destiny," the belief that by conquering the west, European-Americans would bring to culmination the progress of civilization. The California Gold Rush (1848) hastened the drive to reach the Pacific Coast. Victory over Mexico in the 1846–1848 war seemed to further confirm American right of conquest.
- The Civil War: Growing sectionalism, which would lead to the outbreak of civil war a decade after Leutze completed the painting, was a source of great concern by the late 1840s. When the Civil War began, the painting was used to raise money for the union cause.
- The losers of the Battle of Trenton, Hessian mercenaries, symbolized the contemporary German city-state monarchs' abuses of military power, while Washington's motley crew was intended to remind Germans that the 13 separate colonies had successfully united to form a single nation.

Source: *Washington's Crossing* by David Hackett Fischer, New York Times 2004

### Relevant Information about the Artist

Information that will help students understand the theme and main ideas of your lesson.

- Emanuel Leutze (1816–1868)
- Of German heritage, but grew up in the U.S. He received artistic training and started his career as an artist in Germany, before settling in U.S.
- He believed in the liberal democratic principles and progress toward democracy from the Middle Ages to the present. He was a supporter of contemporary liberal movements in Europe, and wanted his fellow Europeans to be inspired by the success of the American Revolution as the concerted effort of different states.
- Leutze was a strong abolitionist.

Source: *The Life and Works of Emanuel Leutze*, Raymond L. Stehle

## Relevant Information about the Artwork

Information that will help students understand the theme and main ideas of your lesson.

In his image, Leutze deliberately manipulated historical fact in order to emphasize the larger values that Americans have read into the history of the nation's founding, such as heroism, sacrifice, and unity.

- Painting this work in Germany, Leutze used the Rhine River as a model for the Delaware River, and recruited American tourists and students to serve as models and assistants.
- The 13 varied men in Washington's boat signify the unity of the 13 colonies in a fight against a common enemy.
- Contrary to historical fact, Leutze shows the movement of the Washington's boat from East to West—as a map is normally positioned and read (notice the North Star), thus suggesting the inevitability of Euro-American westward expansion.
- One passenger is a New England seaman of African descent. This passenger is said to be named Prince Whipple. There is no documentation that puts him at the crossing, much less in General Washington's boat. The inclusion of this figure reflects Leutze's Abolitionist sympathies.
- There is an androgynous figure in a loose red shirt pulling an oar, possibly acknowledging the role of women (albeit hidden) in the struggle for independence.
- Other passengers are recognizable as western riflemen, farmers, a member of a Delaware regiment, a prosperous Baltimore merchant—representing different regions.
- Washington holds a brass telescope and wears a heavy saber, symbolic of a strong statesman, and—like a great leader—rises above everything but the flag. Although Washington was only 44 at this time, Leutze depicts him as in Gilbert Stuart's famous portrait of the much older ex-president.
- There are many other inaccuracies and anachronisms: the Betsy Ross flag wouldn't be adopted for another year after the crossing of the Delaware; cannons were last to be transported, and probably by ferry, not in these smaller (Durham) boats; the time of day is wrong: the crossing was done at night; it is doubtful that such large chunks of ice would accumulate in a flowing river; there was rain, sleet, or snow coming down at the time of the crossing; Washington likely wouldn't have stood up in the boat through such a treacherous crossing; Lt. James Monroe, future president, stands next to Washington and holds the flag, but there is no proof that he was in this boat.
- The painting is a monumental 12' x 20', intended by Leutze to be purchased by the government and publicly displayed. The figures are life-sized.

Sources: *Framing America* by Frances Pohl, Thames and Hudson, 2008

Washington Crossing, <http://www.ushistory.org/washingtoncrossing/history/whatswrong.htm>

**Resources:**

**High-quality art reproductions**

Reproduction of painting “Washington Crossing The Delaware”  
Source: “Picturing America” series distributed to Chicago Public Schools

**Field trips to See Original Works of American Art**

self-guided class trip

docent-led class trip

Location: Art Institute

Date: To be determined.

**Texts, Web sites, and Primary or Secondary Sources for Student Use**

**Texts, Web sites, and Primary or Secondary Sources**

For students(√)	For teachers (√)	Title/name and URL
	X	Washington Crossing <a href="http://www.ushistory.org/washingtoncrossing/history/whatswrong.htm">http://www.ushistory.org/washingtoncrossing/history/whatswrong.htm</a>
X	X	Washington’s Crossing: The Painting <a href="http://blog.oup.com/2006/02/washingtons_cro/">http://blog.oup.com/2006/02/washingtons_cro/</a>
X		<u>The History of US</u> by Joy Hakim v. Colonial America
X		Detailed map of Trenton, NJ <a href="http://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&amp;tab=wl">http://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&amp;tab=wl</a>
X		Image of the painting hanging in the gallery (to appreciate the scale of the painting) <a href="http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3233/2983400749_44276b6f63.jpg">http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3233/2983400749_44276b6f63.jpg</a>
X		Timeline of Revolutionary War key events (teacher prepared and/or in textbook)

**Other Materials/Supplies Needed for the Lesson**

No specific materials.

**Student Activities:**

Day	Emphasis and Objectives of the Day's Lesson	Activities				
1	Compare and contrast an historic event depicted in art with facts as presented in narrative accounts	<p>Review text section on the Battle of Trenton. Present the painting as a classic image in American art. Students begin "close read" of the painting and share wonderment and questions about the event. Compare and contrast the image with facts from the text. Students list inferences about the event depicted in the painting. Students share lists, then record new observations reported by their classmates. Students work in small groups to generate questions sorted into three categories: "About the artwork," "About the Artist," and "Context of the Painting." Explain that in the next session the class will learn more background information.</p>				
2	Interpret the artist's intentions in his depiction of the crossing of the Delaware in this painting	<p>Students share their wonderments or questions from previous session. Discuss why this painting was created, under what circumstances, and who was the artist. Provide students working in groups sentence strips with information listed above. Their task is to organize the facts into three categories: "About the artwork," "About the Artist," and "Context of the Painting."  <i>NOTE: Omit the information regarding the inaccuracies for a special session later.</i></p>				
3	Interpret the artist's intentions in his depiction of the crossing of the Delaware in this painting	<p>Demonstrate how some students categorized the information from previous session. Ask "What was surprising?" Next, ask "What would you say if I told you that this painting has many errors?" This lesson will identify the painting's inaccuracies and what were the artist's motivations in creating this artwork. Identify and discuss some of the more obvious examples such as, "It would be near impossible to be standing up on such a journey." Elicit "Why would the artist portray this inaccurately?" (It enhances Washington's heroism and leadership.) Define "anachronism" and guide students to identify examples. Organize student responses in a chart</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="711 1711 1404 1833"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="711 1711 987 1745">Inaccuracy</th> <th data-bbox="987 1711 1404 1745">The Artist's Reason</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="711 1745 987 1833"> </td> <td data-bbox="987 1745 1404 1833"> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Inaccuracy	The Artist's Reason		
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Day	Emphasis and Objectives of the Day's Lesson	Activities
4-6	<p>Evaluate the causes and effects of 19<sup>th</sup> century westward expansion in the U.S.</p> <p><i>Note: If the lesson is included in the curriculum to support understanding of the American Revolution, then these activities can be included during a subsequent unit on Manifest Destiny.</i></p>	<p>Summarize the inaccuracies from session 3.  Ask: "Was the artist just careless or was there a specific point to the inconsistencies?"  Review a few responses from previous session.  Explain that in today's session we're going to examine why the boats are moving westward.  Students will use maps and the text book to examine "Manifest Destiny." They will compare a map of the United States at time of the Revolution with a map during Leutze's era and summarize how the country expanded westward.  Students read to identify and analyze the pros and the cons of Manifest Destiny.  Students conduct a mock debate on Manifest Destiny, representing different points of view, including that of a Native American, a fur trader, an industrialist, a missionary, others involved and affected.  Students write a mock newspaper editorial expressing their views.</p>
7-8	<p>Appreciate the significance of a celebrated American masterpiece.</p>	<p>Students examine the central metaphor in this painting: Unity as represented by the Continental Army soldiers in Washington's boat. Remind students how each passenger symbolizes a colony. Discuss how the boat symbolizes "Unity over Diversity."  Students expand on the central themes in the painting—they create their own way of depicting a selected theme via visual art. It might be a drawing or a three dimensional work.  Possible topics include: "family, the environment, unity, diversity." The student/artist will include a written explanation of how the artwork symbolically illustrates this important idea.  Students discuss their own artwork and appreciate the ways in which they have communicated a theme.  Summarize with examples the effectiveness with which Leutze communicated through his artwork.</p>

**Assessment:**

Student explanation of how their artwork symbolically illustrates an idea.

Student summary of what they learned through the lesson.