



MARSDEN HARTLEY AND THE GREAT WAR

Learning History through Art

Recommended Grade Levels: 9-12

Course/Content Area: History, Art

Authored by: Annie Lewis-Jones for the National WWI Museum and Memorial

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How are art and history related?
- What were the major causes of WWI?
- How did the culture of pre-war Europe influence painter Marsden Hartley's work?
- How do you best analyze art for cultural and historical meaning?

SUMMARY: Students will learn about the origins of the Great War and how to analyze the transformation of history into artwork.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT: Common Core Standards:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7: "Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos or maps) with other information in print and digital texts."
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7: "Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words."
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6: "Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text."

Core Arts Standards:

6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

National Social Studies Standards from National Council for the Social Studies:

World History Content Standards for Grades 5-12

World History Era 8: A Half-Century of Crisis and Achievement, 1900-1945

Standard 5: Major global trends from 1900 to the end of World War II

Standard 5A:

The student understands major global trends from 1900 to the end of World War II.

Therefore, the student is able to explain how new technologies and scientific breakthroughs both benefited and imperiled humankind.

TIME NEEDED: One 50-minute class period

OBJECTIVES: *Students will:*

- Identify at least three underlying causes of World War One.
- Explain the feelings present in Berlin during war preparations that influenced Hartley's color and shape choices in "Himmel."
- Analyze two symbols relating to World War One that Hartley used in his painting, "Himmel."
- Create a drawing with at least one symbolic theme of a main cause of World War One.

INTERDISCIPLINARY: Art, Social Studies

THEMES & CONNECTIONS:

- Origins of WWI
- Representing history through art

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- PowerPoint for instruction
- Student worksheets – "Pictures Speak 1000 Words" – Appendix A
- 8 x 10 sheets of white cardstock paper
- An assortment of markers, crayons, and colored pencils.

LESSON

DIRECTIONS:

Introduction (5 minutes):

- Using this lesson's companion PowerPoint, open the lesson by displaying Slide 2, featuring *Himmel* by Marsden Hartley.
- Ask: *Knowing nothing about what we're going to study today, what do you see in this copy of this famous painting? What are things you notice?*
- As students develop ideas in response to this question, the teacher should write their ideas of themes, symbols, and other concepts on the whiteboard. This will provide an easy comparison reference for the teacher when the poster is presented again later in the lesson.
Answers to this question could vary depending on the students' background or knowledge of artistic expression. Hopefully, students will have noticed vibrant colors, the statue, the writing, or other elements of Hartley's painting.
- The teacher should transition to the development of the lesson by explaining that art has been a dominant aspect of history through the ages. Art is an influence to history as well as an expression of cultural or historical events. Inform the students that the topics covered today will be a brief overview of some of the origins of World War I and how to analyze art in relation to history.

Instruction (35 minutes):

This lesson will be taught primarily in lecture (brief overview of the causes of WWI) and discussion format (learning about history through art with emphasis on Marsden Hartley's painting, *Himmel*, from the World War I era) and distribution of a project will follow at the end of the day's lesson.

1. Map Review – PowerPoint Slide 3
At this time, the instructor should show the map of Europe circa 1914. Ask the students the following question:
Looking at this map, how many of the five great powers of Europe in 1914 can you name?
Answer: Great Britain, Russia, France, German, Austria-Hungary.
2. Brief Lecture – Origins of WWI – PowerPoint Slides 4 - 6
The rest of this short lecture on the origins of World War I should follow the foundations of the outline found in Appendix A. Students should take notes to assist with their upcoming project.
3. Dissecting Art – Slide 7
 - Ask students: *Now, after having a brief background of the underlying causes of World War I, are there any images that pop out to you from this painting? Are there any images that could symbolize something from World War I or another historical event?*
 - Read the following description of Marsden's painting to the class:
Painter Marsden Hartley witnessed elaborate preparations for the First World War while he was living temporarily in Berlin, Germany. Hartley was enthralled by the pageantry of wartime Berlin; its parades, its signs, and insignia. He incorporated many references to these sights in this painting, one of several he completed in response to the war. For example, the figure on horseback in the lower right looks like the monumental public

sculpture of Frederick the Great that stands in the center of Berlin. German troops passed the sculpture as they paraded through the city on their way to the front. But it also looks like one of the toy Prussian soldiers that Hartley collected. The combination of war and childhood images also appears on the left-hand side of the canvas. Hartley wrote the words “Himmel” and “Holle” in childlike penmanship. These are the German words for Heaven and Hell, but they also comprise the name of a popular German children’s game, like Hopscotch. – Randall Griffey, Associate Curator of American Art, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO.

- Review with students:
What famous leader does the statue depict? Why do you think Hartley’s painting represents celebratory and patriotic emotions rather than showing worry and distress?
Answers: Frederick the Great; These emotions are expressed because he was in Berlin, Germany at the time. Berlin saw the war as being a noble cause and therefore celebrated it in elaborate fashion.

4. Analyzing Artworks – Slide 8
Depending upon time, you can share analysis questions for just historical paintings, or for a variety of artworks. See Appendix B for additional painting types and questions.

ASSESSMENT:

Closing Activity (10 minutes):

Students will create their own drawing using symbols portraying one or more of the underlying causes of WWI.

1. Distribute Pictures Speak 1000 Words worksheet (Appendix C) to class. Have the students fill out the due date of the teacher’s choice in the blank on the handout.
2. Distribute cardstock to students and give students access to markers, crayons, and colored pencils.
3. Take time to let them read and accept any questions as necessary. With the remaining time, allow the students to brainstorm ideas and start completing the questions. Projects will be completed as homework.

MODIFICATIONS/ACCOMMODATIONS:

- Teacher’s lecture notes (Appendix A) can be copied and provided to students needing assistance with note-taking. Alternatively, students may also benefit from the use of a graphic organizer for note taking. (Appendix D)
- For students with dexterity issues, assign the analysis of a different WWI era painting rather than the creation of a new drawing. Students will answer worksheet questions based on the painting. Consider Andre Masson’s *The Little Tragedy*, which can be viewed along with museum label notes on the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art’s website: <http://art.nelson-atkins.org/objects/1035/the-little-tragedy?ctx=d7fcb0e0-ba99-495c-80fa-73f81eb15b1a&idx=0>

Appendix A: Teacher's Lecture Notes – Origins of WWI

Empires

- The five great powers at the turn of the 20th century – *prompt students to answer again for review*. Answer: Great Britain, Russia, France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary – controlled much of the world. At this time, Europe was the major center of economic and political power. The United States was not yet a leader.
- The powerful families within these empires had ruled for centuries.
 - All countries had kept loyalty to a single monarch through the ages.

Do any of you know which British monarch all of these powerful families were related to by blood or marriage? Hint: She was a queen.

Answer: Queen Victoria

Treaties and Alliances

- Treaties, secret agreements, and alliances tangled many European countries together.
 - Russia, Great Britain and France, under certain conditions, are committed to supporting each other if conflict arises.
 - Italy is wavering.
 - Germany's only true ally is the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- Diplomatic relations became tense when countries began building their militaries.

Industrialism and Technology

- The early 20th century saw the “The Age of Steel” as opposed to that of iron and wood.

Can anyone name some new innovations that came about due to this “Age of Steel?”

Answer: electricity, automobiles, railroads, ships, airplanes, airships, and (most importantly) new weapons and machines of war of unprecedented extent.

- Cities emerged as communication and transportation hubs.

Nationalism

- People gained pride in their cultural differences and shifted loyalty from a single monarch to their own people who shared a language, culture, and ethnicity. This is the rise of “nationalism.”
 - Groups used nationalism as a base for pride and dissent with other peoples.
 - High quarrel in multi-ethnic nations (i.e. Slavs resisted Austria-Hungary's rule in the Balkans). Serbia was the center of Slav resistance and home to the secret society, the Black Hand.

Colonialism

- The five powers colonized Africa and Asia for new territory, new markets, and new resources.

Can anyone think of an example of a country that speaks a certain language because they were colonized and forced to learn that language?

Answer examples: South Africa speaks English, Ghana speaks English, Niger speaks French, India speaks English.

Has anyone heard of the “Scramble for Africa?” Colonization is where that came about.

- Great Britain had the most expansive empire with a powerful navy, but Germany began to challenge them by building military might and a navy to rival the British.

Social Unrest

- This was the first time that ordinary people saw hope for emerging in a prosperous world. This caused many to migrate to large, industrial cities. Some succeeded here, but many more did not due to lack of jobs and shelter.
- The common people embraced socialism, as they thought it would serve the broad population.
 - For some, socialism was a demand for justice; for others, it was the gathering of an army for a revolution.

Does anyone know the name of the Russian socialist who became a leader of that army for a revolution during the WWI era?

Answer: Karl Marx

Tell students that these five areas of dissent were underlying causes for the war; all they needed was a spark to set aflame. That spark was the assassination of the Archduke of Austria-Hungary, Franz Ferdinand, on June 28, 1914.

Appendix B: Teacher Notes - Analyzing a Painting

One has to approach art with a critical eye – everything means something! These are crucial questions to ask when analyzing a painting.

If it's a historical or mythological painting:

- What event is being shown?
- What characters are involved, and what are their roles?
- What message does the painting contain?

If it's a portrait:

- Who is the sitter?
- How does the artist portray him/her?
- What features or aspects of the sitter are given prominence or attention?

If it's a genre-scene:

- What scene is being depicted?
- What is happening?
- What message (if any) does the painter have for us?
- Why has he chosen this particular scene?

If it's a landscape:

- What is the geographical location of the view in the picture? (eg. Is it a favorite haunt of the painter?)
- What is the artist trying to convey to us about the landscape?

If it's a still-life:

- What objects – no matter how seemingly insignificant – are included in the picture?
- Why has the artist chosen these particular items?
- Why has he laid them out in the way he has?

*Still lifes are known for their symbolism, so it's worth analyzing the objects painted, to see what each might symbolize.

Collins, Neil. How to Judge a Painting. *Encyclopedia of Art*. Retrieved from <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/art-evaluation.htm>.

Name: _____

PICTURES SPEAK 1,000 WORDS

TURN THIS PAPER IN WITH YOUR FINAL DRAWING.

DUE : _____

Art is a powerful way to present historical content and express feelings about events. Marsden Hartley was one influential painter from the World War I era. Now, it's your turn! You get to take on the role of powerful artist from the years 1914-1919.

For this activity, you will create a piece of artwork symbolizing a main cause of World War I. Fill out the questions below, brainstorm your drawing ON THE BACK OF THIS PAPER, and then use markers, colored pencils, and/or crayons to complete your work on the cardstock paper given. Have fun and be creative!

Remember, this is not an image of what you think the war would have looked like. This is a symbolic representation of FEELINGS CONCERNING THE ORIGINS OF THE WAR.

- 1) Choose **at least one** of the following main origins of World War I to use as a theme of your drawing. Circle your choice(s).

Nationalism

Colonialism

Empires

Treaties and Alliances

Industrialism and Technology

Social Unrest

- 2) What additional events, places, or people from World War I are you using in your drawing? **Please list your choices and detail what they represent.**

3) What colors are you using in your work? Why did you choose these colors?

4) Are you using any writing on your artwork? If so, what is it? Why did you choose it?

5) What will your drawing be titled? Is there meaning to the title you chose? (Points for creativity!)

Student Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Graphic Organizer - Marsden Hartley and the Great War

What do you see in the famous painting? What are things you notice?



Looking at this map, how many of the five great powers of Europe in 1914 can you name?

Empires

Treaties and Alliances

Industry & Technology

Nationalism

Colonialism

Social Unrest

Are there any images that pop out to you from this painting?

Are there any images that could symbolize something from World War I or another historical event?

Further Resources:

Additional information about Hartley's painting *Himmel* can be found on the Nelson-Atkin's webpage: <http://art.nelson-atkins.org/objects/23315/himmel?ctx=bb14b976-d429-435a-b0ed-593806faaccf&idx=4>

For additional background information about WWI, visit the National WWI Museum and Memorial's webpage: theworldwar.org.

Bibliography:

Collins, Neil. "How to Judge a Painting." *Encyclopedia of Art*. <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/art-evaluation.htm>.

Donna Lawrence Productions. (2006). *A World on the Edge* [Motion picture]. National WWI Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO.

Hartley, Marsden. *Himmel*, ca. 1914-1915, oil on canvas with artist-painted wood frame. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City: MO.

"Marsden Hartley, American, 1877-1943, *Himmel*. The Studio 33 Audio Guide from the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Kansas City, Missouri. Copyright Nelson Gallery Foundation, 2011.

Museum label for Marsden Hartley, *Himmel*, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO.

Smitha, Frank. *Europe, 1914* [map]. 2004. 1: 13411200; "Macrohistory: WorldHistory". <http://www.fsmitha.com/h2/map01eu.htm>.