

People as Subjects: Creating the Characters of the West

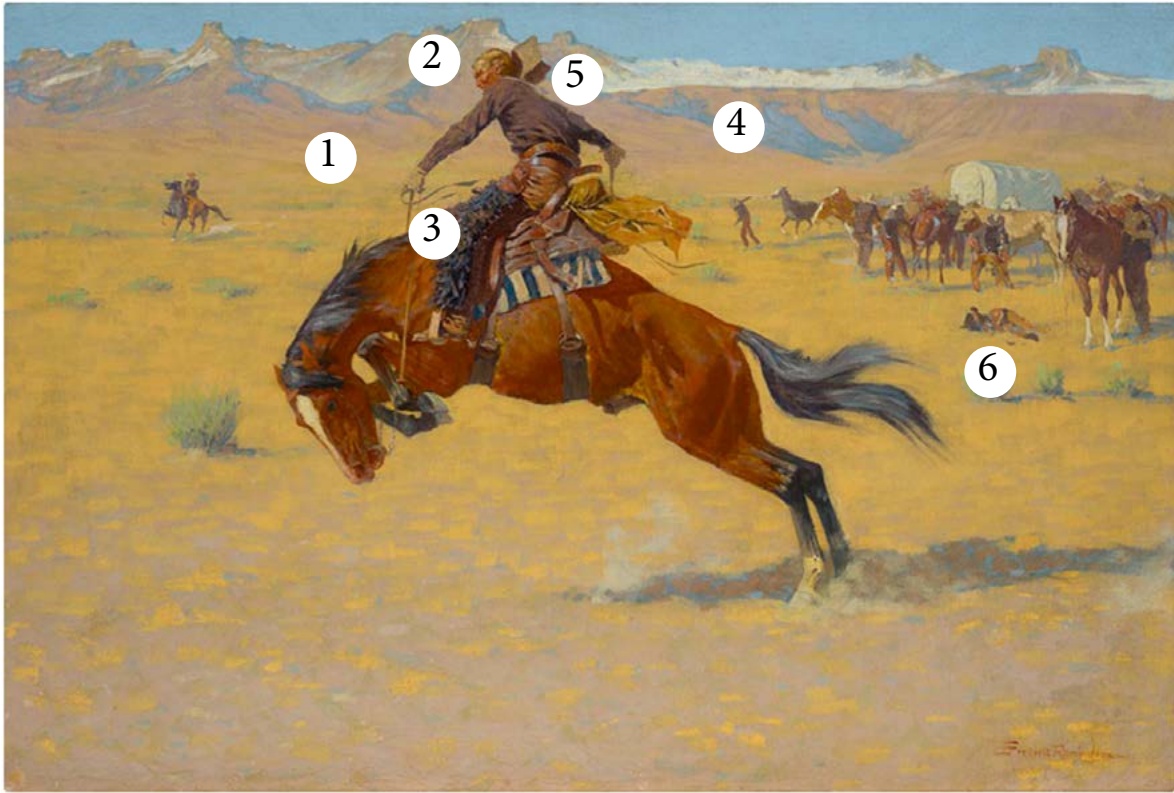


Frederic Remington, *A Cold Morning on the Range*, c. 1904.

Background Information

When we think of typically “American” characters, we often think of individuals tied to the American West—pioneers and cowboys, for example. While their characteristics certainly developed from their life here, their images, as we have come to know them, were created by the artists that immortalized them. Western American artists observed the rugged individuals in their settings, and elaborated upon their appearances to create effect, tell a story, or evoke particular emotions. Eventually, it became difficult to distinguish the trappings of the exaggerated characters from the actual lives of these individuals.

Look Closer



Frederic Remington, *A Cold Morning on the Range*, c. 1904.

Focus on the main character in the painting. The character's pose(1), facial expression(2), clothing(3), surroundings(4), and accessories(5) have been added by the artist to tell us what we should know about this person and situation. Notice the other individuals in the painting, and contemplate their relationship with the main character(6).

Discussion Questions

- Who is the main character in the painting? How can you tell?
- How is the character posed?
- What expression is the character making on his face? What emotion does it depict?
- What is this character wearing, holding, and using?
- Where is this character located in the scene?
- What do you notice about how the other individuals are depicted in this painting?
- What does this tell you about the relationship between the artist and his subjects?

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Activity

What makes a character? Artists tend to incorporate certain elements to give a viewer a sense of the character's personality, including clothing, facial expression, pose, and accessories. Pair up with a partner from class. Ask your partner the questions on the interview worksheet to get to know more about them. After you answer the questions, draw a portrait of your partner, turning them into a recognizable character by incorporating the elements mentioned above. Consider what your character might wear, hold, use, what emotions are present, or their location in the scene.

Materials:

Interview worksheet

Paper

Pencils

Colored pencils/crayons/markers/watercolors

Resources

<http://nationalcowboymuseum.org/explore/like-cowboy-imagery-politics-prose-reality/>

<http://nationalcowboymuseum.org/explore/history-of-the-cowboy-hat/>

<http://nationalcowboymuseum.org/explore/cowboy-boot/>

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Name: _____

Who are you interviewing? _____

1.) What is your favorite activity or pastime?

2.) When you do this, how does it make you feel?

3.) What **facial expression** would correspond to this feeling?

4.) Think about what you might look like when doing this activity. Stand up and **pose** your body as if you are doing this activity. Describe the **action**:

5.) What **clothing** do you wear during this activity? What **accessories** do you have or use?

6.) Where do you do this activity? What would be in the **scene** where you do this?

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Grade levels: P-12 CO Standards

Visual Arts (2009)

P 1.1; P 2.1; P 3.1; P 4.1

K 1.1-2; K 2.102; K 3.1; K 4.1

1 1.1-2; 1 2.1; 1 3.1; 1 4.1

2 1.1-2; 2 2.1; 2 3.1; 2 4.1

3 1.1-2; 3 2.1-2; 3 3.1-2; 3 4.1-2

4 1.1-3; 4 2.1-2; 4 3.1-2; 4 4.1-2

5 1.1-3; 5 2.1-2; 5 3.1, 3; 5 4.1-2

6 1.1-3; 6 2.1-2; 6 3.1-3; 6 4.1-2

7 1.1-3; 7 2.1-2; 7 3.1-3; 7 4.1-2

8 1.1-3; 8 2.1-2; 8 3.1-3; 8 4.1-2

HS 1.1-3; HS 2.1-3; HS 3.3; HS 4.1-3

Soical Studies (2009)

P 1.1; P 2.1

K 1.1; K 2.1; K 3.1; K 4.1

1 1.1-2; 1 2.2; 1 4.2

2 1.1-2; 2 2.2

3 1.1-2; 3 2.2

4 1.1-2

6 1.1-2

8 1.1-2; 8 2.1-2

HS 1.1-3; HS 2.2

Reading, Writing and Communications (2009)

P 1.1-3; P 2.1-2; P 3.1-2; P 3.1-2

K 1.1-3; K 2.1-3; K 3.1-2; K 4.1-3

1 1.1-3; 1 2.1-4; 1 3.1-2; 1 4.1-2

2 1.1-2; 2 2.1-3; 2 3.1-3; 2 4.1-2

3 1.1-2; 3 2.1-3; 3 4.1-3; 3 4.1-2

4 1.1; 4 2.1-3; 4 3.1-3; 4 4.1-2

5 1.1-2; 5 2.1-3; 5 3.1-3; 5 4.1-3

6 1.1; 6 2.1-3; 6 3.1-3; 6 4.1-3

7 1.1-2; 7 2.1-3; 7 3.1-3; 7 4.1-3

8 1.1-2; 8 2.1-3; 8 3.1-3; 8 4.1-3

9 1.1-2; 9 2.1-2; 9 3.1-3; 9 4.2

10 1.1-2; 10 2.1-3; 10 3.1-3; 10 4.1-2

11 1.1-2; 11 2.1-3; 11 3.1-3; 11 4.1-3

12 1.1-2; 12 2.1-2; 12 3.1-3; 12 4.1-2