

# *Dreamy Landscapes* Teaching Resource

**Ages 6–18 (Grades 1–12)**

**Materials needed:**

- Pencils
- Paper
- Colored pencils/crayons/markers
- Paint (if available)

**1 hour** (includes two 20–30-minute activities)

**Essential Questions:**

- What is a landscape? Why is landscape art important?
- What is the foreground/middle/background of a landscape?
- What is the Hudson River School of painting?



Image: Asher B. Durand (American, 1796–1886). *Landscape* (detail), n.d. Oil on canvas. Acquisition by Exchange, 2000 (2000.01).

# Part 1: Intro to American Landscape Art

## Look

Visit our Google Arts & Culture online exhibition, [Hudson River Art](#), which features works from our permanent collection. This exhibition includes paintings from the **Hudson River School** era all the way through contemporary times. They all focus on the Hudson River and its surrounding **landscapes** as their subjects.

Look through the entire exhibition and our [Collection Highlights](#). Then, choose two of your favorite works to focus on for the discussion below.

## Discuss

- Why did you select the two paintings you have chosen to discuss?
- How are these paintings different from others you have seen? What do they all have in common?
- What types of subjects did the artists choose to paint? Why? What do you see? What do you think is happening?
- What story do the pictures tell you? What words come to your mind?
- Would you like to visit these places? Why?
- What emotions do you feel when you look at your chosen landscapes? Why?
- How does the artist convey, or show, these emotions? What colors and materials did s/he use?
- Whom do you think they made these paintings for?
- Why would someone want to collect these types of works?

*Educators and parents, see Part 5 (page 8) for background information and further readings.*

## Part 2: Landscape Haiku (Activity 1)

**Duration:** 20–30 minutes

**Materials needed:**

- Pencils
- Paper

**Introduction:**

Visual artists and writers have always used nature as inspiration for their works. For example, a haiku is a traditional form of Japanese poetry that focuses on the natural world as a subject. Haiku traditionally is written in three lines, and uses a 5-7-5-syllable format in its construction.

First Line: 5 syllables

Second Line: 7 syllables

Third Line: 5 syllables

**Procedure:**

1. Visit our Google Arts & Culture online exhibition, [Hudson River Art](#), and take a look at our [Collection Highlights](#). Choose a landscape to write about.
2. Think about the words and emotions that come to mind as you look at your chosen landscape.
3. Make a list of adjectives, or descriptive words; verbs, or action words; and nouns, or people/animals/places/objects in your chosen landscape to help you with forming a haiku.
4. Take it a step further: what word or phrase can you add so that your reader knows what season you are describing? In a traditional haiku, these specific words are known as **kigo**.
5. Draft your lines and count your syllables. You can write as many haiku as you like!
6. You can also experiment with writing a shorter, nontraditional haiku, using *fewer than* the 5-7-5 limit per line.

**Share your work:**

Take a photo of your haiku and post it to Instagram using the hashtags #MuseumFromHome and #NaturalistsJourney, and tag the Museum.





**Example of a classic haiku:**

Bend in the river  
Cooling on a shaded beach  
Water rippling

**Example of an experimental haiku:**

A steamy walk  
We hide along the cliffs  
By cooling waters

Image: Bayard H. Tyler (American, 1855-1931). *Looking North from Alpine*, 1895.

## Part 3: Create Your Own Landscape (Activity 2)

**Duration:** 20–30 minutes

### **Materials needed:**

- Pencils
- Paper
- Colored pencils/crayons/markers
- Paint (if available)

### **Introduction:**

All landscapes include four main elements: the **foreground**, the **middle ground**, the **background**, and the **horizon** line. These help an artist create a sense of **perspective** for their viewers.

1. **Foreground** is the part of a painting that appears closest to you.
2. **Middle ground** lies between the foreground and background of a painting and often is the focal point for the **composition**—this is where a lot of details can be found about the place being shown.
3. **Background** is the part of a painting that appears farthest from you. Objects and details in the background of a landscape painting look smaller than those in the foreground.
4. The **horizon** line in a work of landscape art is where the earth and the sky appear to meet.

Choose two landscapes from our Google Arts & Culture online exhibition, [Hudson River Art](#), or our [Collection Highlights](#) page. Try to find these four elements in your chosen landscapes. Can you point out one detail from the perspective of each section (foreground, middle ground, and background)? Do you notice if the horizon line is different from one work of art to the next?

Here are two helpful YouTube videos on Landscape Analysis:

- [Understanding the Horizon Line](#)
- [Sketchbook Mission #2](#)

**Procedure:**

1. Hudson River School artists and contemporary artists make landscape artworks of places they love in order to celebrate them and highlight their beauty. Think of a place outside that you love to be in, visit, and/or look at. This can be a place that has changed over time, or a place you hope stays the same for as long as possible.
2. What do you want your viewer to notice about your landscape? You can brainstorm using words on a piece of scrap paper.
3. Will your landscape have a horizontal or vertical format?
4. Where will your horizon line be?
5. Do you need a larger foreground or a larger background?
6. What is happening in your middle ground?
7. What time of day, season, and weather conditions do you want to have in your scene?
8. Using paper and pencil, sketch out your landscape.
9. Add colors, if you have them!

**Share your work:**

Take a photo of your sketch and post it to Instagram using the hashtags #MuseumFromHome and #NaturalistsJourney, and tag the Museum.



## Part 4: Glossary

**Background:** The part of a painting that appears farthest from the viewer.

**Commercialism:** The practice of trying to make as much profit as possible and not caring about how this affects other people or places.

**Composition:** The arrangement of the individual elements within a work of art so as to form a unified whole.

**Contemporary art:** The art of today.

**Environmentalism:** Concern about and action aimed at protecting the environment.

**Foreground:** The part of a painting that appears closest to the viewer.

**Haiku:** A Japanese form of poem of seventeen syllables, in three lines of five, seven, and five, traditionally evoking images of the natural world.

**Horizon:** The line at which the earth and sky appear to meet.

**Horizontal:** Something that is flat and parallel with the ground. In landscape art, the composition and main focus of the work is parallel with the horizon line.

**Hudson River School:** Hudson River School is the collective name given to a number of nineteenth-century North American landscape painters who depicted scenes of natural beauty in areas that included the Hudson River Valley and the Catskill Mountains.

**Industrialization:** When industry, manufacturing, and other mechanical processes are introduced on a large scale to a region or country.

**Kigo:** A word or phrase associated with a particular season, used in traditional forms of Japanese poetry.

**Landscape:** The natural landforms of a region; also, an image that has natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, rivers, trees, and forests as its primary focus. Landscape art primarily focuses on this natural scenery.

**Middle ground:** Lies between the foreground and background of a painting and often is the focal point for the painting—this is where a lot of details can be found about the place being shown.

**Perspective:** The way in which things appear from a particular point of view.

**Sustainability:** The ability to meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

**Vanishing point:** The point toward which parallel lines appear to converge.

**Vertical:** At right angles to a horizontal plane, or perpendicular to the horizon line.



# Part 5: Further Reading for Educators and Parents

## Background Information

During the early half of the nineteenth century, two famous American landscape artists, John Trumbell and William Dunlap, discovered the young Thomas Cole and took him under their wing. Together these artists founded the Hudson River School and began a new art movement that focused on landscapes of the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains. Soon, other artists were following their lead and producing great works of art themselves.

Some artists reflected on a belief in harmony between humans and nature through their paintings. Others expressed frustration and deep concern about the area's rising **commercialism** and **industrialization**. Regardless of their feelings towards the Hudson River Valley, these artists successfully captured the beauty of the region in their art, drawing interest and awareness to the landscape. The Hudson River School (also referred to as the "First New York School"), was a popular movement until the latter part of the nineteenth century, when it began to fade.

Now, with increasing interest in and attention paid toward **environmentalism** and **sustainability** in all aspects of modern life, landscape art from the Hudson River School era and beyond has become essential for reflecting on and understanding the relationship between humans and the Earth, so that we can plan for a future that both protects nature and supports us.

## HRM Virtual Exhibitions on Google Arts & Culture

- [\*Hudson River Art\*](#)
- [\*Walks with Artists: The Hudson Valley and Beyond\*](#)

## HRM Exhibitions

- [\*Thomas Cole's Refrain: The Paintings of Catskill Creek\*](#)
- [\*Janelle Lynch: Another Way of Looking at Love\*](#)
- [\*James McElhinney: Discover the Hudson Anew\*](#)
- [\*The Color of the Moon: Lunar Painting in American Art\*](#)
- [\*Walks with Artists: The Hudson Valley and Beyond\*](#)
- [\*Sylvia Sleigh: Invitation to a Voyage\*](#)

## YouTube Videos on Landscape Analysis

- [\*Understanding the Horizon Line\*](#)
- [\*Sketchbook Mission #2\*](#)



## Part 6: Standards

### Common Core Learning Standards

#### **English Language Arts**

##### Reading Informational Text:

Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2-12.1

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2-12.10

##### Foundational Reading Skills:

Phonics and Word Recognition: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.2-5.3

Fluency: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.2-5.4

##### Writing:

Texts Types and Purposes: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2-12.1-2

Research to Build and Present Knowledge: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2-12.7-9

##### Speaking and Listening:

Comprehension and Collaboration: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2-12.1-3

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2-12.4-6

##### Language:

Conventions of Standard English: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2-12.1-2

Knowledge of Language: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2-12.3

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2-12.4-6

#### **Literacy in History and Social Studies**

##### Reading:

Key Ideas and Details: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.1-3

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.10

## New York State Learning Standards

### **English Language Arts**

Standard 1: Language for Information and Understanding

### **The Arts**

Standard 1: Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts

Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources

Standard 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Standard 4: Understanding the Cultural Contributions of the Arts

### **Social Studies**

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

Standard 3: Geography