



A Closer Look: Winslow Homer



Winslow Homer (1836–1910), *The Life Line*, 1884. Etching on paper. Gift of William Greenbaum and Ellen Solomon, 1993. [#2832]

Look closely at the etching. Respond to the questions below.

What do you see?

What do you think is happening in this etching?

What do you wonder about?

Writing prompt: This woman is being rescued from a dangerous situation. I once found myself in a similar situation when...

Teacher Notes

Winslow Homer (1836-1910) first came to Gloucester in the summer of 1873, at the midpoint of his life. He had visited Manchester in 1868 and 1869 and may have been to Essex in 1870 and 1871. By the time of his first visit, Homer had painted extensively in oils and experimented some with watercolor, but it was in Gloucester that he turned watercolor, once the medium of amateurs, into one suitable for professional artists. It was a turning point in his career.

Homer lived in the Atlantic House Hotel on the corner of Main and Washington Streets in June of 1873 and engaged in three months of work that culminated in a large series of mostly youthful figures in landscapes. By 1875, Homer stopped working as an illustrator and concentrated on fine art. He often worked from memory, or from the artwork he did in Gloucester. His style was loose and considered unfinished at the time, and he was criticized harshly. Although emotionally affected by the criticism, he stuck to his vision, focusing on structure and flattened planes of color.

In 1880, Homer returned to Gloucester and stayed on Ten Pound Island, going off the island only for supplies. The sea, the light and the atmosphere became his subjects. Just as in Fitz Henry Lane's later work, people became less important. Homer's deep aesthetic inquiry was on the level of Lane's, asking how we see and what is aesthetically necessary to communicate an idea. Some of Homer's most dramatic watercolors were painted during this period, when he began to use the white of his paper for light effects.

Homer's time on Cape Ann influenced his art from then on. The painting *The Life Line* shows a dramatic sea rescue in a breeches buoy, the life saving device often used in Gloucester and elsewhere when rescue by lifeboat was impossible. The painting is often considered Homer's first masterpiece, which may have influenced his desire to do another, reproducible version of the image on p. 3.12.

For more information, visit <http://www.capeannmuseum.org>

Extensions

PreK–5 (Science) A breeches buoy was a rescue apparatus designed to assist in transporting people from a shipwreck to shore. Find the simple machine in the scene. What other technology was used at the time to make this possible?



Ten Pound Island Light in Gloucester Harbor, where Homer stayed. U.S. Coastguard photographer. Gift of Davis Carter. [#2221.5]

6–8 (Visual Arts) It has been said that Homer's work reflected feelings of loss and anxiety of the times. What do you think this scene symbolizes? Create a symbolic drawing that substitutes symbols for ideas.

9–12 (ELA) Homer captured a scene that is full of action and emotion. Write a short narrative from the point of view of either the rescuer or the one being rescued, describing the events that caused this situation and what happened as a result.

Standards

Elementary School (Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Framework)

3-PS2-1. Provide evidence to explain the effect of multiple forces, including friction, on an object. Include balanced forces that do not change the motion of the object and unbalanced forces that do change the motion of the object.

Middle School (Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework)

3.5 Create symbolic artwork by substituting symbols for objects, relationships, or ideas.

High School (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy)

MA.3.A. Demonstrate understanding of the concept of point of view by writing short narratives, poems, essays, speeches, or reflections from one's own or a particular character's point of view (e.g., the hero, anti-hero, a minor character).



A Closer Look: Martha Hale Harvey



Martha Hale Harvey (1863–1949), *Babson Farm Riverview Plow Team Working Fields*, c.1890s. Photograph. Gordon Thomas Collection or Martha Hale Harvey Collection.

Look closely at the photograph. Respond to the questions below.

What do you see?

What do you think is happening in this photograph?

What do you wonder about?

Writing prompt: The man and horses are working hard to prepare the land for farming. The last time I did manual labor was...

Teacher Notes

Little is known about how Martha Hale Rogers Harvey (1863–1949) became interested in photography or how she acquired her technique, but by the mid-1880s she was an active, technically skilled and artistically astute photographer. Martha, and her artist husband George, established adjoining studios in 1894, at 47 River Road in Annisquam, and supported themselves with their art-work.

Martha Hale Harvey has been called a naturalist photographer. Like other of the artistic movements coming out of the transcendentalist nineteenth-century ethos and reacting to growing industrialization, the Naturalists focused on simple compositions, illustrating a peaceful coexistence between humans and nature. Many of Harvey's images show people performing tasks in traditional, pre-industrial ways. Her images were highly selective, often posed to present a romantic attitude about a way of life.

Apart from Martha Harvey's images themselves, her photographic methodology greatly affected the aesthetics of her prints. Harvey's original photographs, before enlargers existed, were all contact prints, meaning that the prints were the same size as their glass plate negatives. The plates were commercially prepared with a gelatin binder and sensitized silver salts, giving a metallic appearance to the finished surface. Photographers commonly used this process into the 1920s. Tonalities came from either the paper color itself or from a toner such as tea, which gives brown tones to paper soaked in it. Bleaching out would be used to bring certain toned areas back to white. Martha Harvey's aesthetic is warm-toned with subdued color values. She printed in conventional black and white, platinum, sepia, carbon and chalk methods.

Martha Harvey stands as a pioneer among women photographers and artists. Her willingness and courage to pursue art as a career, her technological ability and artistic talent, and her marriage to another artist with whom she enjoyed mutual respect and support, all give her a place in art history. Her involvement with and devotion to Cape Ann and its community give her an additional position of significance in the history of this region.

For more information visit <http://www.capeannmuseum.org>

Extensions

PreK–5 (Social Studies) Many of Harvey's images show people performing tasks in traditional, pre-industrial ways. What is being done in this picture? Learn more about how fields are cleared today.

6–8 (ELA) Martha Harvey stands as a pioneer among women photographers and artists. What made Martha Harvey a pioneer? What were other women doing in America at the time? Choose another woman and compare her with Martha Harvey.

9–12 (Chemistry) The plates were commercially prepared with a gelatin binder and sensitized silver salts, giving a metallic feel to the finished surface. A silver salt is a chemical compound formed between the element silver and a halogen. Explore this chemical process and figure out what happens.

Standards

Elementary School (Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework)

3.12 Explain how objects or artifacts of everyday life in the past tell us how ordinary people lived and how everyday life has changed. Draw on the services of the local historical society and local museums as needed. (H, G, E)

Middle School (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy)

W7. Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

High School (Massachusetts Science and Technology/Engineering Curriculum Framework)

HS-PS1-2. Use the periodic table model to predict and design simple reactions that result in two main classes of binary compounds, ionic and molecular. Develop an explanation based on given observational data and the electronegativity model about the relative strengths of ionic or covalent bonds.

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Sources also include the artist files in the Cape Ann Museum Archives.



Martha Hale Harvey, *Lobsterman at Salt Island, off Good Harbor Beach*, 1890s. Photograph. Gordon Thomas Collection or Martha Hale Harvey Collection.