

Forests and Treescapes

Grades 9 – 12

Missouri Knowledge Standards:

Social Studies Standard 5- the major elements of geographical study and analysis (such as location, place, movement, regions) and their relationships to changes in society and environment

Fine Arts Standards 1- process and techniques for the production, exhibition or performance of one or more of the visual or performed arts: 2- the principles and elements of different art forms: 3- the vocabulary to explain perceptions about and evaluations of works in dance, music, theater and visual arts: 5 - visual and performing arts in historical and cultural contexts

Learning Goals: Students will

- Investigate the role of trees in our environment and how artists have used trees as subject matter.
- Learn the vocabulary related to landscape art.
- Use inquiry and discussion to evaluate works of art.
- Experiment with various artistic styles in creating their own landscape painting

Materials List: Worksheets and discussion material are provided in this lesson plan. Additional research may require internet access.

Time Required: Three class periods minimum; may be expanded through more in-depth discussion and/or research.

Implementation: Discuss the variety of roles that forests play in our environment. Discuss issues related to forestry, including the management of forests and the laws that have been passed to protect forests. You may wish to have students use the [Forest Puzzles](http://www.oms.edu/visit/life/forestpuzzles/menu.html) site (<http://www.oms.edu/visit/life/forestpuzzles/menu.html>) to learn more about the cycles and management of forests. Students should

make connections to local woodlands and area parks and consider the similarities and differences between wooded areas near their communities and larger forests. What ecosystems are needed to support them, and which do they in turn support? What are the benefits to society that wooded areas, both large and small, provide?

Review the Vocabulary words as needed, and introduce the painting background before discussing the painting.

Background for the painting: In 1938 Jacob Burck produced a painting entitled *Planting Trees in Forest Park*. As indicated by its name, Forest Park, located in St. Louis, Missouri, was originally untouched forest land. It was designated as a city park in 1874 and many changes were made that required cutting down trees to provide for access roads, picnic areas and other amenities. In 1904 the Park became the site of the St. Louis World's Fair. Creating the Fair grounds meant cutting down huge numbers of trees. After the Fair, the Park was replanted to restore its forest-like atmosphere. In the 1930s, the Federal government provided funds through the Works Progress Administration to improve the Park with additional picnic grounds, tree and flower plantings and other projects. In recent years, an organization has been formed to preserve the Park and its forest atmosphere for future generations. Forest Park remains a treasured refuge of greenery in the middle of a busy urban environment.

Use the [Issues of Style](#) worksheets and the painting project to continue the lesson.



Jacob Burck, *Planting Trees in Forest Park*, oil on canvas, ca. 1938.

Use the following questions and similar ideas to discuss Burck's painting:

- Why do you think they are planting trees? Why are trees important?
- Locate the three trees that appear to have just been planted. Why does one seem closer to us and the other two farther away?
- Why does the landscape seem so barren?
- How did the artist create that effect?
- Why do you think the artist chose to paint the planting of trees rather than a prettier, green landscape?
- What are trees symbolic of in our society?
- Look at the workmen. Describe how you think they feel. Notice also that the three newly-planted trees all have something hanging on them. Does seeing this affect how you think the workmen feel about these trees?
- What does this painting say about the landscape?
- Create a list of adjectives to describe the mood this painting creates.

Vocabulary

Landscape: A work of art that uses parts of the land for a subject. Landscapes can show mountains, valleys, rivers or fields. There are different kinds of landscapes. Cityscapes show parts of a city, and seascapes show the ocean.

Treescape: a category of landscape where trees are the main focus.

Background: Parts of artwork that appear to be distant or behind the objects in the foreground or front.

Focal point: An area of an artwork that first attracts and usually holds the viewer's attention.

Realism: (1850-1900) A style of art that shows places, events, people or objects as the eye sees them.

Impressionism: (1875 - 1900) A style of painting that began in France. Impressionist artists were interested in how changing light affects color. They often painted landscapes and scenes of everyday life.

Abstraction: An abstract artwork is usually based on a subject you can identify. The artist starts with an image or object but changes the way it looks by leaving out details. The artist might simplify the shape or rearrange parts of the object. That way, the artwork is no longer a picture of the object. It is a way to express an idea or feeling. The object can be changed a little or it can be completely abstracted, so you may not recognize the object in the picture. Abstract work with no recognizable subject matter is called non-objective art.

Mood: A conscious state or temper of mind or predominant emotion.

Representational: An image that is similar to the way an object or scene looks. A representational image is made to look like the real thing or to create an illusion of the actual object or scene.

Atmospheric perspective (aerial perspective): A way to show how light, air and distance make flat surfaces look different. It is usually done by using blues and pale, dull colors for objects which are far away.

Elements of art: The visual "tools" artists use to compose their art. The elements (categories) include line, color, shape, space, light and texture.

Expressionism: A style of art in which the main idea is to show a definite or strong mood or feeling. It often describes art that distorts reality through exaggeration, vigorous and visible brushwork and strong color, in order to express an artist's ideas or emotions.

Issues of Style: Discuss the different styles each artist uses and what this reflects about trees, landscape and the artist's view of nature. Review the vocabulary list as needed to discuss the characteristics of the paintings.



Frederick Oakes Sylvester, *Live Man, Live Strong, Another June is Here*, n.d.



Dawson Dawson-Watson, *Spring Landscape*, ca. 1910



Mary Hallett Gronemeyer, *Missouri Landscape*, ca. 1970

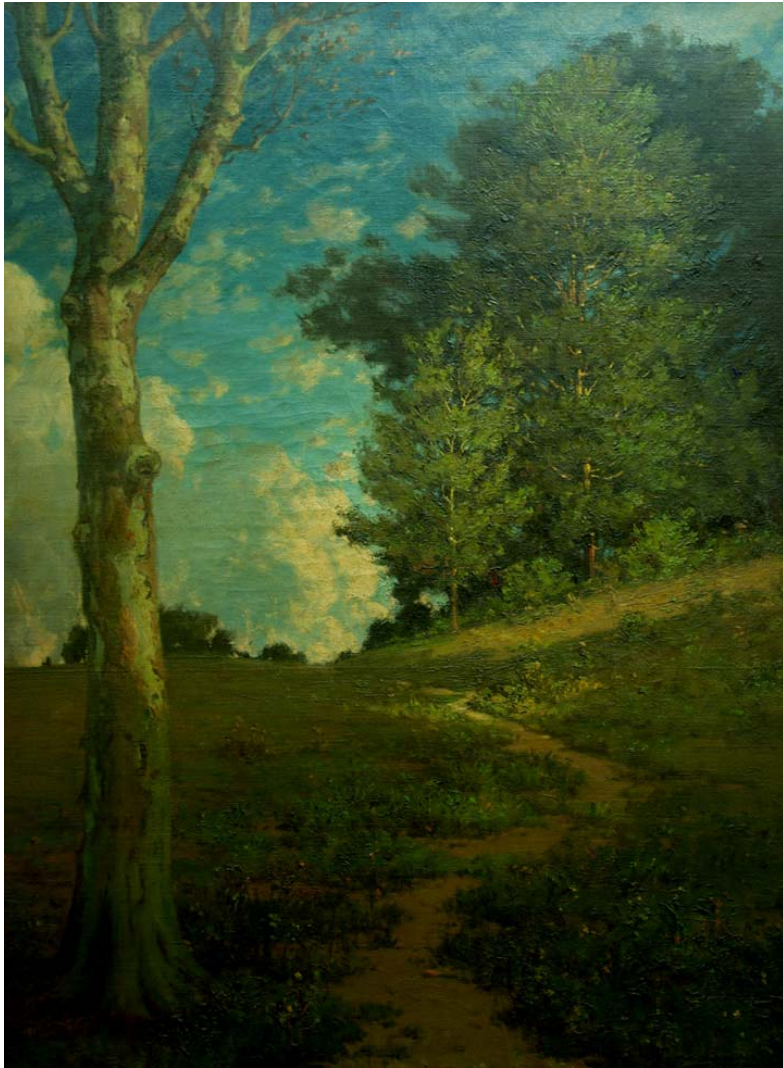
Fine Arts Activity: Students can choose from the style of painting explored in the previous exercise to paint a treescape. One tree should be the main focal point of the painting, as in the paintings by Burck and Sylvester. This tree is identified by virtue of its size, color, placement, and texture.. Each student should decide what kind of forest they will paint. (For example, the treescape could represent a forest full of pine trees.) Students should also select the style they wish to use; realism, impressionism or abstraction..

Adapted from The Kennedy Center, Boise St. University/ARTSEEDGE
Washington, DC and available at <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2179/>

Printable worksheets for the Issues of Style exercise are provided at the end of this document.

Name _____

Date _____



Frederick Oakes Sylvester, *Live Man, Live Strong, Another June is Here*, n.d.

Use these questions to explore this painting and to decide what style Sylvester used. Use the Vocabulary sheet and the artist's biography in the exhibition for help.

- What object is the focal point of this painting?

- Would you call this painting a landscape or a treescape? Why?

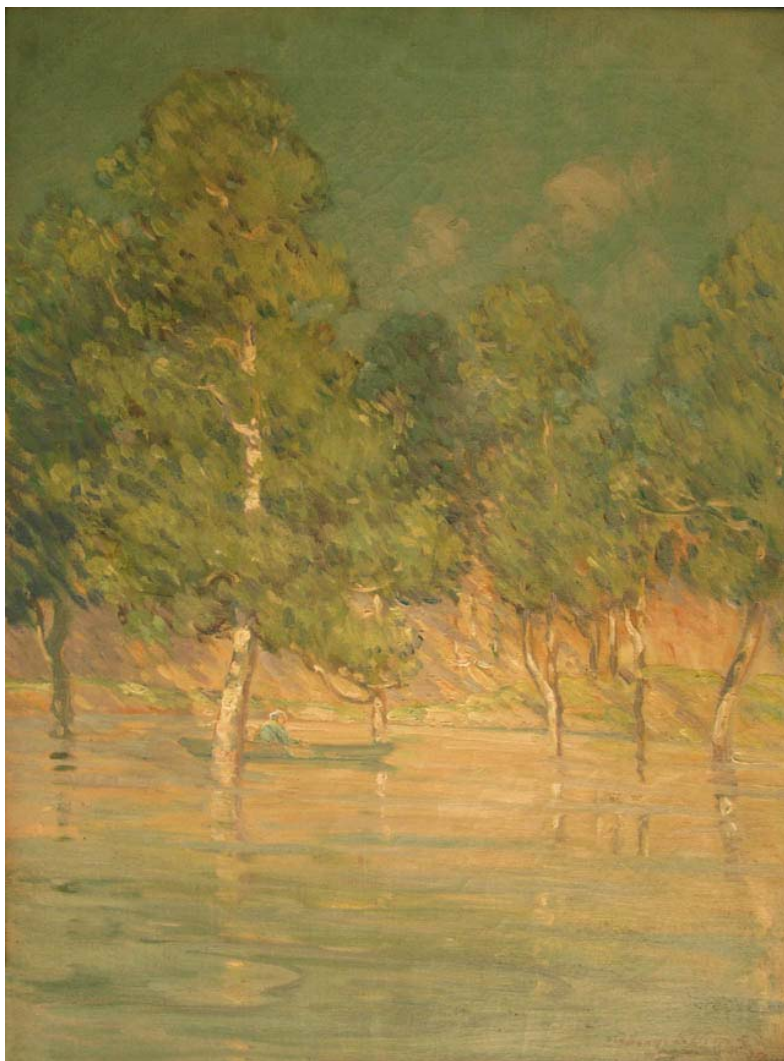
- Sylvester used a special kind of perspective to make the trees in the background look farther away. What is this called?

- Do the trees look like trees you have seen? Do you think the artist has changed things in the painting or does he show things as they really are? Why?

- What style do you think Sylvester used in this painting?

Name _____

Date _____



Dawson Dawson-Watson, *Spring Landscape*, ca. 1910

Use these questions to explore this painting and to decide what style Dawson-Watson used. Use the Vocabulary sheet and the artist's biography in the exhibition for help.

- What object is the focal point of this painting?

- Would you call this painting a landscape or a treescape? Why?

- Do the trees look like trees you have seen? Do you think the artist has changed things in the painting or does he show things as they really are? Why?

- Notice the way Dawson-Watson put the paint on the canvas. You can see each stroke of the brush in the trees. Also notice that there is a person in this painting. Is the person doing anything important? What is he doing?

- What style do you think Dawson-Watson used in this painting?

Name _____

Date _____



Mary Hallett Gronemeyer, *Missouri Landscape*, ca. 1970

- What object is the focal point of this painting? _____
- Would you call this painting a landscape or a treescape? Why? _____
- Do the trees look like trees you have seen? Look carefully at each tree and at the houses and the clouds. Can you tell what kind of trees these are? Why or why not? _____

- What style do you think Gronemeyer used in this painting? _____