





## Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze (1816–1868)

### *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way (mural study, U.S. Capitol), 1861*

oil on canvas

33 1/4 x 43 3/8 in. (84.5 x 110.1 cm)

Bequest of Sara Carr Upton

### About the Artist

Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze was born in Germany in 1816 and moved to America with his family at the age of nine. He studied in Philadelphia and continued his training in Europe beginning in 1841. He became active in liberal political circles leading up to the German Revolution of 1848, and expressed his strong belief in the importance of freedom and democracy. In 1852, Leutze exhibited his most famous painting, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, in the Rotunda of the Capitol. *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, his large mural for the Capitol Building, was commissioned in 1861, the year this study was completed. The final mural, finished in 1862, featured several changes, including the addition of a black boy in the foreground. This figure was probably added after Leutze read Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, issued in September 1862 after the Battle of Antietam.

### About the Artwork

Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze completed this painting as a study for a 20-by-30-foot mural in the U.S. Capitol. He shows a group of weary travelers on their journey westward as they catch their first glimpse of the rolling descent to the "promised land" of California. Leutze indicates some of the difficulties the pioneers have faced on their trip, condensing several landforms in the background to suggest the treacherous route. He emphasizes the hardships of the journey by including a burial scene at the base of the central summit.

This painting represents Manifest Destiny, the idea that America was destined by God to spread west to the Pacific Ocean. At the top of the canvas, an eagle holds a scroll inscribed with the work's title, a phrase from a 1726 poem by the Irish poet George Berkeley. Two Native American figures appear within the border on both sides of the eagle. Near the center of the composition, a mother with her infant child is comforted by her husband, who points out the view. This group recalls images of the Holy Family, with the American "Madonna" dressed in red, white, and blue.

Small scenes within the ornate border link the pioneers to a long line of biblical, mythical, and historical figures who were considered "explorers." Moving up along the left side, Leutze includes Moses parting the Red Sea, a Viking ship, and the Three Kings traveling to Bethlehem. On the right, he features Christopher Columbus, the "Spies of Eshcol" (who explored Canaan before the Israelites journeyed there), and Hercules splitting a mountain to form the Pillars of Gibraltar. The circular portraits at the bottom present Daniel Boone on the left and Captain William Clark on the right. In between them is a view of the "Golden Gate" in the San Francisco Bay, the ultimate reward that awaits these exhausted pioneers.

### Learning to Look

- Take thirty seconds to notice as many details as you can in this painting. What are the people doing? What is happening at this moment?
- Hold your hand up to your eyes and use it to cover parts of the image. How would you divide the composition into different sections? How do these different sections compare?
- What are the differences or similarities between where the travelers have come from and where they are headed?
- What challenges have these pioneers faced during their travels? What details do you see that provide evidence?

- The view in the background is not based on reality—it was created by the artist. Describe the landforms you see. Why do you think the artist combines several different landforms together in this way?
- What part do Native Americans play in Leutze's image of westward expansion? Do you see anything that indicates the pioneers encountered them on their travels?
- What was happening in the nation in 1861 when this was painted? Do you feel that Leutze was hopeful about the nation's future?
- How does the landscape of the San Francisco Bay at the bottom of the painting compare to the scene above? Why do you think Leutze includes it here?
- The artist Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze was a German immigrant to the United States. After investigating this painting, how do you think he felt about his adopted country?

### Activity

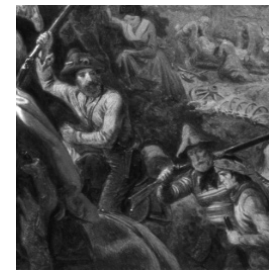
In this activity, students will research and write a diary from the point of view of one of the figures in the painting.

First, direct students to investigate the following Web site:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award99/upbhtml/overhome.html>

They should click on "Categories of Material" and choose "Diaries." Within this section, they can browse through the personal diaries of pioneers who completed the difficult journey west to the Pacific. Students should take notes on the types of experiences and information included in their diaries.

Next, divide students into groups of three, and assign them one of the groupings from the painting pictured here.



Ask the students to identify and imagine at least three specific events or occurrences the group faced on their journey westward. Each student should then choose one of the people in their grouping and write their own diary of the journey from that person's perspective. They should mention all three specific events identified by their group.

Finally, students should share their diaries with their own group, and the class as a whole.

### Resource

The Library of Congress, *Trails to Utah and the Pacific: Diaries and Letters, 1846–1869*:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award99/upbhtml/overhome.html>

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Re<sup>d</sup>  
Aug. 21

Dragoon Camp, 80. ms. above the mouth  
of Lake Washita - on Red River.

Dear Sir, an opportunity occurs at this moment  
of dropping a few lines to friends & amongst others I pay  
5 words to you. I am well and in the daily  
expectation of an interesting meeting  
with Pawnee & Comanche, after which I shall  
make the quietest march home again that I  
can possibly make. This tour is of a most  
fatiguing kind & I trust it may sufficiently  
interest you to repay me for the trouble. The  
public are expecting that I will see these  
Indians or I should almost be ready to  
abandon the expedition & come home.  
I have had frequent letters from G.  
who speaks in the warmest terms of the  
kindness & friendship of the family with  
whom she is staying. I enclosed a Draft  
of the pay - to you for 65. dols. which  
I forgot to request you to enclose when  
collected, to "Clara B. Catlin Lower  
Alton, Illinois" & charge &c

800. mounted men on their green prairies  
furnishes one of the most picturesque scenes I  
ever saw - I would be glad that you  
could see them. You will see  
my sketches home - Love to all  
Yours &c Geo. Catlin -

Geo. Catlin  
Red River

Before July 19. 1834

Re<sup>d</sup> Aug. 21. 1834

Post Paid 25  
July 19 1834

D. S. Gregory Esq

164. Broadway  
New York.

1834



## George Catlin (1796–1872)

Letter to D. S. Gregory, “above the mouth of the False Washita on Red River,”

19 July 1834

8 x 6 in. (20 x 16 cm)

George Catlin papers, 1821–1904, 1946

### About the Artist

George Catlin was born in 1796 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Although trained as a lawyer, Catlin quit his law practice and moved to Philadelphia in 1823 to begin a career as a portrait painter. He gained membership in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1824, but his career in formal portraiture met with little success.

In 1830 he began his life's pursuit—documenting the customs and culture of the Native Americans of the Plains. He spent the next six years traveling, drawing, painting, and writing about the Plains Indians. By 1837, he had amassed hundreds of portraits, scenes, and landscapes, which he called his Indian Gallery. He exhibited his collection in major American cities, and in 1839 crossed the Atlantic to display his Indian Gallery in London, and eventually in Paris and Brussels. Catlin spent the remainder of his life gathering support for the sale of the Indian Gallery to the U.S. Congress; he died almost penniless in 1872. Seven years later, in 1879, the Indian Gallery came to the Smithsonian as a gift from a private collection.

### About the Letter

In 1834, Catlin accompanied an expedition of dragoons, a regiment of cavalry officers in the U.S. Army, on their journey from Fort Gibson into Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma. He wrote to his brother-in-law, D. S. Gregory, from the dragoon camp on the Red River.

*... I am well and in the daily expectation of an [illegible] interesting meeting with Pawnees and Comanches after which I shall make the quickest march home again that I can hopefully make ... The public are expecting that I will see these Indians or I should almost be ready to abandon the expectation & come home.*

*800 mounted men on these green prairies furnishes one of the most picturesque scenes I ever saw—I would be glad that you could see them. You will see my sketches [at] home.*

Catlin explained the goals of the dragoon expedition, led by Colonel Henry Dodge, in another letter home:

*Colonel Dodge explained to them the friendly motives with which we were penetrating their country—that we were sent by the President to reach their villages—to see the chiefs of the Camanches and Pawnee Picts—to shake hands with them, and to smoke the pipe of peace, and to establish an acquaintance, and consequently a system of trade that would be beneficial to both.*

In the early nineteenth century, letters were the quickest means of communication. Once the letter was written, it was folded and sealed with wax. Postal rates were determined by the number of pages. Envelopes were used later in the century when the postal rates decreased.

### Learning to “Read”

- What type of document is this? How do you know?
- Other than the writing, what other marks or physical characteristics do you see? What does this tell us about how it was mailed?
- Where was it mailed from? Where was it sent to? (You can ask students to locate these two places on a map of the United States.)
- The letter is inscribed with dates that record approximately when it was mailed and when it was received. Can you find this? About long did it take for the letter to reach its destination?
- The artist George Catlin wrote this letter during his travels to the western Plains, where he set out to document Native American life. Find and point out the line “*I am well and in the daily expectation of an [illegible] interesting meeting with Pawnees and Comanches after which I shall make the quickest march home again that I can hopefully make.*” Ask the students: What does this statement tell us about Catlin’s experiences in the West?
- Find and point out the line “*800 mounted men on these green prairies furnishes one of the most picturesque scenes I ever saw.*” Ask the students to discuss the meaning of the word “picturesque.” How does Catlin’s description of this scene relate to general attitudes at the time toward Native Americans and their way of life?

### Activity

This letter provides us with George Catlin’s perspective during his travels among the Plains Indians. He describes one of the views of Native Americans that he witnessed as “one of the most picturesque scenes I ever saw.” Catlin, like other American artists and writers of his time, often presented Native Americans as a beautiful element of the American landscape and romanticized their lives.

Ask students to choose one portrait created by Catlin during his travels, using the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Catlin Classroom Web site to locate an image ([http://catlinclassroom.si.edu/catlin\\_collectionsearchform.cfm](http://catlinclassroom.si.edu/catlin_collectionsearchform.cfm)). Instruct students to research the particular culture of the person represented in their portrait. Ask them to consider what specific difficulties and hardships the Plains Indians were facing at that time.

Direct the students to write a letter from the perspective of the Indian in their portrait. Ask them to imagine and include a description of the person’s interaction with George Catlin.

### Resource

Visit the Archives of American Art’s George Catlin papers online:  
<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collectiononline/catlgeor/>

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## Chief Joseph (ca. 1840–1904)

by Cyrenius Hall (1830–1904)

oil on canvas, 1878

22 x 18 1/8 in. (55.9 x 46 cm)

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

### About the Sitter

Born in the Wallowa Valley in northeastern Oregon among the Nez Perce, Chief Joseph was also known as Young Joseph. His Native American name means “Thunder Rolling in the Mountains.” His father, Old Joseph, gave up cooperating with the whites when they attempted to drastically reduce his reservation during the gold rush. Young Joseph carried on this policy after his father’s death in 1871.

Although celebrated for his skill in battle, Joseph worked tirelessly for peace with U.S. government authorities. In 1877, under the threat of forced removal from his traditional homelands in Oregon’s Wallowa Valley, Joseph reluctantly began leading his followers toward a reservation in Idaho. However, after a group of angry warriors killed several white settlers in retaliation for earlier violence, Joseph redirected his party toward the lands of the Crow, an allied tribe in Montana. In response, federal soldiers began their pursuit of them. The outnumbered Nez Perce embarked on a skillful retreat, at times eluding American forces and at other times repulsing their military advances. General William Tecumseh Sherman remarked that “the Indians throughout displayed a courage and skill that elicited universal praise. . . . [They] fought with almost scientific skill.”

When the Crows refused to come to their aid, Joseph decided to seek sanctuary in Canada. After traveling 1,170 miles with his band of followers, Joseph was intercepted only miles from the Canadian border. He surrendered there on October 5, 1877, stating, “From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.”

Joseph and his people were taken to a reservation in Oklahoma. Although Joseph visited President Rutherford B. Hayes to demand that his people be returned to the Northwest, this did not happen until 1885. Joseph died on the Colville Reservation in Washington State in 1904.

### About the Portrait

This portrait depicts Chief Joseph in 1878 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, only a year after his surrender. It was painted by Cyrenius Hall, an itinerant artist who traveled the Oregon Trail, painting landscapes and Native American scenes.

In French, *nez percé* means “pierced nose.” Famed American explorers Lewis and Clark bestowed the name on the tribe, although nose piercing was uncommon. In this portrait, Joseph wears gold earrings, two strands of beads, and detailed bead ornaments.

### Learning to Look

- How would you characterize Chief Joseph’s facial expression? How would you relate his expression to the events of 1877? (Teachers may choose to read Joseph’s surrender speech to facilitate discussion; a link may be found in the Resources section.)
- Looking at the portrait, what kind of leader do you think Chief Joseph was? How do you think his tribe perceived him?
- Many photographs of Chief Joseph exist. How would a photograph of him differ from this painting? Why do you think Chief Joseph was photographed and painted so frequently, and how do you think these images were used?
- How do you think the public perceived Native Americans during Chief Joseph’s lifetime? How would the views of gold prospectors, settlers, missionaries, generals, and the U.S. government differ?
- In the literature, artwork, and media of this time period, Native Americans were often depicted as “wild savages” who were becoming extinct. In what ways does this portrait reflect or reject this point of view? Is Chief Joseph depicted as a person who is in charge of his own fate, or does he simply react to the decisions of whites? In what ways is he presented as an individual or as a generalized, stereotypical Native American?

### Activity

#### The Trail of Westward Expansion

Conflicts between Native Americans and whites were often rooted in geography. Introduce students to the concept of trails through the West, and have them think about who used these trails and how settlers and Native Americans might have interacted on them. The teacher can provide examples of actual National Historic Trails, using the National Park Service’s online resources. Then explain that students will create their own National Historic Trail.

The teacher should first decide if the trail should include only events in Chief Joseph’s life or include other westward expansion events and interactions between Native Americans and whites. Next, create a list of locations or regions that are important in telling this story, or have students make their own list.

Each student should select a location or region from the list and have him or her create a guide to that “stop” on the trail. Projects could take the form of a visitor’s brochure, interpretive sign, slideshow, or Web site. Students should include at least three of the following components in their guide:

- Narrative description of the westward expansion–related event that took place in this area
- Brief biographical information about the individuals associated with the spot
- A map
- A description of the way of life of those associated with this spot
- Brief description of the landscape and wildlife and their influence on the historical events that transpired there
- If possible, a photograph or illustration from the time period

As an extension activity, create a class National Historic Trail map that includes all the sites chosen and the path one would follow between them.

### Resources

Created in 1986, the Nez Perce National Historic Trail follows Chief Joseph’s route toward Canada:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/npnht/>

Chief Joseph’s surrender speech may be found on PBS’s New Perspectives on the West Web site:

[http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a\\_c/chiefjoseph.htm](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a_c/chiefjoseph.htm)

The National Park Service has many resources relating to National Historic Trails on its Web site:

<http://www.nps.gov/>

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## Winslow Homer (1836–1910)

### *A Visit from the Old Mistress*, 1876

oil on canvas

18 x 24 in. (45.7 x 61.0 cm)

Gift of William T. Evans

### About the Artist

Winslow Homer's artistic career began in 1854 or 1855 when he started as an apprentice to a lithographer in Boston. After studying briefly in New York at the National Academy of Design, he came to popular attention as an illustrator for *Harper's Weekly* during the Civil War. Scholars assume that Homer made several visits to Petersburg, Virginia, between 1875 and 1876, when he produced sketches that were incorporated into this and other paintings of African American life. Although some African Americans reportedly complained that Homer mistakenly depicted them as exclusively poor and rustic, his portrayals were much more sensitive than the exaggerated stereotypes of blacks which were generally seen in his day.

### About the Artwork

In this painting, Winslow Homer captures the tense encounter between a group of freed slaves and their former mistress following the Civil War. This period known as Reconstruction opened a difficult new chapter in race relations. Homer is able to convey the uncertainty of this complicated time in American history through a simple composition.

The scene takes place within the black women's humble home. Their former mistress has presumably just entered, and her black gown with lace trim sets her apart as an outsider. She dangles a closed, red fan by her side. All of the black women, and even the toddler, stare directly at their visitor with unwelcoming expressions. One woman does not even rise from her seat, a change from the obedient behavior that was expected before Emancipation. The standing women are of similar heights, placing them on equal footing with each other. However, the women are clearly separated through the use of color. All of the African American figures wear earth tones that contrast with the visitor's black and white attire. The space between the freed slaves and their former mistress also suggests that a racial divide continues.

### Learning to Look

- Describe what is happening in this painting. What are the women doing?
- The title of this work is *A Visit from the Old Mistress*. With that in mind, what do you think the scene shows?
- What mood does the artist create? How does he do this?
- What do you notice about Winslow Homer's placement of the people? What message do you think this composition communicates?
- What do you think each person in the scene is thinking?
- When this was painted in 1876, how do you think people responded to it?
- This scene takes place during Reconstruction, after slavery was declared illegal. How would this scene be different if it took place before Emancipation?

### Activity

- Organize students into groups of four. Direct them to choose a figure in the composition and re-create the painting by posing themselves like the people pictured. Students should improvise a conversation together, and talk about what it would feel like to be in each role.
- Next, students should independently research the three different plans for Reconstruction presented at the end of the Civil War: the plans presented by Abraham Lincoln, the Radical Republicans, and Andrew Johnson, who became president after Lincoln's death.
- Using their research (and working in the same groups of four) students should imagine what changes they would make to this scene to make it most representative of each different Reconstruction plan. For example, they can choose to change the location, arrangement of figures, inclusion of specific figures, etc. How would the conversation that they imagined between the figures also change?
- Groups should take turns to explain their suggested changes to the class.

### Resource

From the Virginia Center for Digital History at the University of Virginia, an archive of Civil War-era letters, diaries, and newspapers from Augusta County, Virginia, and Franklin County, Pennsylvania: <http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/freedmen1.html>

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When they<sup>t</sup> were in  
a peach orchard in  
front of Yorktown in  
April 1862.



This is what I saw —

I was not a soldier —

but a camp follower

& artist, the above



## Winslow Homer (1836–1910)

### Letter to George G. Briggs, 19 February 1876

7 pages, 8 x 6 in. (21 x 15 cm)

Archives of American Art, Winslow Homer letter collection, 1890-1909

### About the Artist

Winslow Homer is one of America's most celebrated landscape and genre painters. Perhaps best known for interpreting the primal struggle between man and nature, he excelled at illustration, oil painting, and watercolor. Though he had some formal training in drawing and painting, he was largely self-taught. Homer began his career at age nineteen as an illustrator, apprenticing at a lithography firm in Boston. In 1859 he moved to New York to work for *Harper's Weekly*, where he served as an artist-correspondent during the Civil War, traveling with Union soldiers and visiting the front several times. His wartime experiences inspired numerous prints and paintings, and brought him his first critical acclaim.

### About the Letter

During the Civil War, Winslow Homer was contributing artist for *Harper's Weekly*. In this letter to George G. Briggs, Homer recalls his encounter with sharpshooters in a peach orchard at the Battle of Yorktown in 1862. He writes, "I was not a soldier but a camp follower & artist. The above impression [referring to his sketch] struck me as being as near murder as anything I ever could think of in connection with the army & I always had a horror of that branch of the service." Homer's illustration *The Sharpshooter* appeared in *Harper's* on November 15, 1862.

#### Transcription:

Scarboro Me  
Feby 19 1876

Mr George G. Briggs  
My dear sir

I send you some frames on Thursday by American Ex—

I never supposed that you would take both of the pictures, as you only called for one—so I mentioned to you frames which I never should have done but for the fact that I had a frame made to finish this size picture & concluded to send it if you made a choice of that size as I said before I never consider frames & do not deal in frames but now that you have taken both & I have given you the impression that I am to frame them. There is no help for it & so I send you and include in the purchase—with that wooden one a frame that cost me \$50.

You will have to get that wooden one re-bronzed. I made that frame & bronzed it (here in the country with a native Carpenter) and it is a more appropriate frame for a picture than the other gold one.

I rec'd the book—many thanks, I never knew that Berdans sharp shooters were from Mich. I looked through one of their rifles once when they were in a peach orchard in front of Yorktown in April 1862.

This is what I saw—

I was not a soldier but a camp follower & artist, the above impression struck me as being as near murder as anything I ever could think of in connection with the army & I always had a horror of that branch of the service.

Well Mr Briggs this is the last letter I shall have occasion to write I send you herewith a proper receipt—& if you should ever find me at home if you should be this way in the summer

I would be glad to see you—but I have not been home in the Summer for five or six years and there is no chance of it but this answers this your question & with regret, I now state it—

I go to one, of two fishing clubs that I belong to. I live here four miles from the Post office & R. R.

Yours very truly  
Winslow Homer



Winslow Homer, *The Army of the Potomac—A Sharpshooter on Picket Duty*, 1862, wood engraving on paper, image: 9 1/8 x 13 3/4 in. (23.2 x 35.1 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of International Business Machines Corporation

### Learning to Look

- What do you see on this document?
- How long do you think it took the writer to compose this page? Was it intended to serve a formal or informal purpose?
- This page is from a letter written by artist Winslow Homer. He recalls one experience he had while documenting what he saw during the Civil War, when he worked as an illustrator for *Harper's Weekly*. What do you think the sketch on the page represents?
- Read students the text from the letter that surrounds the sketch:

*I never knew that Berdans sharp shooters were from Mich. I looked through one of their rifles once when they were in a peach orchard in front of Yorktown in April 1862. This is what I saw—I was not a soldier but a camp follower & artist, the above impression struck me as being as near murder as anything I ever could think of in connection with the army & I always had a horror of that branch of the service.*

- How does the sketch he drew relate to what he described in his writing?
- During the Civil War, sharpshooters often scouted out a situation or were the first soldiers to start an altercation with the enemy. They were trained to shoot and kill. Why do you think Homer sees their job as different from other soldiers? How does he use his sketch to emphasize this point?
- Show students Homer's illustration of a sharpshooter that was published in 1862 (the year that he remembers in his letter). How does this perspective differ from his sketch? Which is more powerful and communicates Homer's feelings more clearly?

### Activity

Explain to the class that the Civil War was one of the first conflicts when people like Winslow Homer attempted to document war by experiencing it firsthand and interacting directly with soldiers.

Instruct the students to research the experience of soldiers during the Civil War. After they have compiled their research, they will work together in groups to write an imagined script between Winslow Homer and the soldiers he met and interacted with in 1862. They can cover the following in their script:

- Information about the soldiers' personal lives and background
- The soldiers' perspective on their job
- Winslow Homer's perspective on their job
- A narrator's voice, to describe the setting

Once their scripts have been edited and finalized, each group will act out the scene(s) for the class.

### Resources

Visit the Archives of American Art's Winslow Homer collection online:  
<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collectionsonline/homewinl/>

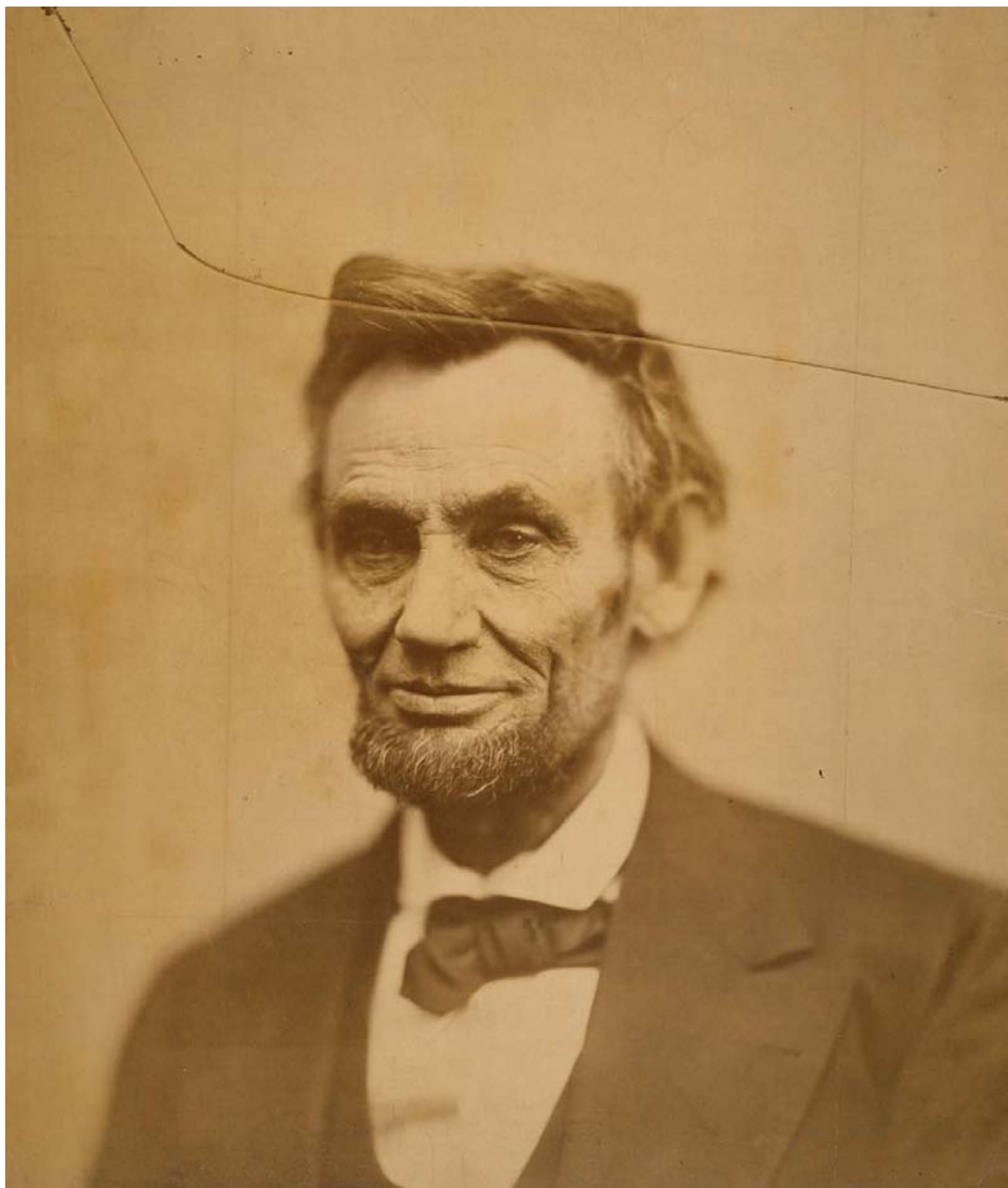
Katcher, Philip R. N. *Sharpshooters of the Civil War*. Illustrated by Stephen Walsh. Chicago, Ill.: Raintree, 2003.

<http://www.civilwar.si.edu>

<http://www.civilwarhome.com/soldierslife.htm>

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## Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)

by Alexander Gardner (1821–1882)

albumen silver print, 1865

17 11/16 x 15 3/16 in. (45 x 38.6 cm)

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

### About the Sitter

The election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in 1860 triggered the secession of the southern states from the Union. The day after his inauguration, Lincoln learned that Fort Sumter, in Charleston, South Carolina, was running out of supplies. He made the difficult decision to resupply the fort, knowing that this could result in war. On April 12, 1861, Confederate guns fired on Fort Sumter, and the Civil War began.

During the war, Lincoln was criticized by people across the political spectrum. Abolitionists decried his refusal to eliminate slavery in favor of preserving the Union. Many criticized Lincoln's temporary suspension of basic civil rights, under which fifteen thousand civilians were arrested and detained without trial. Lincoln also took the blame for Union losses on the battlefield.

As the Union victory became inevitable, debate flared over the emancipation of slaves. Some thought that Lincoln should abandon emancipation in order to end the war quickly. He refused, insisting that African American soldiers would not fight for the Union if it abandoned them. Lincoln knew this could cost him reelection. General William Tecumseh Sherman's victory in Atlanta, Georgia, changed the mood in the North. Lincoln was triumphantly reelected in November 1864.

### About the Portrait

Lincoln was the first president to take full advantage of photography, both as a campaign tool and as a way to craft a desirable public persona. These images, appearing on campaign buttons and in newspapers, transformed Lincoln from a gawky backwoods farmer into a statesman.

Lincoln often spoke of his rural origins. In a speech he delivered on February 27, 1860, at the Cooper Union in New York City, for example, Lincoln said, "Twenty-five years ago I was a hired laborer, mauling rails, at work on a flat-boat—just what might happen to any poor man's son." Freedom, he said, allowed him to "better his condition" and was a right to which all men were entitled. This speech helped make Lincoln the Republican presidential candidate.

This photograph is one of a series taken by Alexander Gardner in his Washington, D.C., studio in February 1865. Known as an albumen silver print, it was made by contact printing a glass negative on light-sensitive paper coated with a solution of egg white (albumen) and salt. The large glass negative that Gardner used for this portrait broke after it was developed, and just one print was made before the ruined negative was discarded.

### Learning to Look

- Analyze Lincoln's facial expression, pose, and attire. What mood or tone does this portrait have? What response might this image have elicited from viewers at the time? What type of leader was Lincoln considered to be at this point in his career?
- When this photograph was taken, Lincoln had already won reelection to a second presidential term. How does this image differ from a campaign photograph?
- Examine the way in which Alexander Gardner focused his camera. Identify which portions of the portrait are in focus and which are blurred. Why do you think Gardner focused his camera this way?
- In addition to photographic portraits, Lincoln also had many painted portraits made. Discuss the differences between these two different types of presidential portraiture. How do painting and photography differ in process and product? For what different purposes might each medium be used?
- If you were a photographer preparing to take a formal portrait of Lincoln at this point in his career, what challenges would you face and how would you overcome them? How would you decide to depict Lincoln as he entered his second term as president of a divided nation?

### Activity

#### Lincoln's Cabinet

Explain to students that Lincoln included four individuals in his cabinet who had run against him for the presidency, some of whom still believed that they were better qualified for the job. Discuss with the class the challenges Lincoln would face and the strategies he would have to develop to balance cabinet members' personalities.

Divide students into groups and have each group select one of the cabinet members to research.

- William H. Seward (secretary of state)
- Simon Cameron (secretary of war)
- Edward Bates (attorney general)
- Salmon P. Chase (secretary of the treasury)

If desired, the project may be broadened to include other contenders in the presidential race, such as Stephen A. Douglas, John Breckinridge, and John Bell.

Instruct groups to research the following information about their candidate:

- Biographical information
- Main beliefs
- Support by region
- Views on slavery and the Civil War
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Role in Lincoln's cabinet

Groups should prepare a six-minute skit supporting their cabinet member in the form of a persuasive campaign commercial. Skits should include the candidate's platform, views on the Civil War, and at least one direct quote. Skits may also include portraits of the candidates.

Conclude the lesson with a group discussion about the different skills and abilities that each member brought to Lincoln's cabinet and the ways in which this group functioned or failed during the Civil War.

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401. 0220

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COBB'S PATENT

**Keell Shop: PARK AVENUE at 53rd STREET**

Open weaver. Cool. Comfortable. Cool. Cool... A sweater, but for all occasions.

**City of New York**  
**Department of Social Services**  
**Office of the Inspector General**

Case color

A Treasury of  
Austly-Constructive  
World-Wide News

**William H. Johnson (1901–1970)*****Jitterbugs (II)*, ca. 1941**

serigraph on newspaper

16 7/8 x 14 3/8 in. (42.8 x 36.5 cm)

Gift of Mrs. Douglas E. Younger

**About the Artist**

William H. Johnson was born to a poor African American family in South Carolina. He moved to New York in 1918 and trained at the prestigious National Academy of Design, where he received numerous awards. Johnson spent most of the 1920s and 1930s in Europe, where he was influenced by both modern styles and folk traditions. Returning to New York in 1938, African Americans became the primary subject for his art. The Works Progress Administration assigned him to teach at the Harlem Community Art Center, where he met other black artists and intellectuals. Sadly, after 1944 Johnson's mental health deteriorated quickly due to a syphilis infection, and he spent the last twenty-three years of his life in a state hospital in New York.



William H. Johnson, *Self-Portrait*, ca. 1923-26, oil on canvas, 29 3/4 x 23 3/4 in. (75.5 x 60.4 cm). Gift of the Harmon Foundation



William H. Johnson, *Self-Portrait*, 1929, oil on canvas, 23 1/4 x 18 1/4 in. (59.0 x 46.3 cm). Gift of the Harmon Foundation

**About the Artwork**

When William H. Johnson created this work in 1941, he was teaching at the Harlem Community Art Center, just minutes away from the Savoy Ballroom in New York City. Many jazz dance crazes, including the jitterbug, were popularized at this famous dance hall. Immersed in the vibrant African American arts and culture which had blossomed during the Harlem Renaissance, Johnson frequently turned to the sights and sounds around him for inspiration. In this work, he shows a couple of dancing "jitterbugs," like those who flooded into the Savoy to swing to the music of jazz legends. The dance style was energetic and athletic, with women being thrown in the air and dipped down to the ground as couples tried to outdo each other.

Bold blocks of color interlock at sharp angles to create a sense of energy and movement. Together with the repeated lines on the floor, these stylistic elements recall the rhythm and vitality of jazz music. In the background, parts of instruments float in the air without any players present. This print was created using a technique known as serigraphy, which was new to Johnson, in which ink or paint is applied using stencils. It allowed him to experiment repeatedly with the same composition, trying different color combinations, background designs, and materials. This work is printed on newspaper, with advertisements visible through the paint, and the resulting effect further emphasizes the urban nature of Johnson's subject.

**Learning to Look**

- Johnson typically used only four or five colors. Ask students to name the colors they see here. After each color is identified, ask the class to describe what they see that is represented in that color (i.e., what do you see that is blue?).
- Ask the students to identify what the artist has represented with all of the individual parts they just identified.
- What adjectives do you think describe this couple?
- What material is this work printed on? Look closely and identify what you can see and read. How does this affect the overall impression that the artist creates?
- William H. Johnson was a highly trained artist who worked in many different styles. Why do you think he chose to portray this subject in bright colors and blocky forms instead of a more realistic way?
- Based on what you know about the Harlem Renaissance, what does this work reflect about the years surrounding that time in New York City? How does it do this?
- Play some jazz music for the class (audio clips are available online at <http://www.smithsonianjazz.org/class/armstrong/kit/kit.asp> or <http://www.folkways.si.edu/search/AlbumDetails.aspx?ID=281#>) Ask students to compare what they hear with what they see here.

**Activity**

Both of the figures in this work are anonymous, and their faces are almost entirely blank. Students should work independently to research the Harlem Renaissance and create identities for the couple. They should create names for the figures and write a narrative describing where they came from and what they experienced in their daily lives. This should be as specific as they can make it. Examples of information to include in the narrative:

- Information about their childhood and where they grew up
- A description of the neighborhood where they live
- A description of where they dance and why this activity is an important part of their lives

In their research, students should look for photos of Harlem to include as part of their story.

As an additional activity, students could create an artwork in Johnson's style depicting their own neighborhood, childhood, or dance moves and then write a few sentences, similar to an interpretive label found in a museum, explaining the work.

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CHARLES W. HAWTHORNE  
PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

June 29, 1937.

Dear Johnson,

I was very glad to get yours of June 5th. I like the tone of it and your previous letters very much. Keep right on the way you are going and you will pull out.

I hardly know what to say about your exhibition. If you can have it without too much expense, I know it would be a good thing. I don't know how much your work at the Academy would help. After all, most of it is life work. Your still-life might be interesting, to be sure, but generally speaking, school work is not of any particular interest.

As you know, I am not connected with the Academy and I don't know what influence I would have, but I will write to the School Committee and ask them if they will loan whatever you want for your exhibition. And you must write them too, making a formal request and arranging for someone to attend to sending them.

We are down here in Provincetown and looking toward a big summer. I really think that your best plan is to get outdoors and paint a lot of stuff and depend on that for your show next winter. I hope it's a great success and that you will let me hear from you from time to time.

With very best wishes,  
Yours sincerely,  
Charles W. Hawthorne



HARMON FOUNDATION  
INCORPORATED  
140 NASSAU STREET  
NEW YORK

W. BURKE HARMON  
PRESIDENT

MARY BEATTIE BRADY  
DIRECTOR  
SAMUEL MCCUNE LINDBAY  
ECONOMIC ADVISER

February 3, 1930.

My dear Mr. Johnson:-

I am glad to have the opportunity of extending to you the Harmon Foundation's medal of honor and accompanying honorarium, which was recently conferred upon you by the jury for the 1929 Awards in Fine Arts of the William E. Harmon Awards for Distinguished Achievement Among Negroes.

This recognition is not simply an insignia of honor which the Harmon Foundation authorities have undertaken to grant each year, but it represents the unbiased and disinterested opinion of competent jurors who regard your work as worthy of wide recognition because of its intrinsic merit to race of the producer.

These Awards were established by my father as a sincere effort to assist in increasing public appreciation of, and an economic interest in the worthwhile creative activities of the members of this group, and it is a source of inspiration to us in carrying forward this program to have affiliated as recipients of the awards, men and women whose productions have been regarded by the judges as representing a high order of achievement in relation to the total field represented.

We hope as the years go by that this Award may prove to be of increasing value, not only in advancing opportunities for your own creative expression, but perhaps even more so in developing greater public demand for the outstanding contributions produced by the members of the group which you represent.

Very sincerely yours,

W. Burke Harmon  
President

Enclosure

Mr. William E. Johnson,  
311 West 130th Street,  
New York, N. Y.



## William H. Johnson (1901–1970)

### Scrapbook, ca. 1922–47

One bound volume, 26 leaves

21 x 16 1/4 in. (53.3 x 41.4 cm)

William H. Johnson papers, 1922–1971

### About the Artist

A painter, printmaker, and teacher, William H. Johnson was born in Florence, South Carolina, in 1901. He moved to New York City in 1918 to live with his uncle. In the 1920s he lived and studied in New York, attending the National Academy of Design in 1922. In the late 1920s he moved to France, meeting Danish weaver Holcha Krake, whom he married in 1930. They spent the 1930s in Scandinavia, moving to the United States just before World War II. Johnson fell ill in 1947 and was institutionalized until his death in 1970. Much of his artwork, as well as his scrapbook and personal papers, were in storage at the time of his death.

### About the Scrapbook

This page is from a scrapbook that contains letters, photographs, awards, certificates, lists of paintings, clippings, and other miscellany. The photographs are of Johnson in his studio painting, his artwork, and one of Johnson with the American ambassador to Sweden, Fred Morris Dearing. Also shown are two letters: one from Charles W. Hawthorne recommending Johnson to get outdoors and paint, and a second from the Harmon Foundation about a medal of honor Johnson received in 1929. Scrapbooks are a valuable source of information, and many artists kept them. By saving and assembling letters, photographs, and other documents in a scrapbook, the maker creates a personal history of important events.

### Learning to “Read”

- What do you think this is? What is included on this page?
- What do you see in the photographs?
- Pass the poster and ask individual students to read sections of the text. What is discussed in the letters? How do you think they relate to the photos?
- This is a scrapbook made to document part of the life and work of African American artist William H. Johnson. Have you ever made a scrapbook? What did you include? Why?
- Why do you think these particular items were chosen to display in this scrapbook? What do they tell us about the artist and his career?
- One of the letters included on this scrapbook page is from the Harmon Foundation, an organization that was very involved in fostering awareness of African American artists. Have students take turns reading this letter out loud. What does it tell you about the Foundation’s motivations and interests?
- How would you describe the image of an African American artist that this scrapbook page presents? Is he respected for his work? How can you tell?
- Based on what you know about the developments and changes during the Harlem Renaissance, how would this scrapbook page be different for an African American artist who was active before this period?

### Activity

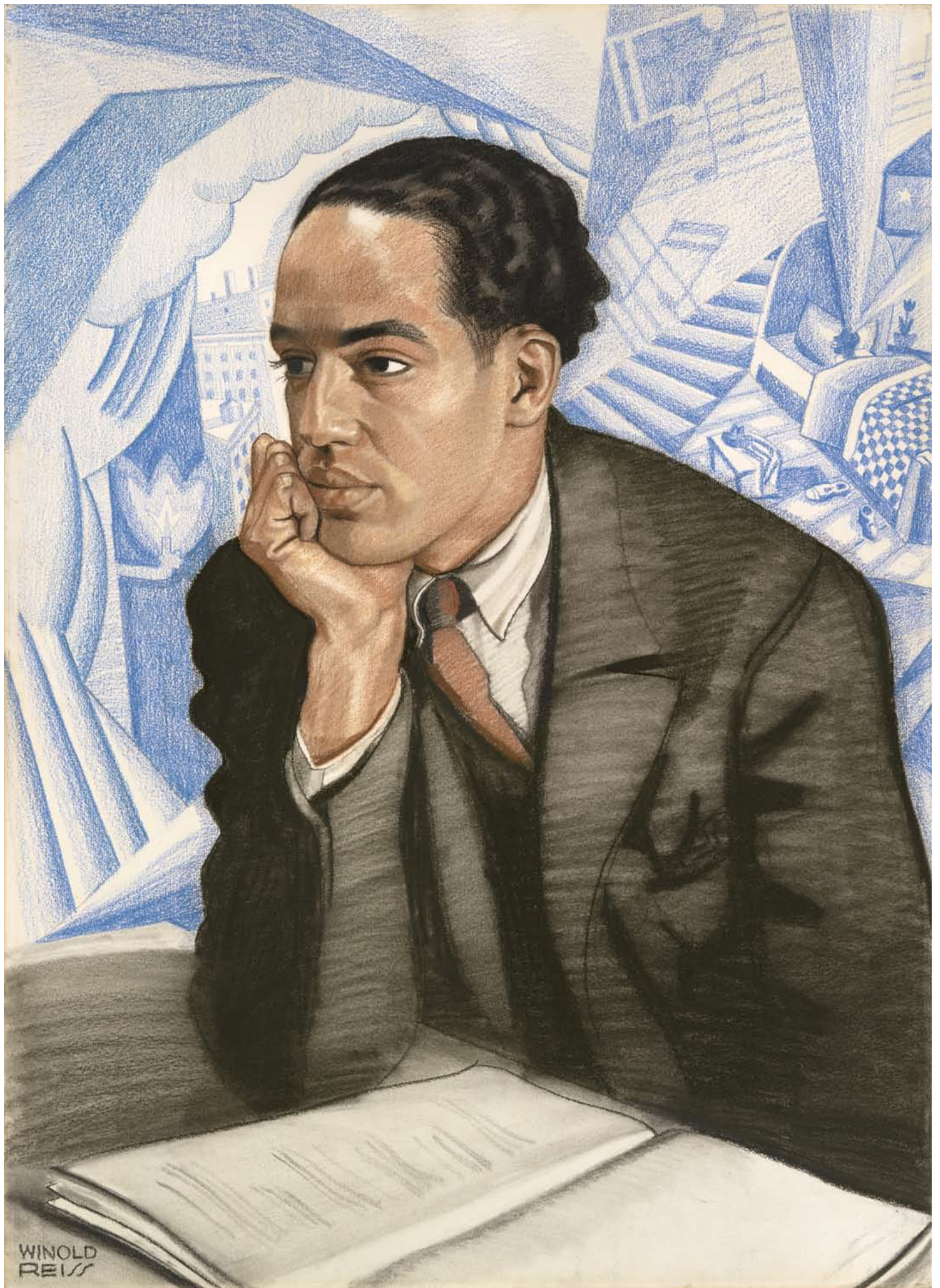
Ask students to choose and research another important African American musician, writer, or artist from the Harlem Renaissance. They should do their best to find primary source materials such as photographs, letters, and quotes that provide information about the person’s life. Using this research and their gathered materials, the students will make their own scrapbook page that represents important aspects of the person’s life and career. They should write a summary of their scrapbook page, identifying the sources and context for the materials they have chosen. Students will present their scrapbook pages to the class.

### Resource

Visit the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Web site for a slideshow of Johnson’s artworks:  
<http://americanart.si.edu/collections/interact/slideshow/johnson/>

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WINOLD  
REISS



## Langston Hughes (1902–1967)

by Winold Reiss (1886–1953)

pastel on illustration board, ca. 1925

30 1/16 x 21 5/8 in. (76.3 x 54.9 cm)

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of W. Tjark Reiss, in memory of his father, Winold Reiss

### About the Sitter

Born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902, Langston Hughes said, “My earliest memories of written words were those of W.E.B. Du Bois and the Bible.”

After graduating from high school, Hughes accompanied his father to Mexico. Crossing the Mississippi River by train, he wrote “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” a poem chronicling the African American journey from ancient to modern history. He sent the poem to *Crisis*, the magazine Du Bois edited. He asked, “What colored person is there, do you suppose, in the United States who writes like that and is yet unknown to us?”

Leaving Columbia University after a year, Hughes visited Africa and then lived in Paris, sending work home for publication. His first volume of poetry, *The Weary Blues*, was published in 1926.

As the Harlem Renaissance reached full bloom in the 1920s, debate raged in local and national publications about art and literature’s role in expressing African American identities and overcoming stereotypical depictions. Hughes was hailed by some as the movement’s poet laureate. Others criticized him because of his use of realistic dialect and vivid depictions of nightclub and street scenes. Hughes actively participated in this intellectual debate but did not hesitate to realistically and sensitively portray the “low-down folks,” as he called them, in his poems, essays, short stories, plays, novels, and newspaper columns.

Eventually publishing more than forty books, Hughes never lost touch with the working people.

### About the Portrait

Artist Winold Reiss was born in Germany. Arriving in New York City in 1913, he soon began creating sensitive representations of African Americans and Native Americans. Reiss’s depictions avoided the racist stereotypes common at the time. This portrait, along with others created by Reiss, illustrated Alain Locke’s *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, a collection of Harlem literary works.

In this image, Langston Hughes appears deep in thought before an open notebook. He is well dressed, and high-rise Harlem buildings loom behind him. The portrait also includes sharp angles and harsh shapes that intrude on this thoughtful moment. Blue jazz notes swirl around Hughes, and a pair of work shoes and a simple bedroom allude to the working-class culture he explored in his work.

### Learning to Look

- Identify as many objects, places, and abstract shapes as possible in the background of the portrait. What is the relationship between Hughes and the background?
- What is the main color used in the portrait? How does this color make you feel? How is it connected to Hughes?
- If you were walking down a main street in Harlem during the 1920s, what sights and sounds would you expect to encounter? What would people be doing? Compare this with the scene behind Hughes. Then compare the 1920s street scene with what you might expect to see if you walked down a main street today.
- What parts of the portrait appear still, and what parts appear to move? How did artist Winold Reiss achieve this effect, and why did he include it in the portrait?
- Read one of Hughes’s poems about writing, for example, “Theme for English B.” What anxieties and emotions fill the author’s head as he prepares to write? What inspires him? Compare the author’s attitude in the poem to his appearance in the portrait. In the portrait, what thoughts fill Hughes’s head and from where does he draw inspiration?

### Activity

#### Publishing the Harlem Renaissance

Explain to students that Harlem Renaissance magazines, journals, and newspapers provided a forum in which to discuss African American art and literature as well as the social, political, and economic future of African Americans. Magazine contributors often disagreed, finding each other too radical or too conservative and accommodating to white society. Some magazines intentionally published works rejected by more conservative publications.

Hold a group discussion about the differences in point of view among these magazines. Divide students into small groups that will act as editorial boards of new Harlem Renaissance magazines of the 1920s. Each group should name its publication and design an appropriate cover image. Illustrations may be included throughout the magazine. Each magazine should include at least three of the following contributions:

- A “Letter from the Editor” describing the magazine’s point of view and goals
- An original literary work related to the Harlem Renaissance
- A critical review of one of Hughes’s poems
- A critical review of a Harlem Renaissance jazz song, theatrical performance, or artwork
- An editorial or opinion article contributing to the debate about the future of African Americans in the United States
- A news article related to Harlem

### Resources

“Drop Me Off in Harlem: Exploring Intersections,” the Kennedy Center’s main Harlem Renaissance Web site:

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/exploring/harlem/artsedge.html>

“On the Harlem Newsstand: Vehicles for Many Voices,” the Web site dedicated to Harlem Renaissance publications:

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/exploring/harlem/themes/newsstand.html>

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## Joseph Delaney (1904–1991)

### *Penn Station at War Time*, 1943

oil on canvas

34 x 48 1/8 in. (86.4 x 122.2 cm)

Gift of Joseph Delaney

### About the Artist

Joseph Delaney was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, but lived in New York City for most of his life. There he studied with Thomas Hart Benton at the Art Students League. A realist like Benton, his favorite subject was the hustle and bustle of the city. His interest in New York and its people can be seen in his paintings and his work with the public. From 1934 to 1940, Delaney worked for the Works Progress Administration on public art projects. He also taught at Harlem and Brooklyn settlement houses.

Some of Delaney's own life experience is reflected in *Penn Station*. The prejudice that he and his brother, Beauford, encountered inspired Beauford, an artist of the Harlem Renaissance, to move to Europe and made Joseph committed to ending racial discrimination at home. He may be commenting on social change by depicting one African American man standing tall in a military uniform and another in a porter's uniform lifting a customer's bags. Before studying art, Delaney served for three years in the National Guard in the 1920s. Discussing World War II and Vietnam in an essay, he wrote, "The freedom we know and enjoy is guaranteed by young and brave Americans fighting and dying for this kind of life to continue."

### About the Artwork

Joseph Delaney painted this scene of New York City's Pennsylvania Station in 1943, a significant year for the United States' participation in World War II. The U.S. military tripled in size by the end of the year, the single largest increase of any year. This had a direct impact on railroads, which were called on to transport large numbers of military equipment and personnel. In addition, the war years led to an increase in civilian use of railroads because of the rationing of gasoline and rubber. In 1930, 66 million travelers went through Penn Station annually; during the war, that number rose to 109 million. In adapting to these changes, the railroads made a significant contribution to the war effort by increasing America's readiness for the war.

To accommodate the increase in traffic, the station added temporary ticket booths and waiting areas. Perhaps the most significant change caused by the war, however, was the number of women and ethnic minorities hired by the station to fill jobs left vacant by people joining the military. This was part of larger social changes that opened up new opportunities for these groups. Delaney depicts African American men both in military uniform and in the uniform of a porter. The accomplishments of African American units in World War II led to the desegregation of the military in 1948. Women also found new roles both at home and at war. Many of the women in *Penn Station at War Time* wear similar blue suits and hats, which could represent wartime volunteer women's organizations such as the WACs (Women's Army Corps) or the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service).

### Learning to Look

- How would you describe the mood of this painting? What would it feel like to be part of the crowd?
- Instruct students to take a full minute to look closely at this painting and try to make sense of the crowd. What is going on? How many different uniforms, both military and civilian, can you see? What signs can you read?
- Ask the students to choose one person in the painting. Ask each to describe what his or her person is doing? What clues did they use?
- How do those people and their individual stories fit together? What does this scene say about taking a train at Penn Station or about life during World War II in general?

### Activity

Students will conduct an interview with a family or community member who experienced World War II and life on the home front. A local senior center may connect students with possible interviewees.

If students cannot find a person to interview, they can search the Library of Congress Veteran's History Project for civilian oral histories: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/html/search/search.html> (make sure to limit the search to those interviews that have been digitized or have a transcript available)

Print out copies of this painting from the Museum's Web site for students to use as a conversation starter during their interview: [http://americanart.si.edu/images/1970/1970.176\\_1a.jpg](http://americanart.si.edu/images/1970/1970.176_1a.jpg)

Possible questions for students to address during the interview include:

- Does this painting remind you of any specific experiences during World War II? If so, what are they?
- What were you doing during World War II?
- How did the war most impact your life?

Students should write up their interviews and present any key points or stories to the class.

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Biddle  
Dec 11 - 41

Dear George —

As you probably realize,  
the world conditions as it  
is today, has in my  
particular case, produced  
a very awkward and  
trying situation.

A few short days has  
changed my status in this  
country, although I myself  
have not changed at all.





## Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889–1953)

**Draft letter to artist George Biddle, 11 December 1941, regarding his status in the United States four days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor**

10.2 x 8.3 in. (26 x 21 cm)

Yasuo Kuniyoshi papers, 1921–1993

## Max Yavno (1911–1985)

**Photograph of artist Yasuo Kuniyoshi (1889–1953) in his studio at 30 East Fourteenth Street, New York City, 31 October 1940.**

Photographed for the WPA Federal Art Project.

8 x 10 in. (20 x 25 cm)

Downtown Gallery records, 1824–1974

### About the Artist

A painter, printmaker, and photographer, Yasuo Kuniyoshi was born in 1889 in Okayama, Japan. At age thirteen he came to the United States and a year later began studying at the Los Angeles School of Art and Design. In 1910 he moved to New York and took courses at the National Academy of Design, the Independent School of Art, and the Art Students League. He was married to fellow artist Katherine Schmidt from 1919 to 1932, and after traveling through Europe, they moved to Woodstock, New York, in 1927. By 1930, Kuniyoshi had established himself as an internationally known painter and graphic artist. In New York he taught at the Art Students League, the New School for Social Research, and served as the first president of the Artists' Equity Association from 1947 to 1950. He was also active in social organizations, such as the Japanese American Committee for Democracy, and took an active role in the war effort during World War II.

### About the Letter

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Kuniyoshi, who was prodemocracy, anti-imperialist, and antifascist, was briefly placed under house arrest and his funds impounded. He wrote to artist George Biddle, "A few short days has changed my status in this country, although I myself have not changed at all." Biddle was a boyhood friend of President Franklin Roosevelt's and had given Roosevelt the idea for a government-supported mural and arts program, which later became part of the Works Progress Administration, or WPA. Kuniyoshi proved his loyalty to the United States and was helped and supported by his circle of prominent American artists.

### About the Photograph

Max Yavno took this photograph of Yasuo Kuniyoshi in the artist's studio at 30 East Fourteenth Street in New York, on October 31, 1940. Kuniyoshi is seen here working on his painting *Upside Down Table and Mask* (1940), which is now in the Fukutake Collection, in Okayama, Japan.

From 1936 to 1942, Yavno worked for the WPA as a photographer, and during World War II he served in the United States Air Force as a photography instructor. After the war he was a commercial and fine art photographer.

### Learning to Look

- What type of document is this? What date was it written?
- Ask students to take turns reading the text out loud to the entire class. What do you think was the relationship between the person writing the letter and the person it is addressed to?
- What tone does the writer convey in this letter? What are the key words that communicate this to you?

- Look closely at the photograph. The man who wrote the letter is pictured here. What do you know about him from this image?
- This man's name was Yasuo Kuniyoshi. He was a successful artist who was born in Japan, but lived from the age of thirteen in the United States. What "world condition" does he refer to in his letter?
- What is the meaning of the second part of his letter? "A few short days has changed my status in this country, although I myself have not changed at all."
- How does this letter relate to the overall experience of Japanese Americans during World War II?

### Activity

Yasuo Kuniyoshi wrote this letter to artist George Biddle, the brother of Francis Biddle, who was attorney general of the United States when Japanese Americans were placed in internment camps following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Although we do not know George Biddle's specific opinion on U.S. policies during World War II, he was likely placed in a difficult situation, torn between his ties of friendship to Kuniyoshi and his brother's duty to carry out President Roosevelt's policies.

Instruct students to write an imagined letter to Francis Biddle, persuading him against the policy of internment. The letter should offer support for Yasuo Kuniyoshi and his fellow Japanese Americans, using quotes from Kuniyoshi's own letter to provide a persuasive argument. Through research, the students should ensure that the letter addresses many of the fears that pervaded America following December 7, 1941, regarding people of Japanese heritage.

### Resource

Visit the Archives of American Art's Yasuo Kuniyoshi papers online:

<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collectionsonline/kuniyasu/>

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/>

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“above and beyond the call of duty”



**DORIE MILLER**  
*Received the Navy Cross  
at Pearl Harbor, May 27, 1942*



## Dorie Miller (1919–1943)

by David Stone Martin (1913–1992)

color photolithographic poster with halftone, 1943

28 1/16 x 20 1/4 in. (71.2 x 51.4 cm)

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

### About the Sitter

After a childhood of farming and football in Waco, Texas, nineteen-year-old Doris “Dorie” Miller enlisted in the navy in 1939 to see the world and send money home to his family. He joined as a mess attendant, one of the few positions open to African Americans at the time.

Serving on the battleship USS *West Virginia*, anchored in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Miller was doing laundry rounds on the morning of December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked. He went on deck to help the wounded to safety, including the captain and executive officer. He then manned a .50 mm machine gun, which he had not been trained to use, and fired at enemy planes until ordered to abandon the burning bridge.

Miller’s heroism was ignored or forgotten in the mainstream press until African American newspapers rallied for Miller to be honored. President Franklin D. Roosevelt personally ordered that Miller be awarded the Navy Cross, the navy’s second-highest award, in 1942.

Promoted and reassigned to sea, Miller was one of the 644 men lost when the escort carrier *Liscome Bay* sank in 1943 during the battle for Makin Island, in the Pacific.

### About the Portrait

Created by David Stone Martin, an Office of War Information (OWI) art director, this poster was displayed to boost African American morale and participation in the war effort during World War II.

OWI posters had many themes, instructing Americans to recycle scrap metal, increase factory productivity, buy war bonds, and keep confidential information to themselves. Other posters, like this one, commemorated inspirational heroes. Early posters were envisioned as artistic interpretations of patriotism, often including stylized images and few words. Later posters resembled commercial advertisements containing memorable taglines (“Loose lips sink ships!”) and cartoon-like imagery.

In order to contribute to the war effort, the Boy Scouts volunteered to distribute posters to shops, businesses, and public spaces, replacing posters every two weeks.

### Learning to Look

- What event is depicted in the background of the portrait, and why was this included?
- With its limited color palette, how do you think this poster would attract viewers and get noticed?
- What is this poster’s message? What persuasive tools does the poster use to convey its message?
- In what types of places do you think the Boy Scouts hung this poster? How might the poster’s meaning change depending on where it was displayed?
- Examine the style of the portrait. In what ways does the style resemble commercial advertisements or fine art? If you were designing an OWI poster, would you use an artistic or commercial style to get your message across to 1940s viewers? Which type of poster do you think would be most effective?
- What types of reactions did viewers living in the 1940s have when they saw it? How are the reactions of today’s viewer different?

### Activity

#### African Americans in WWII Exhibition

Explain to students that they will be creating an exhibition about African Americans in World War II in order to better understand and teach others about this important aspect of U.S. history.

Divide students into small groups, and have each group create a “panel” of the exhibition with its own topic. Assign any of the following topics or create your own:

- Introductory panel (including a WWII timeline)
- Branches of the U.S. armed services
- Jazz musicians performing for troops
- OWI’s role in shaping African American involvement in the war effort
- Executive Order 8802, which prohibited discrimination in hiring defense workers
- The African American press and the “Double V” campaign
- African American involvement in war bond drives, food rationing, etc.

Each group should research its topic and create a poster board panel that includes the following elements:

- Title
- World War II visual primary source with appropriate captions
- Text explaining the history presented in the panel
- At least three quotes from primary sources
- A section highlighting a relevant individual
- Maps (when appropriate)

Invite others to visit the exhibition and have students prepare a short guided tour about their panel.

### Resources

Photographs of African Americans who broke barriers in their war service:

<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/aframerwar/>

The “Double V” campaign and the black press:

<http://www.newsreel.org/guides/blackpress/treason.htm>

<http://www.blackpressusa.com/history/timeline.asp?era=228&block=2>

OWI posters and the “artistic” vs. “commercial” style:

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,850005,00.html>

Images of African Americans involved in WWII efforts:

<http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/ww2-pictures/#home>

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## Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000)

### *The Library*, 1960

tempera on fiberboard

24 x 29 7/8 in. (60.9 x 75.8 cm)

Gift of S. C. Johnson & Son, Inc.

### About the Artist

Jacob Lawrence moved to Harlem in 1929 when he was twelve years old and received his first artistic training in an after-school arts and crafts program, where his instructor immediately recognized his talents. He dropped out of high school during the Depression to help support his family, but was encouraged to visit the Schomburg Library and exhibitions of African art to learn more about his cultural heritage. Much of his later work focuses on the lives of important African Americans in history and scenes of African American life. He is one of the most celebrated African American artists of the twentieth century.

### About the Artwork

In this colorful painting, African Americans sit and stand in the reading room of a crowded library. Most are fully absorbed in reading or investigating illustrations, while one figure walks with a heavy armload of books. The readers' clothes and the volumes they study are painted in purple, green, red, gold, and black, unifying the composition. These colors contrast with the brown tones of the floor, tables, and chairs. While it is not clear exactly what most of the people are reading, the person in red at the front table leafs through a book with illustrations of African art.

This library scene may represent the Schomburg Library at 135th Street in Harlem, today known as the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. In 1926, Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, a scholar of black history and culture, donated his large collection of books to the library. It developed into one of the most extensive library collections focused on the experiences of people of African descent. Jacob Lawrence stated that “this became a favorite place of mine to go and work and do research.” Since black history was not taught in school like other subjects, Lawrence spent hours investigating his own cultural history. He created this work in 1960, just as the civil rights movement was gaining momentum. As many African Americans uncovered the details of their own heritage and became more aware of past injustices, their desire for equal rights and opportunities grew stronger.

### Learning to Look

- What are the people in this painting doing? Where do you think they are?
- What are some similarities between the people in the painting? What are some differences?
- If you look closely, you will see glimpses of what a couple of the people are looking at. What do you see?
- This scene likely represents a library in Harlem known for its large collection of books about black history and culture. Why do you think these readers are so immersed in their books?
- The artist, Jacob Lawrence, was African American and spent many hours in this library. Looking at the painting, how do you think he felt about this place? Why?
- This painting was made in 1960. What was happening at that time that could have influenced the artist and his choice of subject?

### Activity

This work shows us a library where Jacob Lawrence and other African Americans could investigate their own history and culture, at a time when this history was not discussed in schools. Lawrence created this painting in 1960. Divide students into groups and instruct them to create a new book for the library that addresses the following question:

In what ways have African Americans contributed most significantly to American history and culture since 1960?

The book could address African American contributions in areas such as popular culture, politics, music, athletics, and the performing and visual arts. Students should include:

- Photographs or images
- Biographies
- Quotes from important speeches or writings
- Poems
- Timelines

The groups should divide the work between all members, and work together to design the book's layout and its cover.

### Resources

Smithsonian Institution, *Encyclopedia Smithsonian: African American History and Culture*: [http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia\\_SI/History\\_and\\_Culture/AfricanAmerican\\_History.htm](http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/History_and_Culture/AfricanAmerican_History.htm)

Whitney Museum of American Art, *Jacob Lawrence: Exploring Stories*: <http://www.whitney.org/jacoblawrence/>

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Osceola, for Jimmy, for  
Richard, for Beauford,  
for Chuck, for Willie, for  
my grand mother, my  
mother, Leah, Helma,  
Joanne, Alex, W.D. Beau,  
for all the people whom  
have been kind - who  
care - for Red Allen - for  
George Rad - for Michael  
Meloon, for George  
lovely George - protect  
him - for Ann Scottford -

We hear the barbed wire,  
the entry into a hell that  
man have erected to  
honor their guilt - the  
closeness of bodies, the  
raised clubs - the  
revolvers, the machine  
guns pointed at us -

the silence broken  
only by feet walking,  
the spits and quiet  
curses, the two way  
radios, the cameras

of the troopers clicking,  
the ABC, NBC, CBS  
cameras whirring -  
the intense glare of hate  
filled whites standing  
back, the eyes - never  
have I seen such  
eyes, concentrated with  
fear that hates, the mirrors  
of souls that have  
damned themselves,  
we walk slowly -  
purposefully - with  
full dignity -

We stop for lights after  
we took our first right  
into the border of no man's  
land - then -

Here - here on this  
spot where my foot has  
touched Red Beck gave  
his measure - here - but  
then is not the same - in  
the most sordid places -  
the ultimate beauty seems  
to happen - strange -





## William Christopher (1924–1973)

Diary, March 13–16, 1965

8 x 5 in. (20 x 13 cm)

William Christopher papers, 1946–1972

## Unidentified photographer

Martin Luther King, Jr., and William Christopher at Boston University, 1964  
(detail)

The two men met on the occasion of Dr. King presenting his papers to the university and an exhibition of Christopher's paintings in honor of King.

3 1/2 x 3 1/2 in. (9 x 9 cm)

William Christopher papers, 1946–1972

## About the Artist

William Christopher was born in 1924 in Columbus, Georgia. He studied at the Sorbonne and the Académie Julian in Paris, and at the École des Beaux-Arts at Fontainebleau, and with Amédée Ozenfant and Hans Hofmann in New York. He was a painter, an art instructor, and a civil rights activist. As a white southerner living in Hartford, Vermont, in the 1960s he was keenly attuned to racial tensions in the Deep South and he used his art to advance the civil rights movement. In 1964 he made a series of eight paintings in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which he exhibited at Dartmouth College; at Boston University on the occasion of Dr. King presenting his papers to the University; and at the National Convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Savannah, Georgia.

In March 1965, Christopher and his partner George Tooker responded to Dr. King's appeal for support in the Selma-to-Montgomery, Alabama, march for voting rights. Joining them was John Scotford Jr., who taught with Christopher in the art department at Dartmouth College. On March 14, one week after "Bloody Sunday" when peaceful black protesters in Selma were beaten back by Alabama state troopers, Christopher, Tooker, and Scotford arrived in Montgomery as official representatives of the Dartmouth branch of the NAACP. Christopher kept a diary of his trip to Alabama.

## About the Diary

Christopher's powerfully emotional account allows the reader to experience a historical moment at a pivotal point in the American civil rights movement. He described what it was like to march in silence with Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma, on March 15, 1965:

We line up three abreast. I am on the outside—next to the church—John in the middle—George on his right—SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] gives us instructions—silence—the streets are filled with people—the head of the line reaches the barricades—chin to chin—nuns to troopers—all is silent except low whispers—twelve Southern Presbyterian ministers behind us are saying, "Can you believe what we are doing—" ...

—we look ahead to the barriers—and see the troopers with machine guns, the cars filled—we look back and see black men, white men and women children—as far back as we see and the line turns the corner—the troopers are there too—we look to the right through the houses, the troopers are there too—we are silent—the moment has come—we are not afraid—we have all the dignity we possess at hand—we have our life on the line—each of us feels this in each our own way—as we move I pray—I thank so many for this moment, I walk now for the spirit—I remember souls who have touched me, I pray for them ... We near the barricades the entry into a hell that men have erected to honor their guilt—the closeness of bodies, the raised clubs—the revolvers, the machine guns pointed at us.

The silence broken only by feet walking, the spits and quiet curses, the two-way radios, the cameras of the troopers clicking, the ABC, NBC, CBS cameras whirring—the intense glare of hate-filled whites standing back, the eyes—never have I seen such eyes, consumed with fear that hates, the mirrors of souls that have damned themselves. We walk slowly purposefully—with full dignity.

President Lyndon B. Johnson declared the events in Selma "an American tragedy...It is wrong to deny Americans the right to vote. It is wrong to deny anyone full equality because of the color of his skin." Johnson submitted a voting rights bill to Congress on March 17, 1965. After the bill passed the House and the Senate, Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law on August 6, 1965.

## Learning to "Read"

Christopher's diary is legible enough that students should be able to read it from the poster. You might choose to read the entire transcript out loud to the class and then select key passages for them to find on the poster. You can choose an excerpt if your students are too young for some of the content.

- How does Christopher make you feel like you are a part of the scene?
- What details does he include that describe what he was seeing and hearing?
- What is the mood of the scene? How do the marchers feel? How do people watching the march feel?
- Why might the ministers be asking each other, "Can you believe what we are doing?"
- Based on Christopher's experience, why do people march in protest? Why might it be a powerful statement? What other forms of protest can you name?

## Activity

Christopher uses details of what he is seeing and hearing to create a word picture of the marching scene. In this activity students will first draw the scene as they understand it from his letter and then write their own diary entry to record a powerful experience from their own lives.

First, have the students close their eyes while you read the diary to them. While they have their eyes closed, they should be taking note of all the visual details Christopher includes. Then have each student draw the scene as they saw it. They can consult the poster throughout the drawing process if they want to check on a detail.

Have each student select a personal experience that was as powerful to them as the march from Selma was for William Christopher and then write a diary entry about it from their own point of view. Before they write about it, ask them to think about every aspect of the experience and make a list for each sense: I saw, I heard, I smelled, I felt, I tasted. Identifying these details in advance should help them create the same kind of powerful word picture that Christopher did.





R.R.

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## Signs

by Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008)

color screenprint, 1970

35 1/4 x 26 3/4 in. (89.5 x 68 cm)

National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

© Robert Rauschenberg/Visual Artists and Galleries Association

### About the Sitters

Robert Rauschenberg's *Signs* contains many images. It shows singer Janis Joplin, known for her frenzied stage performances and raspy vocals that transformed popular music in the 1960s. Joplin and Rauschenberg shared the hometown of Port Arthur, Texas. Her death on October 4, 1970, from a drug overdose inspired this work.

Joplin's microphone provides a visual link to Robert Kennedy, candidly photographed midsentence, his left arm cradling two soldiers. Kennedy promoted desegregation as U.S. attorney general. He was assassinated while campaigning for the presidency on June 5, 1968.

In contrast to Robert's snapshot, John F. Kennedy appears as a "profile in courage," stoically overlooking his own November 22, 1963, assassination in Dallas. His idealism and youthfulness created great expectations during his presidency, a time of tension during the civil rights movement and international conflict.

Linked to the series of deceased figures by a prostrated protestor lies Martin Luther King Jr. A Nobel Peace Prize winner and leader of many nonviolent social actions, King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. And Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin Jr. appears on the left, emblematic of John F. Kennedy's commitment to land a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s.

### About the Portrait

Robert Rauschenberg claimed that he learned to collage by watching his mother cut out dresses. Copying newspaper comics was his main exposure to art.

Rauschenberg is best known for his "combines," artworks composed of discarded, everyday materials that merge painting and sculpture. "I really feel sorry for people who think things like soap dishes or mirrors or Coke bottles are ugly," Rauschenberg once said, "because they're surrounded by things like that all day long, and it must make them miserable." Like his combines, *Signs* gathers pieces of everyday life of the 1960s and combines them in ways that develop new relationships between people and events.

Some would say that *Signs* offers multiple perspectives at once, refusing to be reduced to a single message. Rauschenberg's combines, paintings, and collages have been called "visual noise" and compared to the experience of rapidly flipping through television channels. One reviewer wrote that Rauschenberg created art for "a generation of multitaskers."

#### Sources

Michael Kimmelman, "Art Out of Anything: Rauschenberg in Retrospect," *New York Times*, Dec. 23, 2005.

Time magazine's September 11, 2001, anniversary collage by Robert Rauschenberg: <http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20020909,00.html>

### Learning to Look

- What symbols of hope can you identify in this portrait?
- What motifs (recurring subjects, themes, or ideas) appear in this image, and what meanings do you think they communicate?
- Human hands are repeating symbols in this work. Why do you think Rauschenberg decided to include so many hands? What meanings could this motif have?
- What materials and techniques did Rauschenberg use to create this image?
- Most of the figures in this artwork have been cut out of their surroundings and placed in this new context. How is John F. Kennedy's portrait different in style? Why do you think Rauschenberg did this?
- Imagine that this artwork is an audio track instead of an image. What types of music and other sounds would resonate from it?

- Created in 1970, this work is a snapshot of the era. How might this work differ if it interpreted the 1960s from today's perspective?
- Why do you think Rauschenberg gave this work the title *Signs*?

### Activity

#### Signs: Bombarded with News

In order to better understand the historical events that surrounded the creation of *Signs*, play the 1966 Simon and Garfunkel song "Seven O'clock News/Silent Night" (or provide the lyrics). The song contains a newscast that references tensions regarding the Civil Rights Bill, Vietnam War protests, and the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Instruct students to listen for connections with *Signs*' subject matter and consider the following questions:

- What concerns were on people's minds?
- How was *Signs* shaped or inspired by its time period?

Students will then use the lyrics as inspiration to present a variety of 1960s news stories. Divide students into groups made up of an anchor-person, reporter, and interviewees. Each group should conduct research to create a newscast skit with smooth transitions that includes at least three of the following segments:

- An interview with one of the well-known figures in *Signs*
- An interview with one of the anonymous individuals (protestors, soldiers, etc.)
- A feature story about contemporary music, film, or literature
- A story reported on location at a news event
- Local, national, or international news

Students should present their skits to the class. Conclude with a discussion of the social, political, and economic events students reported on and the ways in which they connect with *Signs*.

As an extension conversation, discuss how people get their news today. How has this changed the way we understand current events?

### Resource

Lyrics for "7 O'clock News/Silent Night" by Simon and Garfunkel: <http://sglyrics.myrmid.com/parsley.htm#track12>

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