

Art of the Grand Canyon

Duration 1-3 Days (depending on activities chosen)

Location Classroom

Key Vocabulary

conservation: prevention of excessive or wasteful use of a resource

preservation: to protect from harm or destruction

wilderness: uncultivated, uninhabited region; wild country

icon: person or thing regarded as a representative symbol

transcendentalist: one who espoused a philosophical romantic theory that there was an ideal, intuitive reality transcending ordinary life

landscape: a picture representing a countryside or land

kiva: a chamber built wholly or partially underground, used by Puebloan Indian males for religious rites

tourism: the commercial organization and operations of vacations and visits to places of interest

environmentalism: preservation of wilderness lands against the encroachment of commercial exploitation

reclamation: turning arid land into productive farmland through irrigation

Trunk Materials

- ***Kolb Brothers: Grand Canyon Pioneers*** (KAET Arizona Collection DVD) with viewing guide
- **15 Copies of PowerPoint of Grand Canyon Art on CD** including the work of Jack Hillers, Thomas Moran, William H. Holmes, the Kolb Brothers, Fred Kabotie, the WPA, the Sierra Club, and Bruce Aiken
- **Reading/viewing guide** (master copy) for each group: The Powell Legacy, The Great Depression, Contemporary Views
- ***Arizona Highways*** (April 1981) pages 2-5, 28-37, 38-44
- ***The Majesty of the Grand Canyon: 150 Years in Art*** (GCA Publication) pages 16-21, 28-29
- **The Tertiary History of the Grand Canon District** (Stegner Introduction of 2001 edition)
- ***Mary Colter: Architect of the Southwest*** (Princeton Architectural Press) pages 198-205
- **CD: *Grand Canyon Suite*, Ferde Grofe (Cincinnati Pops Orchestra)**
- **Article: “See America: WPA Posters and the Mapping of a New Deal Democracy” by Cory Pillen in *The Journal of American Culture* pages 49-65**

- *The Good Fight*, DVD of Sierra Club Efforts
- *Time and River Flowing: Grand Canyon* (Sierra Club Battle Book)
- *Lasting Light: 125 Years of Grand Canyon Photography* (GCA Publication) pages 32, 34-36
- “Analyzing Visual Art” Guide

**Additional Materials
(not supplied)**

- Copies of Kolb Brothers viewing guide for each student
- Copies of group readings for each member
- Copies of group reading/viewing guide for each group member
- Copies of “Analyzing Art Review Guide”
- *How the Canyon Became Grand: A Short History*, by Stephen J. Pyne
- *A Place Called Grand Canyon: Contested Geographies*, by Barbara Morehouse
- *The West of the Imagination*, by William H. Goetzmann and William N. Goetzmann
- *Bruce Aiken’s Grand Canyon: An Intimate Affair* (GCA)
- *Too Funny To Be President*, by Morris Udall (Chapter 4)
- *A Century of Grand Canyon Art*
- www.batguano.com/century/index.html
- Posters from the WPA
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammen/wpaposters/about.html>
- Center of the American West
<http://www.centerwest.org/projects/past/listening/grofe.html>
- *Mary Colter- Field Research Photos, Desert View Watchtower*
<http://www.nps.gov/archive/grca/photos/colter/watch>
- *Grand Canyon Desert View Watchtower*
<http://www.scienceviews.com/parks/watchtower.html>
- Kolb Brothers Website (Companion to DVD)
www.azpbs.org/kolb

Enduring Understanding

Artists do not create their art in a vacuum. They are deeply impacted by the society in which they live. Art, therefore, reflects the society in which it was created. But artists also try to influence society through their art as an instrument of social change. Clarence Dutton, author of *The Tertiary History of the Grand Canon District*, believed the canyon was “a great innovation in our modern ideas of scenery, and in our conceptions of the grandeur, beauty, and power of nature.” As an innovation then, the Canyon

is a product of interpretation through the lens of our American culture.

Essential Questions

- How has the Grand Canyon contributed to American culture?
- How did the Canyon bestow a sense of national identity?
- How has the Grand Canyon been used by Americans to express their values and beliefs over time?
- How does the Canyon depict a dynamic American culture?

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify and note the impact of efforts to portray the Grand Canyon in photography and painting.
- Assess the contribution the art of Grand Canyon had on the nation.
- Determine how Grand Canyon became a national icon.
- Evaluate how the art of the canyon can be a lens by which American history can be understood.

Background

Over time the art of the Grand Canyon has reflected the dynamic nature of American society in the 19th and 20th centuries. Art at the Canyon also influenced America's understanding of itself. Using the resources provided, complete any or all of the following procedures. In order to effectively teach these lessons, the teacher should familiarize her or himself with each set of readings in this unit.

Suggested Procedures

- Watch the DVD, *Kolb Brothers: Grand Canyon Pioneers* and complete the viewing guide. Discuss the guide. This should set the stage for the following activity.
- Divide the students in the class into three "expert" groups. Each expert group should be given 5 copies of the CD of the PowerPoint on Grand Canyon Art.
- Assign an era in the history of the art of the Grand Canyon to each group. Group #1 will explore John Wesley Powell's legacy. Group #2 will investigate the arts of the Grand Canyon during the Great Depression. Group #3 will examine more contemporary interpretations of the Grand Canyon.
- Each group will be assigned readings/media about the artists and will analyze examples of their art. Each group member will complete the guide for his or her readings/media. Each group member will complete an "Analyzing Visual Art" for the art piece of his or her choice.
- Each group will then report to the class on what they discovered during the class discussion, focusing on the questions it has been assigned.
- Teacher will engage the class in a discussion of the Essential Questions.

Group #1: The Powell Legacy

- Read about the artists of the 1873 Powell expedition in *The Majesty of the Grand Canyon* (pages 16-21, 28-29). Read more on Thomas Moran on the website [A Century of Grand Canyon Art](#). Read about Jack Hillers and Thomas Moran in the April 1981 issue of *Arizona Highways*. Read the Introduction by Wallace Stegner in the 2001 University of Arizona's edition of Clarence Dutton's *Tertiary History of the Grand Canon District*. Answer the Reading Guide questions.
- Complete the "Analyzing Visual Art" Guide for one of Moran's works; "Zoroaster Temple," or "Glimpse of the Grand Canyon," **OR** Jack Hiller's photography, **OR** William H. Holmes' painting in the *Tertiary History of the Grand Canon District, Atlas*. These selections are on the PowerPoint of Grand Canyon Art CD located in the trunk. (Students choose which artist they would like to investigate further.) Make sure each artist is covered by at least 2 students in the group.
- Report to the class on each of the following questions.
 1. Why can Thomas Moran be called a transcendentalist landscape artist?
 2. How did Moran help make the Canyon a cultural icon?
 3. Compare and contrast Moran's depiction of the Grand Canyon with the painting of William H. Holmes. Whose painting do you like better? Explain.
 4. Assess the validity of the following statement made in the April 1981 of *Arizona Highways* about Jack Hillers ". . . others have visited and photographed the Canyon with the same wide-eyed wonderment and respect, but none have come close to conveying the startling beauty captured by Jack Hillers, the first man to photograph the Grand Canyon."

Group #2: The Great Depression

- Read pages 198-205 in *Mary Colter: Architect of the Southwest* about the artistic creations of Fred Kabotie in Watchtower designed by Mary Colter. Then read the article, "Grand Canyon Desert View Watchtower" on [ScienceViews.com](#). Read any textbook's information on the WPA's Federal Art Project and pages 47-56 of Cory Pillen's article in the *Journal of American Culture*, "See America: WPA Posters and the Mapping of a New Deal Democracy." Answer the reading guide questions.
- Complete the "Analyzing Visual Art" Guide for the Fred Kabotie circular mural of the Hopi snake legend in the kiva of Mary Colter's Watchtower **OR** the WPA poster art for the Grand Canyon on the PowerPoint provided in the trunk. (Students should complete the guide for the art of their choice.) Make sure each art piece is covered

by at least two people. **OR** students may listen to the Grand Canyon Suite CD and answer the questions provided by the Center of the American West's "Listening to the West" curriculum guide to Ferde Grofe's *Grand Canyon Suite*.

- Report to the class on each of the following questions
 1. How does the art of Fred Kabotie reflect the policies pursued by John Collier as Commissioner of Indian Affairs?
 2. Contrast the WPA poster art with the paintings of Thomas Moran. What could explain this different depiction of the Canyon?
 3. What does the art created at the Canyon during the Great Depression reveal about America at this time?
 4. How did Ferde Grofe convey the natural landscape of the Grand Canyon in his composition *The Grand Canyon Suite*?
 5. How does the *Grand Canyon Suite* contribute to the iconic nature of the Canyon?

Group #3: Contemporary Views

- Watch the first twelve (12:10) minutes of the video, *The Good Fight*, which emphasizes the role of Martin Litton and the Sierra Club in saving the Grand Canyon. Read pages 32, 34-36 of *Lasting Light-125 Years of Grand Canyon Photography*. Read the two Forwards, the Epilogue and the Idea of Wilderness in the book, *Time and River Flowing: Grand Canyon*. Read about Bruce Aiken's early years living at the bottom of the Canyon with his family in the April 1981 issue of *Arizona Highways*. Read the information on Bruce Aiken on the website [Century of Grand Canyon Art](#). Answer the reading guide questions.
- Choose any Sierra Club photograph from the PowerPoint. Complete an Analyzing Art Review Guide for the photo chosen. **Or** from the PowerPoint, complete an Analyzing Art Review Guide for either of Bruce Aiken's paintings "Bright Angel Creek" or "Split Rock."
- Report to the class on each of the following questions.
 1. How does the photography of the Sierra Club express American sentiments about the environment during the Civil Rights Era?
 2. What techniques utilized by the Sierra Club in 1964 could be used today to address the problem of global warming?
 3. Explain what David Bower meant when he said in 1964, "In Grand Canyon, as in the other park and wilderness reserves, the battle must be renewed each time someone of the great enterprise conspires to reduce wilderness to something else and something less."

4. Compare and contrast Bruce Aiken's landscape paintings of the Canyon with those of Thomas Moran's. What could explain the difference in their depictions of the Canyon?

Evaluations

- Essay test based on student reports and class discussion of "The Big Idea," Essential Questions, or the Learning Objectives. (See Essay Checklist)
- Teacher evaluation of student reports. Look for specific, accurate and relevant information. Assign full credit if information meets these qualifications for each question assigned the group.
- Teacher evaluation of Analyzing Art Review Guide completed by each student. Two points can be awarded for each task successfully completed on the guide. One point for identifying art, location, and artist. 15 points total.

Extensions

- WPA Writers' Program – *Arizona The Grand Canyon State: A State Guide* pages 471-495. A worthwhile look back at the Grand Canyon during the Depression through the eyes of the Federal Writers' Project of the WPA.
- *Too Funny to Be President* by Morris Udall (Chapter 4) This is quite an entertaining account of an Arizona Congressman's role in the effort to dam the Grand Canyon in the 1960s. Put your feet up and enjoy a great read from a most interesting Arizona politician.
- *Through the Grand Canyon From Wyoming to Mexico* by Ellsworth L. Kolb Read the epic story from the man himself!
- *Tertiary History of the Grand Canon District* by Clarence Dutton Geology and beautiful prose in one volume. A classic! Read the work that made the Canyon Grand!
- **WPA Poster Art** is available on the Library of Congress website. Students can learn more about the purpose and the techniques of the New Deal's Federal Project Number One, a central administration for arts-related projects.
- Investigate KAET's Kolb Brothers web site. This is the companion site to the DVD, *Kolb Brothers: Grand Canyon Pioneers*.
- Students interested in the architecture of Mary Colter can read the book *Mary Colter: Architect of the Southwest* or Chapter 8 in *A Gathering of Grand Canyon Historians: Ideas, Arguments, and First-Person Accounts*. Consider the challenges faced by a woman who was successful in the male-

dominated field of architecture. Also, examine the impact her architecture had on the Grand Canyon.

Resources

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