

LESSON PLAN FOR ALBERT BIERSTADT, MOUNT CORCORAN, 1877

TITLE: ARTISTIC PROPAGANDA

GRADE LEVEL: SIXTH

ACADEMIC SUBJECT: LANGUAGE ARTS

GOAL/DESCRIPTION:

After learning the background of how the Corcoran Gallery acquired Albert Bierstadt's *Mount Corcoran*, the students take on the roll of artist and launch a campaign (using [propaganda techniques*](#)) for an artwork of their choosing in the hopes of convincing a top museum to purchase it.

[Propaganda Techniques](#): Information or publicity that is put out by an organization or government to spread and promote a policy, idea, doctrine, or cause and that includes deceptive or distorted information.

BIG IDEA:

Artistic [Propaganda*](#): How artists can use their work to persuade an audience

[Propaganda](#): The spreading of ideas, information, or rumors for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person.

OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES:

Students will learn about Albert Bierstadt's plan to convince the Corcoran Gallery to purchase and display *Mount Corcoran*. Students will learn about artistic patronage. Students will understand how artists use propaganda to convince their audience to believe facts that are not always valid. Students will create posters and give PowerPoint presentations as part of their campaign to get their artwork purchased.

TEACHING PROCEDURE/TIME ALLOTTED:

Eight Class Periods

MONDAY

The teacher will begin by introducing Bierstadt and *Mount Corcoran*. S/he will tell the story of how the Corcoran Gallery acquired the work and then talk about patronage and artistic propaganda. The students will then receive their campaign assignment and have the remainder of the class to research the artwork they will be promoting.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

After Bierstadt's paintings began to lose popularity, why do you think he continued to work in the same style?

Do you think it was wrong of Bierstadt to mislead the museum into buying his piece? Do you agree with the Gallery for keeping the painting even after they found out that *Mount Corcoran* was possibly [fictional](#)?

Bierstadt's peers looked down on him because of his constant self-promoting. Do you think they changed their opinions of his tactics after he was successful? Do you think the same tactic could be carried through in an art museum today? [Fictional: Imaginative. Although it can draw from reality, it springs mainly from the imagination.](#)

HOMEWORK: DECIDE WHAT WORK OF ART TO PROMOTE AND RESEARCH THE PIECE AND THE ARTIST WHO CREATED IT.

TUESDAY

Students will brainstorm ideas for their campaigns and develop an idea for their poster that will advertise for their work of art and begin to persuade their audience. If they have time, they can begin work on their poster.

WEDNESDAY

Students will spend the class period working on their posters

HOMEWORK: Finish poster and have ready to hang at the start of class Thursday,

THURSDAY

Students will spend the class time in the computer lab working on their PowerPoint presentation.

FRIDAY

Students will spend the entire class in the computer lab working on their PowerPoint presentation. Sign up for which day to present.

MONDAY

Students will each have about 5-7 minutes to present their PowerPoint to the class.

TUESDAY

Students will each have about 5-7 minutes to present their PowerPoint to the class.

WEDNESDAY

Students will each have about 5-7 minutes to present their PowerPoint to the class.

PLANS FOR DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION:

If the number of students in the class is too large to spend three whole days presenting, students can be put in groups of two or three. Students can have the option to write a newspaper or magazine article advertising for their work of art rather than create a poster. The teacher can assign specific works of art to the students rather than have them choose their own.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:

Many artists, like Albert Bierstadt, are faced with conceiving creative ways to self-promote their work in order to interest their audience. Bierstadt knew that selling large paintings could be lucrative and was determined to find the highest paying patrons for his work. At the time, patrons were hesitant to support artists unless they were first represented by a credible museum or gallery. Artists today continue to strive for representation from the top galleries and museums around the country in order to establish and expand their careers.

KEY KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS:

(Declarative) Some artists, like Bierstadt, use propaganda to make their audience believe facts that are not true. (Procedural) Using propaganda techniques such as [bandwagoning*](#), [exaggeration*](#), [fallacies*](#), [persuasion*](#), the students will work to convince the museum board (their teacher and their classmates) that their artwork deserves to be purchased and displayed.

[Bandwagoning](#): A cause or movement that has popularity and support used as a strategy to get others to join

[Exaggeration](#): to enlarge beyond bounds or the truth.

[Fallacies](#): A statement or an argument based on a false or invalid inference; incorrectness of reasoning or belief; erroneousness.

[Persuasion](#): To move by argument, entreaty, or expostulation to a belief, position, or cause of action.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT:

(Summative) Students will be assessed using a [rubric*](#) that is based on their ability to persuade their audience, the effectiveness of their poster, and their presentation skills ([volume*](#), [enunciation*](#), [diction*](#), etc.) (Formative) As students work in class, the teacher will walk around, stopping to ask them about their ideas and offer suggestions on improving their campaign.

Rubric: An authentic assessment tool for making scoring decisions; a printed set of guidelines that distinguishes performances or products of different quality.

Volume: the loudness of a sound

Enunciation: to pronounce or articulate clearly all the syllables of a word.

Diction: An author's choice of words based on their correctness, clearness, or effectiveness

MATERIALS/TEACHER RESOURCES:

Large scale reproductions of Albert Bierstadt's *Mount Corcoran* (projected digital images would work fine, so that all groups can see it as they work on their scenes), a projector and screen so that students can give their PowerPoint presentations, access to a computer lab where students can work on their PowerPoints, 19in. x 24in. heavy white paper for posters, markers, a variety of colors of construction paper, scissors, and glue.

TEACHER REFLECTION:

This assignment gives students the opportunity to put themselves into the artist's shoes and imagine what it is like to promote their own work. It also allows students to take creative liberties with the artwork by coming up with creative fictional background stories to their artwork. It brings their attention to how an audience perceives their work while working to improve their public speaking/persuasive speaking skills (this assignment would be especially good for students whose writing skills might not be on par with their classmates but can really shine while presenting).

DEVELOPMENT RATIONALE:

Most sixth grade students are in the emerging expertise stage of artistic development. In this stage, students become very aware of the differences between themselves and their peers and look to separate themselves from adults. They are attracted to art that can be connected to a specific situation or person rather than something more general. There is a greater chance for students to be self-critical and compare their work to that of other students so it is important for teachers to stress the light heartedness of the assignment.

STANDARDS:

- **6.M.3.** Create multimedia presentations using computer technology, including graphics and animation.
- **6.LD-O.6.** Give oral presentations with focus, organization, and point of view, matching purpose, message, occasion, voice modulation, and nonverbal elements to the audience.
- **6.M.1.** Identify persuasive and propaganda techniques used in television; identify false and misleading information.

