

## **Artists as Explorers**

Grades 7 – 12

Missouri Performance Standards: Goal 1: Students will acquire the knowledge and skills to gather, analyze and apply information and ideas. Goal 2: Students will acquire the knowledge and skills to communicate effectively within and beyond the classroom.

Missouri Knowledge Standards: Social Studies Standards 2- understanding continuity and change in the history of Missouri, the United States and the world: 5 - the major elements of geographical study and analysis (such as location, place, movement, regions) and their relationships to changes in society and environment. Fine Arts Standards 1 - process and techniques for the production, exhibition or performance of one or more of the visual or performed arts: 2 - visual and performing arts in historical and cultural contexts

Learning Goals: Students will gain a broader understanding of

- The concept of the explorer
- Vocabulary needed to investigate works of art and glean information from them
- The significance of landscape painting as an historical document
- Observation and description skills

Materials List:

- Images from the online exhibition *Missouri Splendor: St. Louis Artists and the Landscape* (Note: If in-class projection of the website is not available, the discussion sheets provided here may be printed from the website for use as transparencies or worksheets. To obtain these materials on CDROM for your classroom, contact the curator via email at [dunnmortonj@umsl.edu](mailto:dunnmortonj@umsl.edu) or by phone at 314-516-6740.)
- Small sketchbooks or pads of unlined paper and drawing materials for each student.

Time Required: This lesson can be abbreviated to fit into three class periods and an outside assignment for the sketching or can be expanded to a deeper discussion requiring additional student research and more guidance in the final sketchbook project.

Implementation:

Begin the lesson with a class discussion to identify famous explorers from the past and present, such as Lewis and Clark, Columbus, etc...

Continue with a discussion to expand the students' concepts of "explorer." For example, what do you think of when you hear the word explorer? What makes an explorer different from other people? What motivates him/her to explore? What keeps people from being explorers?

Now think about explorers in other fields. An explorer can be anyone who discovers or creates something new; think of it as an intellectual journey.

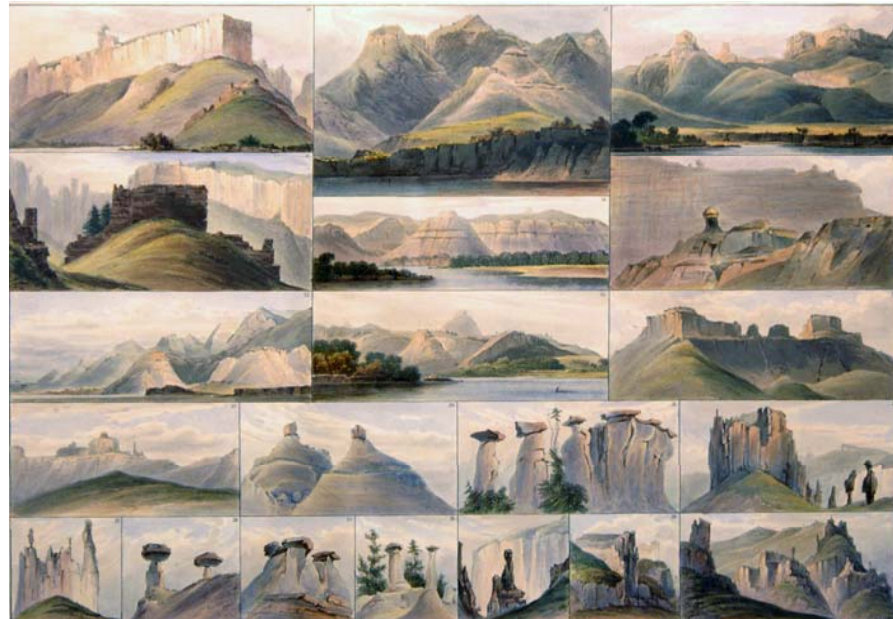
Discuss with the class some other famous explorers in different fields of thought, such as Shakespeare, Mozart, Pasteur, Hubble, etc...

Use the following worksheet to guide a discussion of Bodmer as explorer.

Focusing on artists as explorers:

In 1833, German Prince Maximilian of Wied selected Swiss artist Karl Bodmer to accompany him on his extensive travels through the American West. Bodmer's precise painting style made him the ideal candidate for chronicling landscapes, wildlife and the native peoples they encountered. The artist created 427 watercolors and a volume of sketches during the yearlong trek. Later, Maximilian had prints made from Bodmer's paintings, and they were published along with Maximilian's descriptive writings from the journey. The book was called *Reise in das innere Nord-America in den Jahren 1832 bis 1834 (Travels in the Interior of North America in the years 1832-1834)*.

- How might Bodmer be viewed as an explorer?
- What motivated Bodmer's exploration?
- Why were his works so important?
- Imagine you are living in New York City in 1835. You have never traveled farther west than Philadelphia. One day you see Bodmer's prints at a friend's house. How do you feel, knowing that parts of your country look like this? Describe your reaction to these images.



Karl Bodmer, *Remarkable Hills on the Upper Missouri*,  
aquatint, 1833-34

Many other artists have explored new terrains, people and wildlife through their art. Look at the following images and discuss how these artists were explorers as well.



Carl Wimar, *Landscape with Boulders*, oil on board, n.d.



Thomas Moran, *Moonlit Landscape*, oil on canvas, ca. 1874

Investigate the paintings:

- How settled was the area when the artist sketched or painted it?
- What do you think this artist is saying about this subject?
- Can you tell how he feels about the subject?
- Is the artist idealizing what he sees? That is, does the image seem to be factual and true-to-life, or does it look like the artist has made the subject look better than it really was?
- What purpose might this artwork serve?

### **Be the Artist-Explorer**

The areas these artists explored were new to them and to the audience for their artwork. The images introduced these areas to the world. Take on the role of an explorer in your own neighborhood. What would you find important to paint and record? Why? What should other travelers see if they journey to your neighborhood? Record what you consider to be the important sights, sounds, flora and fauna of your neighborhood exploration in a small sketchbook.

Adapted from *Artist Explorers* Lesson Plan produced by ArtsEdge and available at <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2301>