

Inspiration: Norman Rockwell and You

Overview:

This lesson will address Norman Rockwell's points of inspiration including daily life in America and American culture. Students will work on a long-term illustration project including a schematic layout, draft and final illustration. Each student will consider Rockwell's quote, "I was showing the America I knew and observed to others that might not have noticed."

Eight 60 minute class periods: Class 1- Presentation; 2 & 3 - Drafting; 4-7 Work to complete illustration; 7- Critique; 8- Adjustments, Hang and video shown.

GRADE

9-12

THEME

Four Freedoms

LENGTH

These activities may take eight 60 minute periods.

DISCIPLINE

Art

VOCABULARY

Appropriation; Boy Scouts of America; Critique; Culture; Environment; Idioms; Inspire/Inspiration; Sketch; Representational Art; Symbol; Visual Narrative

Enduring Understandings/ Essential Questions:

1. Norman Rockwell was inspired by his own experiences and life around him. Generally, he was influenced by what he experienced on his vacations, nature, his neighbors and friends. He was inspired by American culture in general, including holidays, and celebrations. Norman Rockwell was also inspired by specific groups, such as the Boy Scouts of America although he, himself, was not a member of the group.
 - What inspired Norman Rockwell?
 - What do you find inspirational?
 - How might you be "inspired" to create an illustration representational of what you know and observe in your everyday life?
 - How will you use color to emphasize a mood or atmosphere?

Objectives:

- Students will view reproductions of Rockwell's illustrations from various books.
- Students will consider everyday American life and cultural events as a means of inspiration (both for Rockwell and in preparation for their own piece of artwork).
- Students will look at *The Runaway* by Norman Rockwell and the work of Anthony Freda (adapted from Rockwell's *The Runaway*).
- Students will complete the worksheet Think Sheet: My America Sequence (9-12) so they may begin a schematic layout design for their own personal illustration about "My America."
- Students will choose a piece of Rockwell's art and modernize the work to be relevant to the current American culture.

Background:

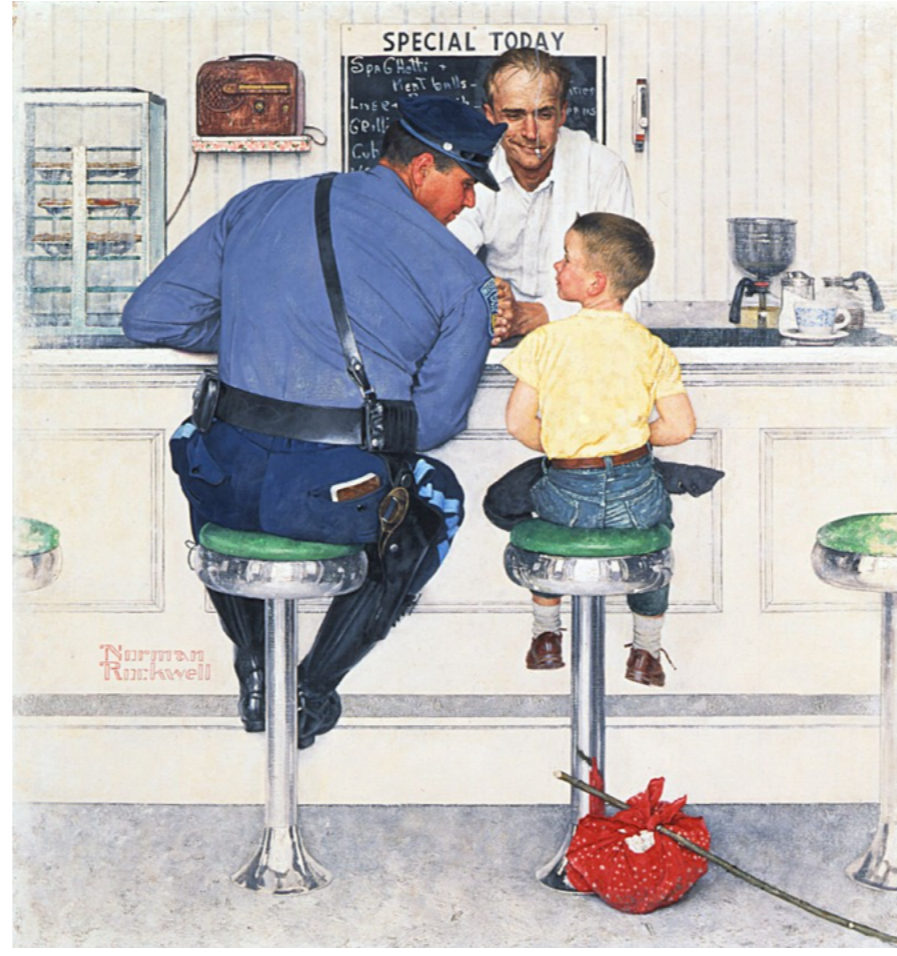
Norman Rockwell was surrounded by a supportive (and inspirational) community of friends and fellow artists when he lived in Arlington, Vermont from 1939 to 1953. During this time he created *The Gossips* which became the most popular *Saturday Evening Post* cover in 33 years. Norman Rockwell used his neighbors as models, but did not want to insult them so he put himself and his wife into the cover design to avoid any suspicions his friends might have. The very first version began with just two gossips, then ten and finally developed into the multiple frames you see today.

Materials:

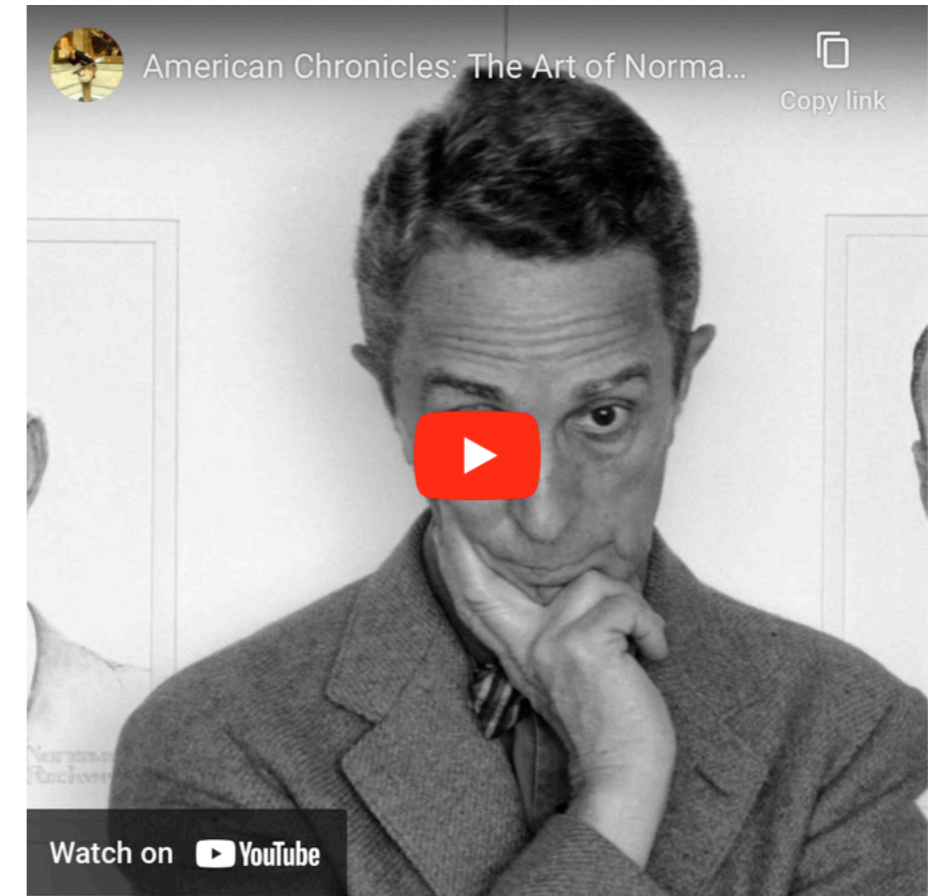
Multimedia Resources:



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
The Gossips, 1948.
Painting for *The Saturday Evening Post* cover, March 6, 1948.
Oil on canvas.
Private collection. ©SEPS: Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978)
The Runaway, 1958.
Cover illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post*, September 20, 1958.
Oil on canvas
Norman Rockwell Museum Collections. ©1958 SEPS: Curtis Publishing, Indianapolis, IN.



American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell
Norman Rockwell Museum

Classroom Supplies Link to resources below: Links

- [American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell](#) by Linds Szekely Pero
- **Worksheet:** Think Sheet My America Sequence (9-12)
- **Handouts:** [Copyright and the Digital Age](#)
- Copies for each student of the article [Rethinking Rockwell in the Time of Ferguson](#) by Max Kutner, August 26, 2014
- Large easel with paper pad and pen
 - [Biography DVD: Norman Rockwell](#) by A&E Television Networks, 2008
- Various media for students to decide on media more appropriate for their project
- Final draft paper, canvas, masonite or other materials as deemed appropriate for each project

Additional Teaching Resources:

[The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge](#) by The Norman Rockwell Museum

[Norman Rockwell: Behind the Camera](#) by Ron Schick

[Norman Rockwell's America](#) by Christopher Finch

[Norman Rockwell's Four Freedoms: Images that Inspire a Nation](#) by Stuart Murray, and James McCabe

[Norman Rockwell's Counting Book](#) by Gloria Tabor

[Norman Rockwell: Storyteller with a Brush](#) by Beverly Sherman

[My Adventures as an Illustrator](#) by Norman Rockwell

[A Rockwell Portrait: An Intimate Biography](#) by Donald Walton

Activities:

Class 1

The students will be seated in a comfortable way so they are able to see one another and can participate in a class conversation led by the instructor. The teacher will have a marker/chalk/crayon and a board or easel to write on.

1. Ask the students to listen attentively to one another as they share personal responses throughout the lesson. Ask a student to define the words inspire and inspiration. A definition will be written on the board to refer to later on in the lesson.
2. An index card and a pencil will be given to each student. The students will be asked to respond to one or both of the following questions (on the index card), "What inspires you?" or "Who inspires you?" Students will be given three to five minutes to write down their ideas.
3. Show an image of *The Gossips* by Norman Rockwell and ask the students if anyone has seen this illustration before. Ask the students to point out only what they see, not what they perceive; the class will collectively take a visual inventory. As each student contributes, restate their observation and write it on the board. You might be able to elaborate on what they have said to add more visual detail or you might ask them for clarification. You might encourage them to look more closely and carefully. By doing this, the students will analyze the work and find clues and symbols to help read the visual image, revealing American culture.
4. Read an excerpt from *American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell*, by Linda Szekely Pero explaining what inspired Norman Rockwell and how his family and surroundings helped grant him creative ideas for his artwork (page 99-100.) A group discussion will be prompted regarding Rockwell's points of inspiration. The instructor will then ask the students to share with the class what they wrote down earlier about what inspires them. Student participation is critical to this discussion.
5. Show a reproduction of the painting *The Runaway*, and ask the students if anyone has seen this image before. Ask the students to point out only what they see, not what they perceive; the class will collectively take a visual inventory. As each student contributes, restate their observation and write it on the board. You might be able to elaborate on what they have said to add more visual detail or you might ask them for clarification. You might encourage them to look more closely and carefully. By doing this, the students will analyze the work and find clues and symbols to help read the visual image, revealing American culture.

Class 2-3

6. Briefly review the list created last class about what inspired Norman Rockwell. Show piece of artwork Anthony Freda created based on Rockwell's *The Runaway*. The article *Rethinking Rockwell in the Time of Ferguson* will be passed out to students to read together and a discussion about the two pieces, appropriation and copyrights will be prompted.
7. Distribute the worksheet, Think Sheet My America Sequence 9-12 to all of the students. This will allow the students to brainstorm and plan their own illustration ideas. As students complete the worksheet, or struggle with their ideas, walk around and conference individually with each student until you feel they have a clear idea.
8. Ask each student to choose what media they feel will best communicate their idea visually. Throughout the project, the students will be encouraged to talk with the instructor and their peers regarding their thoughts, ideas, and frustrations asking for help or feedback.

Class 4-7

9. Three more classes will be allotted to the completion of the student narratives. When most of the students have finished the project, ask the group to come together to conclude the project by presenting their illustrations to one another during a group critique to gain further feedback from their peers about their personal piece. Ask the students to present their project and explain their thoughts, particularly pointing out the one area where color has been intentionally used to emphasize a mood. Ask each student to point out what clues they have used so another may understand the setting and action. Once the artist has spoken, allow a couple of comments from classmates to be given. The comments must be given in a respectful manner, demonstrate critical thoughts and be relevant to the project. For example, a student might say, "I like the way you included a phone and texting as a way to show how we communicate now."

Class 8

10. Upon completion of the group critique, students will prepare an artist's statement and prepare their project for display.
(Optional)

If time permits, allow for one final class period for any adjustments to be made on the final illustration or the artist's statement. Play the biography DVD titled, *Norman Rockwell* by A&E Television Networks. All students, finished or still working will be enriched by watching and listening to the information presented in the DVD.

Activities:

Class 1

1. Display *The Problem We All Live With*. Ask the students if they have seen the image before. Ask the students to look closely at the foreground, the middle ground, and the background and to point out what they see, not what they think. The class will collectively take a visual inventory. You may offer the first example if the students are unclear such as, "I see a girl in a white dress walking with books in her hand." As each student contributes, restate their observation. You might be able to elaborate on what they have said to add more visual detail or you might ask them for clarification. You might encourage them to look closely and carefully. By doing this, the students will analyze the work and identify clues and symbols to help read the visual image, revealing American culture.
2. Ask if anyone can associate the image with issues or events relating to American culture and history. A discussion about civil rights and Ruby Bridges will allow for personal interpretations as well as historically accurate facts about the 1960's. Conversation about other civil rights activists or heroes is welcomed.
3. Read the students the story, *Ruby Bridges Goes to School: My True Story*, by Ruby Bridges. Offer clarification and allow for questions when something is unclear. Then share with the students the description that is written on the Norman Rockwell Digital collection page about this illustration.
4. Ask the students what they think it would have been like to live during the 1960s with the tensions of the civil rights movement. Allow for the discussion to highlight other appropriate civil rights occurrences and activists. As a group, brainstorm a list of problems the students feel they have encountered, either personally, in their community, or on a national or global scale.. The instructor will record the students' ideas on easel paper, or a board; this list will be the starting point for students to plan a project of their own.
5. Give students the worksheet, The Problem I Live With Think Sheet, to complete. Walk around the classroom, offering help when a child is 'stuck' or needs redirection or clarification.

Class 2

6. Students will develop a thumbnail sketch and begin to consider what media would best emphasize the message they wish to convey, or the individual they will be honoring in their artwork.
7. Circulate around the room, checking in with each student and providing assistance if they need to talk about their ideas and material needs. Offer suggestions for revisions regarding composition and design.
8. The last ten minutes of class will be dedicated to a group share. Each student will be asked to explain their idea and the media they feel is best suited for their project. Throughout the project, students will be encouraged to talk with the instructor and their peers regarding their thoughts, ideas, and frustrations with their project, asking for help or feedback.

Class 3 – 5

9. Two more classes will be allotted to the completion of the project. Once students have completed the project, ask them to come together to present their project and explain their thoughts. Once each artist has spoken, comments from classmates will be allowed. The comments must be given in a respectful manner, demonstrate critical thinking, and be relevant to the project.
10. Allow time for students to prepare and display their artwork before class is dismissed.

Assessment:

- Students will be evaluated on their participation in the discussion (informal checks of understanding through questions) and completion of the Think Sheet.
- Students will complete a Think Sheet.
- Students will confer with their peers and the instructor upon completion of the thumbnail sketch and Think Sheet for feedback, suggestions and consider any revisions before moving on to begin the final illustration.
- Students will create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.
- Students will select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective in communicating their ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices.
- Students will demonstrate safe procedures for using and cleaning art tools, equipment, and studio spaces.
- Students will analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (history and culture) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.
- Students will participate in a group critique, then prepare and hang their illustration for display.

Assessment:

- Students will be evaluated on their participation in the class discussion and in the group critique (informal checks of understanding through questions.)
- Students will be evaluated on the completion of the worksheet, including thumbnail sketches for the final, individual project regarding their own interpretation of American life as they know it. Students will be expected to revise their work before completion of their final illustration.
- Students will be evaluated with a teacher designed rubric that evaluates student understanding of assignment.

Standards:

This curriculum meets the standards listed below. Look for more details on these standards please visit: [ELA](#) and [Math Standards](#), [Social Studies Standards](#), [Visual Arts Standards](#).



