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Unit Title: Nature, Art and Conservation at MBRNHP

Grade Level: 11th grade Honors/AP US History (10 – 15 students)

School: Woodstock Union High School

Time Frame: September 2010 – June 2011

Brief Summary of Unit: Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School, stated “The ravages of the axe are daily increasing desecration by what is called improvement; which as yet generally destroys Nature’s beauty without substituting that of Art.” This unit, *Nature, Art and Conservation at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park*, will explore this very issue through on-site visits, school based lessons and independent research. For this unit students will begin by reading Marsh’s Man and Nature, explore the forest, pond and trails, study the Hudson River School paintings in the collection, study the history of conservation, analyze primary sources, keep journals, produce creative components and present final projects on topics of their choice with direct connections to MBRNHP and one other National Park like Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Teton or Acadia. The main objective for this unit is to show how nature inspired artists and how their art helped to inspire the conservation movement.

Field Experts Needed: Park Rangers with areas of expertise in the areas of nature, art and conservation will be needed to guide students in the park and in the mansion. A curator and archivist would be needed to present primary sources and artifacts to the students.

**Materials:** If possible, copies of Man and Nature and Art and the American Conservation Movement. Some digital cameras may be needed.

**What essential questions will guide this unit and focus teaching and learning?**

* In what ways was Billings influenced by Marsh’s Man and Nature?
* What are the main themes in Hudson River School Paintings?
* How did industrialization impact nature and influence art?
* What is the importance of conservation today and are there lands that need to be protected today?
* How did nature inspire artists? And in turn, how did their art inspire the conservation movement and the formation of the National Parks?

**What key knowledge and skills will students acquire as a result of this unit?** (A bulleted list is acceptable.)

*The Students will know (Content Knowledge)…*

* History of conservation
* History of MBRNHP
* Artists, themes & paintings of the Hudson River School
* Themes of nature writers like Fitz Hugh Ludlow & John Muir
* History of photography including the work of Carleton Watkins, William Henry Jackson and Ansel Adams
* Impact of industrialization on the land & the people
* History of other National Parks like Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Teton & Acadia

*The Students will be able to (Specific Skills)…*

* Write multiple journal entries
* Make observations based on place
* Reflect on their experiences with site-based education
* Participate in Visual Thinking Strategies while viewing paintings
* Sketch, paint &/or photograph a landscape
* Discern between primary & secondary sources
* Analyze primary sources like letters & journal entries
* Distinguish between preservation & conservation
* Make historical connections (hometown, state, region & nation)
* Produce final projects (documentary, newspaper article, photographic series)
* Give formal final presentations to class & invited guests

**Through what authentic performance task/s will students demonstrate understanding?** (Please attach a SCORING RUBRIC that assesses the students’ understanding of the essential questions, content knowledge, and specific skills that are listed above.) Students will keep **journal entries** that they do on-site and in class in response to teacher and student generated prompts. Students will also include questions to be explored during future visits. Students will include sketches &/or photographs in their journals as well. Teacher will check each entry and grade overall journal upon completion of unit. The journals will be graded as a paper. Students will also produce a **creative component** like a landscape painting, photographic series or a documentary. This will be graded as a long term project. Finally, students will give **formal presentations** on topics they choose that are directly related to the themes of the unit. Students will present their findings, creative components and engage in a discussion with the audience. The presentations may be graded as their final exam (or percentage of the final) if all are in agreement.

**Lesson Overview**

Prior to 1st Field Experience:

* Read Man and Nature
* View *A Place in the Land*
* Make journals with the assistance of art teacher who teaches book making project
* Students generate questions to be explored during the site visits

1st Field Experience:

* To get a sense of place explore the grounds, trails, forest & the Pogue
* View photos & read primary sources related to conservation with ranger(s)
* First on-site journal entry with sketch &/or photo

Between 1st and 2nd Field Experience:

* Teacher presentation on the Hudson River School
* Individual research on Hudson River School
* Read excerpts from nature writers with guidance from American Literature teacher
* Journal entry in response to Hudson River School & nature writers
* View Hudson River School paintings on-line at MBRNHP website

2nd Field Experience:

* Tour mansion & view Hudson River School paintings with ranger
* Examine primary sources like letters & artifacts related to collection, families & conservation with curator &/or archivist
* Journal entry in response to on-site visit

Between 2nd and 3rd Field Experience (Optional):

* View episode 1 of Ken Burns’ *The National Parks: America’s Greatest Idea*
* Research history of first parks (Yellowstone & Yosemite)
* Research more recent parks like Grand Teton & MBRNHP
* Students will choose a National Park of interest to them that can be connected to the themes of nature, art & conservation
* Journal entry on National Parks

3rd Field Experience (Optional):

* Ranger presentation on how MBRNHP became a National Park
* On-site research & creative component work

Unit Wrap-up:

* Student presentations with invited guests (parents, park rangers & school members)

**Resources:** Identify the resources you use to support the unit (websites, books, community partnerships, other models, etc.).

* Man & Nature
* Art and The American Conservation Movement
* The National Parks: America’s Greatest Idea
* A People and A Nation
* Wilderness Warrior
* *A Place in the Land*
* *The National Parks: America’s Greatest Idea*
* “A Mirror With a Memory” from After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection
* www.nps.gov/mabi
* Olana’s website (home of Frederic Edwin Church) www.olana.org
* Laurance Rockefeller Preserve’s website (Jackson, Wyoming) www.nps.gov/partnerships/snapshots\_grandteton.htm
* Brooke Newsom, art teacher, for journal making project
* Martha Perkins, American Literature teacher, for nature writers and possible interdisciplinary work