

Teaching with *A Storm Passing Northwest of Anadarko* by Wilson Hurley



This document is designed to help teachers present, discuss, and teach about Oklahoma history and art literacy through the use of this work of art. The information and exercises here will aid in understanding and learning from this artwork.

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First Analysis and Criticism

The steps below may be used for group discussion or individual written work.

Before beginning the steps, take two minutes to study the artwork. Look at all the details and subject matter. After studying the artwork in silence, follow these steps:

Describe:

Be specific and descriptive. List only the facts about the objects in the painting or sculpture.

- What things are in the artwork?
- What is happening?
- List what you see (people, animals, clothing, environment, objects, etc.).

Analyze:

- How are the elements of art – line, shape, form, texture, space, and value used?
- How are the principles of design – unity, pattern, rhythm, variety, balance, emphasis, and proportion used?

Interpretation:

Make initial, reasonable inferences.

- What do you think is happening in the artwork?
- Who is doing what?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say to the viewer?

Evaluate:

Express your opinion.

- What do you think about the artwork?
- Is it important?
- How does it help you understand the past?
- Do you like it? Why or why not?

Overview of the Artwork

A Storm Passing Northwest of Anadarko is one of four paintings in Wilson Hurley's *Visions of the Land: The Centennial Suite* that represents the four quadrants of Oklahoma's diverse landscape. The paintings were an official Oklahoma Centennial Project dedicated in 2002. The commission was directed by the Oklahoma Arts Council. Philanthropist Roger M. Dolese made *The Centennial Suite* possible.

First of all, I did not set up my easel and paint this storm in front of me. I left that daring deed to the folks at O.U. and Channel 9 Television of Oklahoma City. I did set up in stormy skies and light rain south of Gracemont and just north of the bridge crossing Sugar Creek and went head to head with that angus bull who never took his eyes from me the whole time. As for the cloud, dropping and beginning to turn, and the wild force latent in it, perhaps it is that part that created the phrase 'terrible beauty' which describes Oklahoma so well. - Wilson Hurley

About the Artist

Although he grew up in Washington D.C., artist Wilson Hurley considers Tulsa, Oklahoma home. Born in Tulsa in 1924, Hurley eventually moved to the Washington area as a young boy when his father became Secretary of War under the Hoover administration. Though he had a burgeoning interest in art as a child, Hurley's artistic tendencies were often stifled by his father under the notion that art was not a respectable career. Fortunately Hurley's mother felt differently. She encouraged her son in his talents by taking him to numerous museums where he saw the works of Inness, Bierstadt, Moran, and Church - all artists who would eventually become Hurley's inspiration 30 years later when he began painting full-time. By the time he was a professional painter, Hurley had already earned a degree in military engineering from West Point, as well as a law degree from George Washington University. However, neither career had satisfied Hurley and he turned to his "Sunday hobby"- painting.

Hurley often chooses to paint a particular subject because he finds it beautiful and he wants the viewer to understand how it delights him saying, "A good painting stops the heart and makes the throat ache." Today his works are included in numerous collections throughout the country including the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, the Gilcrease Museum, and the Whitney Gallery of Western Art.

Southwest Oklahoma



The land of Oklahoma includes some of the most diverse landscape in the country. Divided into four quadrants (Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and Northwest), the terrain of each area has distinct differences.

1. The Southwest region of the state is often referred to as Great Plains Country because of its flat grassland, gently rolling hills, and dry weather.
2. Four counties in the southwestern-most corner of the state (Beckham, Harmon, Jackson, and Greer) were actually part of Texas until 1896 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled they would be part of Oklahoma Territory.
3. The largest city in the Southwestern region of Oklahoma is Lawton. Other important communities in the region include Elk City, Clinton, Weatherford, Walters, Altus, and Duncan.
4. Significant geographic landmarks in Southwest Oklahoma include the Black Kettle National Grassland, the Wichita Mountains, the Antelope Hills, and the Quartz Mountains.
5. Several small mountain ranges can be found in Southwest Oklahoma, the largest of which being the Wichita Mountains, considered by geologists to be one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world.
6. This particular painting features the storms with which affect all of Oklahoma. To catch the spirit of an Oklahoma storm, Hurly set up his easel on a day when light rain and stormy skies dominated the sky above. However, to capture the “terrible beauty” of an actual storm, he studied tapes of storms prepared by the University of Oklahoma and KWTW in Oklahoma City.

Suggested Reading

Oklahoma Adventure, Centennial Edition 2006 by Oklahoma History Press
Oklahoma Stories: Oklahoma's Climate and Geography, **pages 264-269**

Oklahoma: Land of Contrasts by Clairmont Press
Chapter 2: Where in the World is Oklahoma? **pages 24-57**

The Story of Oklahoma, Second Edition by Baird and Goble
Chapter 1: Oklahoma's Diverse Land, **pages 4-17**
Appendix C: Oklahoma Geography, **page 405**

Final Analysis

After completing the readings and activities, go back and look at the artwork again. Now that the students are more familiar with the subject matter, ask them to write a few paragraphs about their interpretation of the artwork. In their own words, the writing should address the following:

- Description of the artwork and who/what is in it
- How the elements of art and principles of design are used within the artwork
- What feelings, emotions, or information the artwork depicts
- Their opinion of the artwork

Pass Objectives

High School- Oklahoma History

Standard 1. The student will demonstrate process skills in social studies.

2. Identify, evaluate, and explain the relationships between the geography of Oklahoma and its historical development by using different kinds of maps, graphs, charts, diagrams, and other representations such as photographs, satellite-produced images, and computer-based technologies.

Standard 6. The student will investigate the geography and economic assets of Oklahoma and trace their effects on the history of the state.

1. Locate the significant physical and human features of the state on a map (e.g., major waterways, cities, natural resources, military installations, major highways, and major landform regions).

High School- The Arts

Standard 1: Language of Visual Art - The student will identify visual art terms (e.g., content, engraving, foreshortening, mosaic, perspective)

1. Identify and apply knowledge of the principles of design: rhythm, balance (symmetrical, asymmetrical, radial) contrast, movement, variety, center of interest (emphasis), and repetition in personal artwork, and the artwork of others.

3. Describe exhibitions of original works of art seen in the school or community.

4. Differentiate between art criticism and art reviews, recognizing that criticism is positive as well as negative in its evaluation of a work of art.

Standard 2: Visual Art History and Culture - The student will recognize the development of visual art from an historical and cultural perspective.

5. PROFICIENT: Identify major regional, national, and international collections of art.

Standard 4: Visual Art Appreciation - The student will appreciate visual art as a vehicle of human expression.

2. Demonstrate respect for their work and the work of others.