

Teaching with *Elk Herd in the Wichita Mountains* by Barbara Vaupel



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.

- Overview of the Artwork
- About the Artist
- PASS Objectives Addressed
- Oklahoma Details
- Visual Arts Details
- First Analysis and Criticism
- Suggested Reading
- Final Analysis

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

Elk Herd in the Wichita Mountains depicts Elk grazing peacefully on a stretch of grassland bordered by the rising granite mountains of Southwest Oklahoma.

Elk was indigenous to the Wichita Mountains area of Oklahoma but were exterminated by the late 1800's. When the land was set aside that later became known as the Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge, no native elk remained.

In 1908, one bull elk of unknown origin was donated to the Refuge by the city of Wichita, Kansas. In 1911 and 1912, additional elk were received from the National Elk Refuge herd.

Due to the success of these introductions, no further animals were brought into the herd and the elk now inhabiting the refuge and surrounding lands are descended from these original animals.

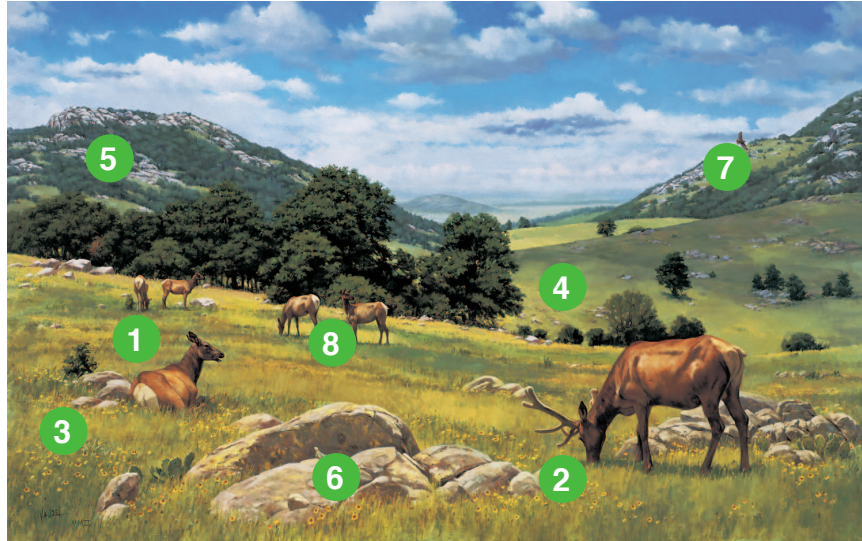
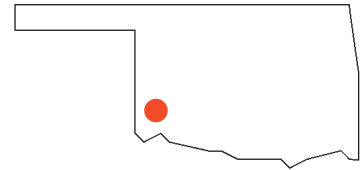
About the Artist

Born in San Diego, California, Barbara Vaupel taught herself to draw. She took a night-school class in California with Floyd Chandler, who emphasized color and atmospheric progression. For a while she did advertisements and later proofread ads. But Vaupel wanted to paint horses - particularly quarter horses. "I never lived the life of raising and showing horses," she says. "But the next best thing to living the life is painting it!" Leaving friends and family behind, in 1967 she headed for Oklahoma. Her earliest horse portraits and rodeo scenes were done on commission. Among them was a portrait of retail wizard Sam Walton with his hunting dogs and pheasant. Recently, the landscapes dominate the horses on her canvases. "I guess that is because of my love of this Oklahoma countryside."

Along with gallery representation, Vaupel has shown in the Women Artist and the West exhibit, Tucson, AZ, and with the Texas Cowboy Artists. She is also included in An Encyclopedia of Women Artists of the American West, as well as named 1999 Outstanding Art Book, 38th Annual Western Heritage Awards. Vaupel, a Henryetta resident, passed away on December 27, 2006.

Oklahoma Details

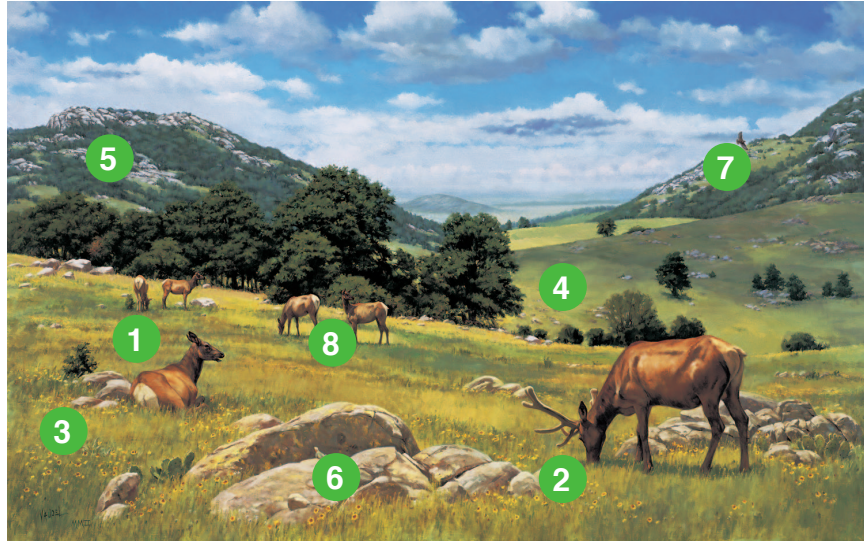
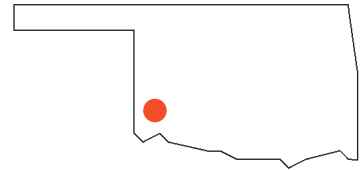
The Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge is located in southwestern Oklahoma



1. Elk are indigenous to the southwest region of Oklahoma, pictured here. The animal became extinct to the area in the 1800s; however, land was set aside to create the Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge. Starting from one bull elk, donated in 1908, and a few more in 1911 and 1912, the area is again heavily populated with elk today.
2. Only male elk have antlers. The antlers start growing in the spring and are shed each winter. While growing in the spring, the antlers are encased in a protective layer of velvet. The velvet on this elk's antlers indicates it is still spring in this scene. The velvet sheds in the summer when the antlers are completely developed.
3. The rich blanket of wildflowers in full bloom on the ground is another indication that it's springtime in this scene.
4. Peaceful grasslands are a common characteristic of southwest Oklahoma.
5. The rising granite of the Wichita Mountains stretch across the southwest region of Oklahoma.
6. While painting on site, the artist, Barbara Vaupel, spotted this collared lizard watching the elk. The collard lizard, or Mountain Boomer, is Oklahoma's state reptile.

Oklahoma Details

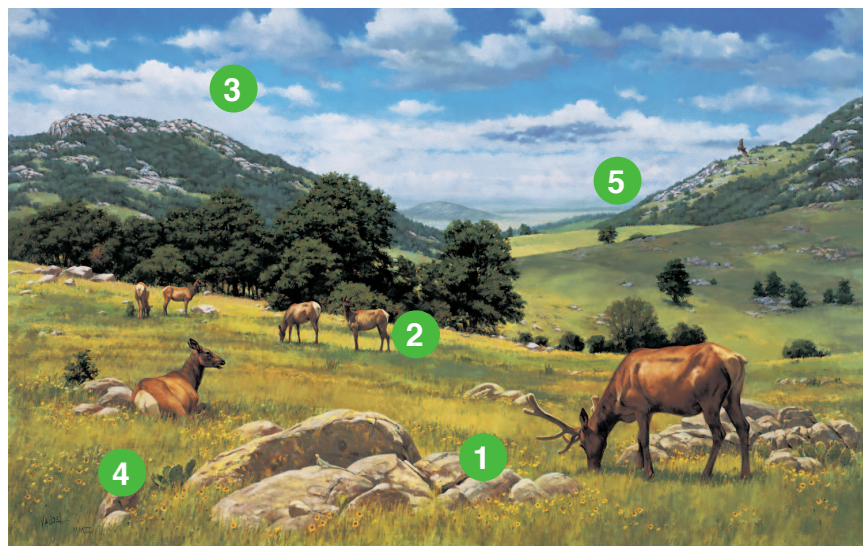
The Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge is located in southwestern Oklahoma



7. Typical of Oklahoma, a hawk makes lazy circles in the sky.
8. Vaupel wanted to capture the light and shadows of mid-day, but female elk do not usually come out into the open during this time. Therefore, she used photographs of elk to paint some of them.

Visual Arts Details

Use this section as a guide to motivate your students to identify various terms and ideas relative to visual arts.



Depth: the illusion of three dimensions and distance in space

The artist used the theories below to help create the illusion of space on the canvas.

1. **Foreground:** part of the picture plane that seems closest to the viewer, usually in the lower portion of the image.

The collard lizard and the rocks on which it sits, as well as the bull elk with antlers are in the foreground of this painting.

2. **Middle ground:** area of a picture between foreground and background

Notice that the bull elk in the foreground is much larger than the female elk in the middle ground, conveying that the bull elk is closer to the viewer.

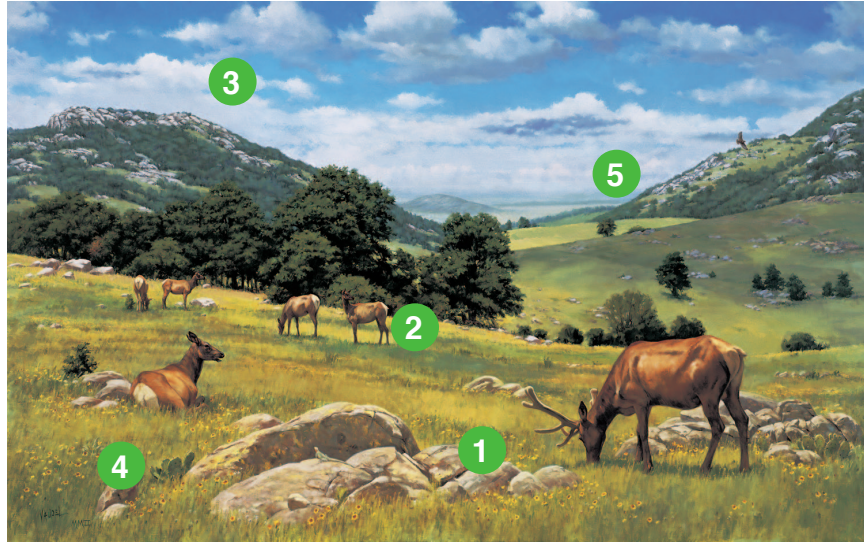
3. **Background:** part of the picture plane that seems furthest from the viewer, usually in the upper portion of the image

The mountains and sky make up the background of this painting.

4. **Warm colors** include yellows, oranges, and reds. They are perceived as vivid and energetic and tend to advance toward the viewer in space.

Visual Arts Details

Use this section as a guide to motivate your students to identify various terms and ideas relative to visual arts.



Here, the artist uses a warm green with a lot of yellow to advance the foreground forward.

5. **Cool colors** include blues, violets, and darker greens. They give the impression of peace and calmness and tend to recede away from the viewer on the canvas.

Here, the dark green of the trees and blue sky recede into the background.

Suggested Reading

Oklahoma Adventure, Centennial Edition 2006 by Oklahoma History Press
Oklahoma Stories: Oklahoma's Climate and Geography, **pages 264-269**
State Emblems, **pages 419-420**

Oklahoma: Land of Contrasts by Clairmont Press
Chapter 2: Where in the World is Oklahoma?, **pages 24-57**
Appendix 2: Oklahoma's Symbols, **pages 503-504**

The Story of Oklahoma, Second Edition by Baird and Goble
Unit 1: Natural Oklahoma, **page 2**
Chapter 1: Oklahoma's Diverse Land: **pages 4-19**
Appendix H: Oklahoma Symbols, **pages 410-411**

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

Grade 4- The Arts

Standard 1: Language of Visual Art - The student will identify visual art terms (e.g., architecture, contour, medium, mixed media, perspective, symbol).

1. Know how works of art are made with respect to the materials, media, techniques, and sources of ideas.
2. Describe and use the principles of design: rhythm, balance, contrast, movement, variety, center of interest (emphasis), and repetition in works of art.
3. Describe and use the elements of art: line, color, form, shape, texture, value (light and dark), and space in works of art.

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

3. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of several fields of art such as painting, sculpture, drawing, computer graphics, printmaking, architecture, and fiber arts.

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

2. Demonstrate respect for personal artwork and the artwork of others.
3. Demonstrate thoughtfulness and care in completion of artworks.

High School- Oklahoma History

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

1. Identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources (e.g., artifacts, diaries, letters, art, music, literature, photographs, documents, newspapers, and contemporary media).
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.
2. Identify and apply the elements of art: line, color, form, shape, texture, value (light and dark), and space in works of art. Discriminate between types of shape (geometric and organic), colors (primary, secondary, complementary, intermediates, neutrals, tints, tones, shades, and values), lines (characteristics, quality), textures (tactile and visual), and space (background, middleground, foreground, placement, one-, two-, and three-point perspective, overlap, negative, positive, size, color) in personal artwork, and the art work 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.

1. PROFICIENT: Analyze a work of art within its cultural and historical context.
ADVANCED: Analyze common characteristics of works of art and artifacts across time and among cultural groups to analyze and identify influences.
3. PROFICIENT: Compare cultural and ethnic art forms throughout the world that have influenced visual art
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.