

Teaching with *Albert Comstock Hamlin* by Simmie Knox



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.

Contents:

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

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. C. Hamlin, Republican, was the first African American elected to the Oklahoma State Legislature. The year was 1908. Born in Kansas, Hamlin settled with his parents on a farm southeast of Guthrie, Oklahoma in 1890. He became actively involved in community affairs, serving on the local school board and as township trustee. He sponsored successful legislation that established the Taft School for Disabled and Orphaned Children in Taft, Oklahoma.

This portrait of A. C. Hamlin was painted by nationally known artist Simmie Knox, Silver Springs, Maryland. Commissioned by the 2003-2005 Oklahoma Legislative Black Caucus, it is one of a series of portraits authorized by the caucus and approved by the Capitol Preservation Commission and directed by the Oklahoma Arts Council. Dedicated on May 24, 2005.

About the Artist

Regarding his work, Simmie Knox states, “ I think that a good portrait is the most difficult thing for an artist to bring off successfully. Not only must you get an accurate likeness but you must also create a good painting. Somehow you must convey a subject’s character, spirit and personality; and everything must communicate the dynamism of the subject.” Since 1981, Knox has specialized in portraiture. He earned a Master’s of Fine Art from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Pennsylvania. Knox was commissioned to paint the official portrait of former President Bill Clinton, resulting in Knox becoming the first African American to ever paint an official portrait of an American president. Knox has painted portraits of U.S. congressmen and state senators, civic leaders, celebrities and religious leaders.

Details



1. A. C. Hamlin was the first African-American to serve in the Oklahoma legislature and the only black to serve until 1964.
2. He was elected to the state legislature as a Republican in 1908 and represented the third district of the prominently black Logan County.
3. Hamlin authored the bill that established Taft School for the deaf, blind, and orphaned children.
4. He also sponsored successful legislation that would make facilities truly equal for both white and black railroad passengers and an amended bill to prevent certain activities such as theatrical performances and baseball games on Sundays.
5. While Hamlin served, the legislature passed laws designed to limit the voting rights of African-Americans. Hamlin did not support the bill. The new law directly resulted in Hamlin not being reelected in 1910.
6. He was born in Kansas and moved to Oklahoma in 1890 with his family.
7. He lived in the Guthrie area.

Suggested Reading

Oklahoma Adventure, Centennial Edition 2006 by Oklahoma History Press
Oklahoma Stories: More about the African-American Experience, **page 374**

Oklahoma: Land of Contrasts by Clairmont Press
Chapter 14: Growing Pains, **page 350**

Online Resource

Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History & Culture, Oklahoma Historical Society
<http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/H/HA015.html>

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- Social Studies

Standard 5: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the unique features which contributed to the settlement of the state of Oklahoma.

1. Identify major historical individuals, entrepreneurs, and groups, and describe their major contributions (e.g., Sequoyah, the Boomers and the Sooners, and Frank Phillips).
2. Describe major events of Oklahoma's past, such as settlements by Native Americans, cattle drives, land runs, statehood, and the discovery of oil.
4. Identify state and local governing bodies (e.g., the state legislature and city councils) and officials (e.g., governor and mayors) that make laws and carry out laws, with an emphasis on civic participation (e.g., the importance of studying the issues and voting).
5. Develop an understanding of and an appreciation for the cultural diversity of his or her community by examining the historical and contemporary racial, ethnic, and cultural groups of the area.

Grade 4- The Arts

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

1. Describe and place a variety of specific significant art objects by artist, style and historical and cultural context.
2. Identify themes and purposes of works of art and artifacts in history and culture.
3. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of several fields of art such as painting, sculpture, drawing, computer graphics, printmaking, architecture, and fiber arts.
4. Identify how visual art is used in today's world including the popular media of advertising, television, and film.

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).

Standard 7. The student will examine major cultural and ethnic groups represented in Oklahoma.

1. Identify cultural and ethnic groups in Oklahoma (e.g., African-Americans, Eastern Europeans, Italians, Germans, and Vietnamese) and explore the causes and effects of their immigration and settlement patterns.
2. Trace the cultural, political, and economic contributions of these groups.

Standard 8. The student will examine factors that contributed to the political, economic, and social history of Oklahoma during the twentieth century.

1. Identify significant individuals and their contributions (e.g., Jerome Tiger, Frank Phillips, Kate Barnard, Angie Debo, Ada Lois Sipuel, Clara Luper, George Lynn Cross, Ralph Ellison, Robert S. Kerr, Henry Bellmon, and Reba McEntire).

High School- The Arts

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

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.