

Curriculum Packet Fall 2005



Girl in Yellow Dress with Doll, Attr. Erastus Salisbury Field, c. 1838, Oil on canvas, 50 x 30 in. framed, Fenimore Art Museum

for

Little Women, Little Men: Folk Art Portraits of Children from the Fenimore Art Museum

and

Child's Play: Children from the Addison Collection

October 29 – December 31, 2005

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USING THE CURRICULUM PACKET

This packet is designed to help you connect the Addison Gallery's fall 2005 exhibitions with your classroom curricula and the **Massachusetts Department of Education's Curriculum Frameworks**. Museum visits and related activities developed for this packet address numerous subject areas that are often cross-disciplinary and therefore can combine two or more frameworks.

The Addison Education Department is glad to assist you in matching exhibition content with the frameworks listed below or others you may wish to use. We can also help you organize your museum visit and pre- or post-visit activities to correspond with your grade level and current classroom topics in **English & language arts, sciences, history & social studies, politics, foreign languages, and the visual & performing arts.**

How to Arrange a Class Visit

- Decide which exhibition(s) is/are most relevant for your class or group to see based on this packet, viewing the exhibitions, and/or talking with education department staff.
- Select several possible dates and times to bring your class to the gallery. (Tuesdays through Fridays, 8 AM - 4 PM). Visits, ranging from 45 - 90 minutes, may be accompanied by an art making or creative writing activity. Up to 50 students can be accommodated in the museum at one time.
- At least two weeks in advance, contact **Rebecca Spolarich** at (978) 749-4037 or **rspolarich@andover.edu** to schedule the visit and discuss ideas for guided tours and related activities that are particularly suited to your group.

How to prepare your class for a visit to the Addison

- Discuss the visit with your class before you come. This packet and a pre-visit to the museum can help you inform students about what they will see and do on their trip.
- Reproductions (photographs, slides, catalogues) are often available for you to look at with your class beforehand. Students love to see images they recognize at the museum!
- Additional information about the artists and exhibitions is always available on request.
- In-class visits (usually including slide presentation and discussion) can sometimes be arranged.
- Mention that students will need to keep in mind: stay with the group, raise hands to ask or answer questions, no touching the artwork or the walls, no running, no food or gum.

What to expect when you are at the museum

- When you come in the front door of the gallery, one of us will greet you and direct students where to hang their coats and gather.
- After a brief introduction in the lobby, we will bring your students through the exhibition(s) of your choice. Students will be asked to discuss, interact with, and raise questions about the artwork that they see. We strongly encourage teachers to engage in the discussion to strengthen the connection between classroom and museum learning.
- If arranged in advance, the visit can conclude with an art making or writing activity.

Making the most of your visit

- Pre- and post-visit activities are the best way to get the most out of your museum visit.
- Project and discussion ideas provided at the end of this packet will help you determine the best approach for the grade and subject of your class. (If this packet does not include information relevant to your class, we can help you make connections.)
- We are pleased to assist you in developing and executing extended projects that connect the classroom and the museum.

*Little Women, Little Men:
Folk Art Portraits of Children from the Fenimore Art Museum*

Introduction

This small selection of folk portraits lends visual record to the lifestyles of children and the ideals of childhood during the early to mid-nineteenth century in the United States. Folk artists were untrained or minimally trained artist-entrepreneurs who capitalized on the fashion for portraits during the rise of an affluent and self-conscious middle class in this formative period. To meet the high demand for portraits and due to their itinerant business, folk portraitists usually worked quickly in each town where they could find customers to make as many paintings of individuals and families as possible. While examples of refined European portraiture were often used as models, the lack of training and the speed at which they completed their works account for the flat, stylized look of the works on exhibit. In fact, the artisan backgrounds of these folk portraitists – who were often trained as sign or wall painters, silversmiths or engravers – accounts for the strong decorative tendency in these colorful portrayals of children.

Parents from prosperous communities commissioned portraits of their offspring for sentimental as well as genealogical reasons. A portrait extended the life of a child indefinitely, especially at a time of high mortality rates. In addition, children's portraits projected information about the family's social and economic status, while it also symbolized the prosperity of the nation. Artists and parents arranged the child's appearance (through clothing, toys, books, pose, setting, etc.) to indicate the family's level of wealth or education, the father's field of work, and even the aspirations parents held for their son or daughter. Such visual details also signified the age and gender of the subject.

Child's Play: Children from the Addison Collection

Introduction

To complement the folk portraits in *Little Men, Little Women*, the Addison has organized a selection of paintings, photographs, and prints of children from the collection. Demonstrating a progression of children's portraiture from the late eighteenth through twentieth centuries in the United States, *Child's Play* shows children in their changing roles at school, work, and play, and as part of family life.

Portraitists like the colonial painter John Singleton Copley (1738-1815) and the post-revolutionary painter Thomas Sully (1783-1872) portray the optimism of youth and the young Republic in their refined portraits of the elite, while realist George Luks (1866-1933) created expressive paintings of average individuals he would encounter on the streets of New York. Photographer Lewis Hine (1874-1940) exposed the realities of child labor during the Industrial Revolution, while more recent photographers use intimate family images to convey new values for children and families in the late twentieth-century. *The New Mothers* by Sally Mann (born 1951) captures the photographer's two young daughters posing with all the style and flair of seductive women, speaking to the all-too-rapid development of contemporary girls.

Themes for Engaging Students in the Exhibitions

The images in this pair of exhibitions offer excellent ways for students to learn about children's life in the United States from the late eighteenth through twentieth centuries, the expectations that adults had for their children, children's clothing and playthings, and young people's roles as sons, daughters, students, and workers. Seen through a variety of lenses, these exhibitions can supplement classroom curriculum in English and history as well as enhance students' appreciation for the developments of American art and portraiture. Following are two approaches to interpreting the exhibitions for class visits:

- **Childhood and Clothing**
- **Children's Identities at School, Work, Home, and Play**

If you have other curriculum topics that you would like to address through these exhibitions, we would be glad to discuss them with you.

Childhood and Clothing

Clothing has been a form of personal communication for centuries in cultures around the globe. Clothing can indicate one's cultural group, social status, field of work, financial standing, gender, religion, or even personal style. For young children, daily apparel is often determined by the will of the parents. In early nineteenth-century portraiture – and in folk portraiture in particular – clothing played a major role in communicating the identity of the sitter. When posing for a folk portrait, fine fabrics, lace, and jewelry were among the items parents selected for their children in order to indicate wealth and prestige. Skirt and pant length signified age: the shorter the length, the younger the individual.

Though nineteenth-century children's dress conveyed much about the child's age and family's social and financial status, unlike today, it did not clearly indicate the child's sex. Boys dressed in girls' clothes to constrain their otherwise "wild" behavior until they reached the age of seven, when they were old enough to play outdoors and thus allowed to wear pants for running and other physical activities. Portrait artists therefore used props to signify whether the sitter was male or female and to reinforce the appropriate activities and behaviors associated with each. Boys were often pictured playing with large dogs, whips, drums, rocking horses, or weapons, while girls were posed holding dolls, needles, flowers, or playing sedentary games. Also, books denoted the individual's literacy or the family's educational aspirations for their child.

Up until the colonial period in the United States, adults did not consider children as innocent individuals requiring protection or playtime; rather, they regarded children as little adults and dressed them similarly to themselves. For example, young girls wore corsets, keeping their posture straight and restricting them from play. This mentality persisted until the eighteenth century when doctors began to advise that children wear loose fitting clothing which was more appropriate for physical activity. This change in awareness prompted adults to begin regarding childhood as a period of development unique from adulthood.

In contrast to the commissioned – and often idealized – portraiture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, realistic scenes from everyday life were beginning to emerge from artists working toward the turn of the twentieth century. Suddenly children from a wide variety of cultural and economic backgrounds become visible in this period, with clothing, posture, and setting continuing to be the major signifiers of social stature. Winslow Homer (1836-1910) created paintings and illustrations of rural children during a routine day at school, while Lewis Hine (1874-1940) photographed the unconscionable conditions of child laborers in the mills. In these images fine fabrics and styles have been traded for more practical, and often well-worn, clothes and shoes. Children do not play with toys; rather, boys and girls alike control looms and carry textbooks.

Object Lesson

Children during the nineteenth century dressed differently than children do today. Clothing like that worn by this child makes many aspects about his or her identity ambiguous to twenty-first-century viewers.

How does the child's clothing indicate gender, age, and social status?

What do the objects in the painting tell you about the child's life?

Why might this child's clothing not be considered appropriate for children today?



Edward W. Gorham, Joseph Whiting Stock, 1844. Oil on canvas, 33 x 28 in. Fenimore Art Museum

Discussion Questions

1. Why did appearance in portraiture mean so much to the parents and children in the nineteenth century?
2. If an artist were painting your portrait, what clothing, accessories, and props would you want included in the picture and why?
3. Does your identity shape what you wear? Or, does clothing shape your identity?
4. What does the clothing worn by children in the twentieth century tell about the ways children's roles have changed since the early nineteenth century?

Children's Identities at School, Work, Home, and Play

*The golf links lie so near the mill
That almost every day
The laboring children can look out
And see the men at play.¹*

Today, most adults in the United States reminisce about the luxuries of childhood as they have known them: minimal responsibilities, complete care and protection by parents, and the freedom to recreate without limits. Yet childhood was not always so carefree. Over the past two hundred years, young people's roles have changed greatly due to a variety of cultural and economic changes. Some of these shifts are illuminated by the images in *Little Women*, *Little Men* and *Child's Play*. For example, in the early 1800s girls could not play outdoors. However, decades later, they were qualified to work twelve-hour shifts operating machinery. And, boys in the early nineteenth century wore dresses until they were aged seven, while modern-day girls wear pants at any age. Careful observation, comparison, and questioning of the images presented in the exhibitions can reveal the varied roles of children and unveil many of the reasons for changes in these roles over time.

Object Lesson

This painting is a portrait of the artist's daughter.

What do Anne's facial expression, clothing, and posture convey about her personality, her identity, and her life?

What role is Anne playing in this portrait? How does her perception of herself compare to her father's perception of her?



George Bellows, *Anne in Purple Wrap*, [Portrait of Anne], 1921, oil on panel, 40 1/2 x 32 1/2 in., Addison Gallery of American Art

Discussion Questions

1. How have children's roles at school, work, home, or play changed since the 1800s? What evidence can you find in the exhibition to support your observations?
2. Many children in the exhibitions are pictured in specific environments, i.e. school, outdoors, at home. How do the settings influence our perception of the children's identities?

¹ Cleghorn, Sarah N. (1915) from Schorsch, Anita. *Images of Childhood: An Illustrated Social History*. Mayflower Books, Inc., New York: 1979. 131.

3. How does the artist's relationship with or regard for his/her subject affect the interpretation of the subject? Which artists view children as unique from or similar to adults? How do they convey a sense of innocence – or not?
4. What differences in children do you notice when they are pictured in private vs. public, or alone vs. with other people?
5. Compare and contrast the ways artists portray boys and girls.
6. How would you compare your clothing and your lifestyle to that of the children pictured in the exhibitions? How do you account for the differences and similarities?

Writing Activities for in the Museum or Classroom

1. Imagine a dialogue between two or more children pictured from different time periods. How are they similar to and different from one another? What questions will they ask each other? Write the dialogue as a play, making sure to note the setting.
(Optional: choose a partner(s) to read your play's dialogue.)
2. Select a portrait of a child from one of the exhibitions. Compare the clothing style worn by this child with your own style. Compare the clothing – and the lifestyle the clothing indicates – of the portrait subject and yourself.
3. Either by looking at what you are wearing now, or by examining your wardrobe, decide how your clothes communicate information about you to other people. Label your shirt, pants, shoes, etc. with words that describe something about you. Do your clothes indicate your age, gender, or what kinds of activities you like? Do they keep you warm or help you run faster? What do they express about your interests, personality, and lifestyle?
(Optional: How do they compare to the style of clothes that your parents wear?)
4. How have adults' expectations of children changed since the nineteenth century? How have children's expectations of adults changed? Discuss these ideas by referencing works from the exhibitions and people or events from your studies of literature, history, or other subjects.

Art Activities for in the Museum or Classroom

1. Create a portrait of yourself or your family. Be sure to consider clothing, props, pets, setting, etc. (Option: create a frame with symbols that indicate additional things about your life.)
2. What are the different roles that you play in your daily life? Are you an athlete, an older brother/sister, a good student, a community volunteer? Create a series of small self-portraits expressing the many identities that you have. Or, assemble a collage of photographs depicting yourself in these roles.
3. Design an outfit or line of clothing for children of the twenty-first century. Consider what childhood will be like for the next generation. Create apparel and accessories that will express the roles and identities of children in the future.
5. Assemble an album of photographs documenting your development from childhood to the present. Select pictures of you at school and play, with your family and friends. How have your roles in these settings changed over time?

Resources for Portraits of Children, U. S. History, and Clothing

Books

- Baumbusch, Brigitte. *The Many Faces of the Face*. (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1999). Colorful, illustrated text for children, which helps young students look at and interpret all types of portraits.
- Black, Mary and Jean Lipman. *American Folk Painting*. (New York: Bramhall House, 1987). A catalogue of American folk paintings presenting a variety of folk images accompanied by informative descriptions.
- Schorsch, Anita. *Images of Childhood: An Illustrated Social History*. (New York: Mayflower Books, Inc., 1979). Reveals how children and the concept of childhood have changed in England and the United States since the sixteenth century, illustrating children's roles with potent images.
- Sills, Leslie. *From Rags to Riches: A History of Girls' Clothing in America*. (New York: Holiday House, 2005). An attractively illustrated timeline of girls' clothing as it has developed throughout United States history. Geared toward young adults but interesting and accessible to all ages.
- West, Shearer. *Portraiture*. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004). This new, very readable text traces the development of portraiture in Western art. The author explores portraits from different time periods and genres to outline the varying functions and forms of portraiture over time.

Web

http://forum.wgbh.org/wgbh/forum.php?lecture_id=1725

This website provides a link to a video-recorded lecture by local art historian, David Dearing, who speaks about the Boston Athenaeum's recent exhibition, *Seen but not Heard: Images of Children in American Art*. His lecture offers interpretations of images of children and discusses similar themes relating to the Addison's current exhibitions. (87 minutes)

<http://www.zona-pellucida.com/childart.html>

A well-organized visual library displaying images of children in art, complete with detailed descriptions and background information on each image. Explore categories such as "Children and Nature," "Mothers and Children," "Children in Groups," and many more.

<http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/exhibits/newchild/>

This website, in conjunction with a past exhibition at the UC Berkeley University Art Museum, *British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood, 1730-1830*, provides a plethora of information relevant to *Little Women*, *Little Men* and *Child's Play* including explanatory text, images, a self-guided tour, interviews with curators, and a cultural timeline relating British and United States history during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.