Lesson Title: History from Multiple Perspectives: The Foundation of Hartford
Grades: 4–7
Time Required: 1–2 class periods
Subject Areas: Visual Art, English, Social Studies

Lesson Overview: In this lesson, students use Frederic Edwin Church’s *Reverend Thomas Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness in 1636 from Plymouth to Hartford* in order to interpret and understand how images tell stories. Students will then analyze a textual narrative of the same event and compare and contrast how the two tell the story of Hooker’s journey.

Common Core Academic Standards

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<th>History/Social Studies</th>
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National Core Art Standards

| Anchor Standard #7. Perceive and analyze artistic work. |
| Anchor Standard #8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. |
| Anchor Standard #11. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding. |

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the way an artist uses the elements of a painting to convey a point of view
- Identify a key moment in Hartford’s history
- Compare two accounts of the same event in different media

Materials:

- Image of Edwin Church’s *Reverend Thomas Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness in 1636 from Plymouth to Hartford*
- Projector and screen/SMART board, or equivalent
- Student hand out: Primary Source Worksheet
- Background Information provided in this lesson
- Pencils or pens

Artwork in Focus:

Click on the link below to access this image through the Wadsworth’s Public Portal. Once on the portal, click on the image to view the object information. Click on the image again to download a jpeg version of the work.

*NOTE: Works of art used in lesson plans may not currently be on view at the museum.*

Frederic Edwin Church, *Hooker and Company Journeying Through the Wilderness from Plymouth to Hartford in 1636*, 1846
Lesson Procedures:

Part One: Guided Looking

1. Project the image of Church’s *Reverend Thomas Hooker and Company*. Give students time to look quietly at the image. Do not reveal the title, date, or artist of this painting until after the guided looking exercise. Begin a classroom discussion by telling students that they will analyze this image as if it was a scene from a movie, looking at the painting’s setting, plot, characters, and mood.
   - Describe the setting [where the scene takes place]. Where do you think it is? What do you see that makes you say that?
   - What time of year is it? If you were in the painting, would it feel hot or cold? What sounds would you hear? What smells?
   - When do you think this scene takes place? Is it in the present? A long time ago? How long ago? What do you see that makes you say that?
   - Imagine the people in this painting are like the characters in a movie. Who do you think the main character might be? Why? Describe the other characters.
   - Describe the characters’ actions. What could be some possible reasons for their actions?
   - Again thinking about this painting as a movie, what do you think happened at the beginning of the movie? What do you think the ending will be? Why?
   - What is the overall mood of this painting? What elements of art, like line, color, and shape, did the artist use to create this mood?

2. Upon completion of the class discussion, reveal the information provided in the Background Information section.

Part Two: Activity

1. Introduce the primary source: an excerpt from Benjamin Trumbull’s *A Complete History of Connecticut* and the group activity
2. In groups of 2–3, students will read and analyze the text in the same way as the painting, identifying the characters, setting, and plot.
3. Then as a class, students will discuss the similarities and differences between the text and painting.
4. As a class, brainstorm other perspectives on this moment in history. What would it be like to be a child who had to go on a long journey? An American Indian witnessing this scene?

Assessment
Discussion: How does looking at these sources together help us create a deeper understanding of the historical event? What other sources of information might there be?

Extension Activity
Ask students to write a journal entry about Hooker’s journey from one specific perspective. It can be one that we have discussed, a figure visible in the painting, or the student imagining their own reactions if they were present in that moment. Journal entries must include:

1. An identification/description of who you are
2. A description of the current setting [this may include sights, sounds, smells, or experiences]
3. Your reasons for being there

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

TEACHER RESOURCE
thewadsworth.org/teachers
Historical Context
The painting is set in Connecticut in 1636, almost 400 years ago in the colonial era, when America was still ruled by England. Reverend Thomas Hooker moved from England to America in order to escape religious persecution, settling down in the Massachusetts colony. He was a religious leader who believed that colonial rule was wrong, and that people should be able to have a say in their government. When Hooker heard about land down south that was not owned by England, he left the Massachusetts colony, leading 100 of his followers to unclaimed land in Connecticut. The place they settled became the city of Hartford.

Art Historical Context
During the early nineteenth century, American painters turned to the magnificent landscape of our young nation as a source of artistic inspiration and creativity. Begun in 1825 with the arrival of its founder, artist Thomas Cole, the Hudson River School became America’s first school of painting, marking a decided shift away from the emphasis on portraiture that flourished during the eighteenth century. With the rise of this school of landscape painters, the wilderness—which had been feared in the previous century—was now considered to be America’s most distinctive feature, a symbol of the nation’s potential. In the absence of a lengthy cultural history like that found in European art, the wild terrain of America soon became both a vehicle to define a national identity and a morally uplifting influence on the country’s inhabitants.

An informal group never officially organized, the Hudson River School artists shared a passion for the American landscape. Here, the word “school” refers to a group of individuals whose thought, work, or style reflects a common theme; in this case, the collective vision was a sense of pride in the beauty of the land. Choosing as their subjects scenery from the Catskills Mountain region, the Hudson River Valley, Niagara Falls, Yosemite Valley, and the White Mountains of New Hampshire—a part of the tourist circuit at the time—artists depicted the wonders of the American wilderness with reverence, grandeur, sublimity, and power. Characterized by their precisely detailed and realistic renderings of nature, the discovery, exploration, and settlement of the land became the central concentration of these artists. This period in art thus reveals the changing relationship between humans and their environment, as the wilderness would give way to an industrialized, urban-based society.
Frederic Edwin Church
American, 1826–1900
Reverend Thomas Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness in 1636 from Plymouth to Hartford, 1846
Oil on canvas
Museum purchase, 1850.9
“About the beginning of June, Mr. Hooker, Mr. Stone, and about a hundred men, women and children, took their departure from Cambridge and travelled more than a hundred miles through a hideous and trackless way over mountains, through swamps, thickets and rivers...”

-From Benjamin Trumbull’s *A Complete History of Connecticut*, 1797

Who are the characters in this written account?

What words in this written account describe the setting (the surroundings)?

What is the plot (the action that takes place) according to this written account?

What is the mood of this written account?