

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

NATURE IN LOS ANGELES LANDSCAPES

ESSENTIAL QUESTION	With what part of the Los Angeles landscape do you most identify?
GRADES	3-8
TIME	One class period and a preview
ART CONCEPTS	Geography, landmarks, place, and identity
MATERIALS	Pencils, colored pencils, and drawing paper, and individual mementos provided by the students (a memento from the ocean/beaches, deserts, or mountains of Los Angeles, or an item that one would need when visiting one of those places).
TALKING ABOUT ART	<p>View the painting by Asher Brown Durand, <i>White Mountain Scenery, Franconia Notch, New Hampshire</i>, 1857, and make observations about the painting using the open-ended phrase, “I see...” Inventory the responses on the board, moving towards more and more detailed responses through close looking. Make sure to use all your senses in your descriptions.</p> <p>Named for American presidents, the range includes peaks named Mount Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Monroe, and Madison along with Mount Chocorua, named for a legendary Native American chief. Can you think of any areas of Los Angeles that memorialize important people or peoples?</p> <p>One can imagine the immense pride such an image would generate in contemporary Americans, as well as the sense of calm and serenity this painting might have bestowed upon its busy, city-dwelling owner. How do you feel when looking at Durand’s landscape? How are the natural landscapes of Los Angeles different from those depicted by Durand?</p> <p>Many of Durand’s contemporaries traveled further abroad in search of exotic locations, but Durand defended his local landscape as a worthy subject of art, telling young artists to embrace the familiar. Can you think of a Los Angeles view that generates the same feelings of pride and familiarity for you?</p> <p>Angelenos and visitors to Los Angeles are often inspired by the diverse geography of the city and its surroundings. Remember a favorite moment when you experienced the natural world in Los Angeles.</p>

MAKING ART

Using your memory and inspiration from your memento, capture your favorite place in Los Angeles where you have experienced a connection with nature. What are the characteristic features of that place? Write those features down. On the same piece of paper, create quick sketches of the individual features on the list.

Durand strove to capture what he witnessed by completing pencil sketches and color studies, choosing only the most beautiful and characteristic features, whether the trees, rocks, or other elements of the landscape. While he created the sketches outside in nature, his paintings were executed in his studio. Just as Durand assembled his landscapes in his studio, use your sketches to compose a remembered (or imaginary) view of an ocean-, desert- or mountain-view in the classroom incorporating yourself as a traveler in the image.

REFLECTION

Display the completed artworks in the classroom. Invite the students to walk around and view each example. Have volunteers share the story of their artwork. Invite them to identify the location and why they chose it. Ask the students to explain the choices they made in putting it together. How does your artwork express your feelings about Los Angeles?

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.3-8

3-8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners. 5.2. Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. 6-8.2. Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

CCSS.HISTORY SOCIAL SCIENCE CONTENT STANDARDS.3-8

3.1 Students describe the physical and human geography and use maps, tables, graphs, photographs, and charts to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context. 4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California