

7-B The County Election, 1852

George Caleb Bingham (1811–1879)



7-B George Caleb Bingham (1811–1879), *The County Election*, 1852. Oil on canvas, 38 x 52 in. (96.5 x 132.1 cm.). Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Mo., Gift of Bank of America.

The Art

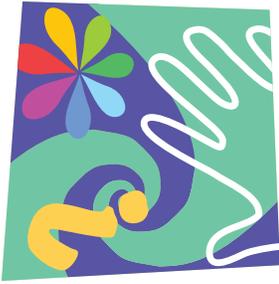
This oil painting shows a large group of men in front of a courthouse in a small Missouri town on Election Day. Some men are talking, some are voting, others are gathered around a newspaper, and two boys are playing. The artist himself appears in the painting in a stovepipe hat, sitting on the courthouse steps. A friendly dog is with him and two men in white hats are looking over his shoulder. Both wealthy and working class men have come to the courthouse to vote.

The Artist

George Caleb Bingham is known as “the Missouri artist” for the state where he lived and worked. Today he is famous for being one of the classic artists of the American West. He is best known for his scenes depicting daily life of the western frontier. His paintings show people of Missouri in and around St. Louis, Columbia, Jefferson City, Arrow Rock, Boonville, and Kansas City. He also painted scenes of the young nation’s government process, including campaigning and elections.

The Historical Perspective

Voting rules were still being formed when Bingham painted this picture in 1852. At that time, only white men could vote; women and African Americans were not allowed to participate. The painting records the day the artist himself ran for a position in the state government. Bingham lost to a man named E.D. Sappington, seen here under a blue banner tipping his hat and handing his card to a voter.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look carefully at this painting. It is quite detailed and full of objects children can recognize and describe. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the images included in the artwork.

Describing



- ✓ Look closely at this painting. What do you see? What is happening here?
- ✓ What are people doing? What are they wearing?
- ✓ What are the children doing?
- ✓ What time of day do you think it is?
- ✓ What season do you think it is?
- ✓ What animals do you see?

Analyzing and Interpreting



Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- The title of this painting is *The County Election*. Why do you think the artist named it that?
- Have you ever heard of an election? What can you tell me about it?
- Do you know what people do on Election Day?
- What does it mean to vote?
- Look at the crowd in the painting. Can you tell me what a crowd is? Have you seen or been in a crowd? Where? What were people in the crowd doing?
- What colors do you see? Which colors can you match?
- How many hats do you see? Look at the different kinds of hats. Let's count the hats.
- Are there other things you would like to say about this painting?

Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

background	conversation
bandana	courthouse
barrel	election
bowler hat	foreground
bow tie	perspective
brim	vote/voting



Books

Click, Clack, Moo Cows that Type by Doreen Cronin (Simon and Schuster, 2000)

Follow this charming tale, illustrating the tenets of democracy, as the cows organize other barnyard animals to negotiate with Farmer Brown for basic "rights," such as electric blankets.

The Day Gogo Went to Vote by Eleanor Sisulu (Little Brown Young Readers, 1999)
Great grandmother Gogo is determined not to miss her first chance ever to vote.

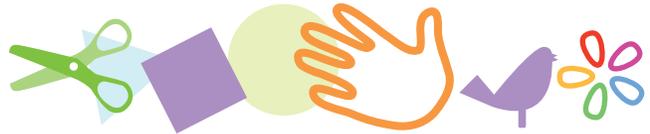


Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can:

- ✓ vote on household issues together, such as meal choices, television shows, bedtime routines, the order of completing chores and homework, etc. Tally votes on paper.
- ✓ visit the election booth together at election time to show children how voting works and discuss why voting sometimes happens in private.
- ✓ create artwork that reflects a value in their household, such as recycling or the wise use of electricity.



Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ Make different kinds of hats or cut them out of paper and laminate them. Have the children describe and match the hats to the hats in this painting.
- ✓ Have the children provide reasons to wear hats and sing about them. Have some hats available to match the reasons children give.
- ✓ Introduce some old-fashioned games, such as checkers, hoola hoops, hopscotch, jump rope.

The ideas listed are just a few of the many activities that could be used to introduce or extend children's learning. Your knowledge of your children and families supports your ability to ensure positive learning experiences and outcomes for students. As an educator, you probably have ideas for books, songs, finger plays, and activities that you have thought of when introducing or extending children's learning related to the "A Head Start on Picturing America" artworks. We encourage you to confer with your colleagues, visit the local library or bookstore, and share your ideas with others.