

9-A The Veteran in a New Field, 1865

Winslow Homer (1836–1910)



9-A Winslow Homer (1836–1910), *The Veteran in a New Field*, 1865, Oil on canvas, 24 1/8 x 38 1/8 in. (61.3 x 96.8 cm.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot (1876–1967), 1967 (67.187.131). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Art

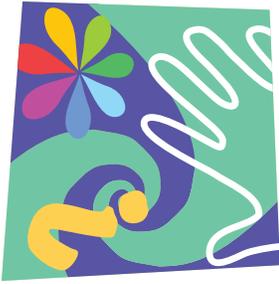
The Veteran in a New Field is an oil painting by the artist Winslow Homer. This painting shows a Civil War soldier after the end of the war. After the war ended, soldiers were allowed to go back to their homes and families. The soldier in the painting has returned home and is harvesting grain in the midday sun. He uses a tool, a single-bladed scythe, to harvest the wheat. His military jacket, from the Union Army, is on the ground along with his canteen. Homer divided the painting into three main strips of color—a band of blue sky; a band of standing, golden wheat; and a band of darker-colored, cut wheat.

The Artist

Homer completed this painting very soon after the end of the Civil War. He had gained his experience serving on the Civil War front, making sketches to go with military reports for a magazine called *Harper's Weekly*. Homer focused on soldiers' everyday lives, rather than on the more dramatic moments of battle. When Homer returned to normal life after the Civil War, he still favored themes of everyday living in his paintings. In this painting, he shows both the sadness and hope that follow war.

The Historical Perspective

The Veteran in a New Field was painted after the peace agreement between the North and South was signed at Appomattox, Virginia, and shortly after President Abraham Lincoln was shot. Many battles during the Civil War were fought in grain fields. Homer shows the soldier using an old, rather than more modern, scythe to remind people of the tool associated with the "grim reaper," a symbol of death. This painting of a wheat field is a reminder of the soldiers who died and the great loss that war brings. This picture captures the hardship of the Civil War but also the country's hope for the future. The soldier's return to a full field of wheat is a promise that life goes on.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look closely at the painting. Look at what the man is doing. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the painting.

Describing



- ✓ What is the man in the painting doing? Children might say raking or sweeping.
- ✓ Where is he working?
- ✓ What is he using to cut the wheat? Can you describe the tool? Have you ever seen a tool like this before? What other tools can you name?
- ✓ What colors did the artist use?
- ✓ Look very closely at the bottom right of the picture. What do you see there? (A military jacket and a canteen are pictured.)
- ✓ What do you do with a canteen? Why do you think the man took off his jacket?

Analyzing and Interpreting

The name of this painting is *The Veteran in a New Field*. Why do you think the painting has that name?

- How do you think the man feels in the sun?
- Why do you think this man's jacket is special?
- What is a soldier?
- Do you know anyone who is a soldier or in the Army?
- Some people wear a uniform but are not soldiers. Do you know someone who wears a uniform? What is his or her job?
- What is wheat? What do you do with wheat? What do you think might happen after the wheat is harvested? What is flour? Do you know what it is used for?

Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

army	planting
autumn	season
cereal	soldier
field	suspenders
grain	tool
harvest	veteran
midday	wheat
military	



Books

Farming by Gail Gibbons (Holiday House, 1990)

Farm life is described, including daily chores and the planting and harvesting of crops.

The Farm Alphabet Book by Jane Miller (Scholastic Paperbacks, 1987)

This picture book highlights an aspect of farm life for each letter of the alphabet.

The Little Red Hen by Paul Galdone (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985)

When a hen wants to bake some bread, she needs wheat, flour, and help, but she has to make the bread herself.

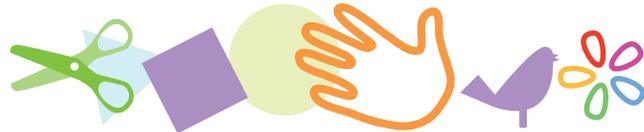


Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can:

- ✓ read the book *The Little Red Hen* and reenact the story with characters or using paper bag puppets.
- ✓ go on a scavenger hunt in their pantry and look for things that contain wheat (bread, pancake mix, etc.).
- ✓ look at grocery store ads and talk about fruits, vegetables, and other grocery store items.



Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ Discuss the importance of fruits and vegetables to healthy growing. Ask, "How do you think eating an apple contributes to a healthy body?" This idea may be difficult for young children so perhaps you can focus on the actual process of eating the apple. Discuss how this process helps clean your teeth.
- ✓ Have the children identify their favorite fruit or vegetable. As a math activity, take a tally of how many children like each type of fruit and vegetable. Summarize the choices in a bar graph.
- ✓ Ask, "Have you ever tried this ___?" Have any child who recognizes the fruit or vegetable try to describe its taste and texture.
- ✓ Make and decorate paper hats. Pass out instruments, wear hats, and enact a marching band.
- ✓ Make biscuits or bake something that requires using flour. Show children the steps in making flour from wheat.

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.