

11-A John Biglin in a Single Scull, c. 1873

Thomas Eakins (1844–1916)



11-A Thomas Eakins (1844–1916), *John Biglin in a Single Scull*, c. 1873. Watercolor on off-white wove paper, 19 5/16 x 24 7/8 in. (49.2 x 63.2 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1924 (24.108). Photograph © 1994 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Art

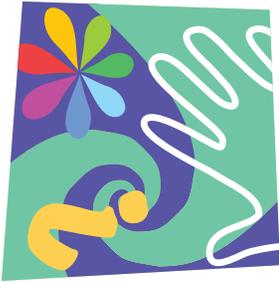
This watercolor painting shows a man, John Biglin, rowing by himself in a scull—a light, narrow racing boat. He is wearing a red scarf over his head and a white sleeveless shirt. Clouds swirl overhead in a very blue sky, but there is no visible sun. In the background are buildings, a fleet of sailboats, and a team of rowers. John Biglin is concentrating on his rowing and he is in a race. The tip of the boat that follows him is just entering the picture on the left.

The Artist

Thomas Eakins was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1844. He was an athletic child who enjoyed rowing, ice skating, swimming, wrestling, sailing, and gymnastics—activities he later painted. After graduating from high school, Eakins attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. At the same time, he took courses on the human body at Jefferson Medical College, learning more about the human figure and hoping to create more real-life pictures. Eakins was a painter, photographer, sculptor, and fine arts teacher. He was committed to painting realistic scenes of modern life.

The Historical Perspective

In England, rowing was considered an activity set aside for gentlemen. In Philadelphia, anyone could participate, since rowing clubs made the expensive equipment available to all members. Those who chose not to participate could gather on the riverbanks to cheer on the oarsmen. Rowing contests became some of the most popular sporting events of the 19th century. When Eakins painted this picture, the Biglin brothers were popular rowers, and brother John was a rowing superstar.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look closely at this artwork—the background and colors used. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the painting.

Describing



- ✓ What do you see in the painting? Can you find water? An oar? A rower? The sky? Clouds? A tower? Boats? A man? A red hat?
- ✓ How many shapes do you see? Do you see a triangle in the painting?
- ✓ What colors do you see in the painting?
- ✓ Is it a sunny day? How do you know?
- ✓ Tell me about the water. Do you think it is deep? Do you think it is cold?

Analyzing and Interpreting



Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- Do you think this boat ride would be fun?
- Have you been in a boat? Where?
- Boats come in all sizes and they all float. What types of boats do you see in the picture?
- The water in the picture is calm and easy to row through. How does the water look? Sometimes water is rough. What happens when the water is rough? What would rough water look like?
- Look at the man in the boat. He has big arm muscles. Why would rowing a boat make muscles strong or big? Why do you think the man needs to wear a head covering?
- How does the man's face look? What can you tell about him from the painting?
- How do we know the land is far away in the picture? Are the other boats close or far?

Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

clouds	rower
compete	rowing
concentration	scull
distance	triangle
oarsmen	watercolor
painting	
race	



Books

Beneath the Bridge by Hazel Hutchins (Annick Press, 2004)

A little boy's paper boat floats downstream on its way to sea.

Little Bear's Little Boat by Eve Bunting (Clarion Books, 2003)

When Little Bear can no longer fit into his boat, he finds someone else who can use it.

Books continued page 70



Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can

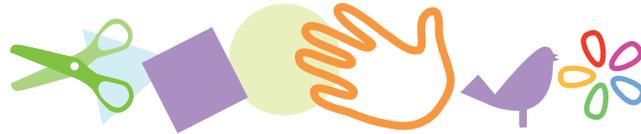
- ✓ take a family trip to look at a boat. Talk about the differences between the boats you have seen. Tell stories about boats that have been used to save people's lives. Tell a funny story about falling into the water or learning to swim.
- ✓ use bath time to discuss how and why objects float. Talk about rowing and move the bath water around using your hand as an oar.
- ✓ talk about safety when riding in a boat. What should you do first if someone falls into the water? What should you do next?
- ✓ go on a picnic where there is water. Bring a few items that will float and attach a long string so they can be pulled into shore if the current takes them.



Books continued...

Mr. Putter and Tabby Row the Boat by Cynthia Rylant (Harcourt Brace, 1997)
On a hot summer day, Mr. Putter, his cat, Tabby, their neighbor, Mrs. Teaberry, and her dog, Zeke, go for a picnic and rowboat ride.

My Red Rowboat by Dana Meachen Rau (Compass Point Books, 2002)
A father and child row a red boat across a lake to buy groceries.



Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ At the easel (indoors or outdoors) add extra white and blue paints, white cotton balls, and glue for white clouds. Bring a mirror or reflecting object and let the children see the reflection of the sky. Encourage them to paint a picture and talk about the sky.
- ✓ Place blue or reflective paper (foil, mylar, etc.) on the floor to represent a lake, river, or ocean. Provide blocks or Styrofoam pieces that can be used to erect buildings of all sizes and shapes along the pretend waterfront.
- ✓ Listen with the children to recordings of water and seaside sounds. Leave the recorder and headphones in the quiet area for children who enjoy this sensory experience. Provide books about boats and water.
- ✓ Fill a plastic tub or container with a shallow amount of water. Offer objects that float and talk about their buoyant qualities. Take them out and offer objects that sink. Talk about the dense qualities that cause them to sink. Discuss the differences.
- ✓ Place pillows on the grass or chairs in short rows of four or five. Demonstrate for the children how to pretend to row. Encourage them to synchronize their movement and use a verbal cue or song to get them in sync. Later, talk about how it feels when we exercise and the benefits of building strong muscles. Sing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."

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.