

4-A Washington Crossing the Delaware, 1851

Emanuel Leutze (1816–1868)



4-A Emanuel Leutze (1816–1868), *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1851. Oil on canvas, 149 x 255 in. (378.5 x 647.7 cm.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John Stewart Kennedy, 1897 (97.34). Photograph © 1992 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Art

This oil painting is very large—12 feet high and 21 feet long—about the size of some classroom walls. People who view the painting are about the same size as the people in it, making the action in the picture seem very close. The painting shows a lot of action. General George Washington and his soldiers are rowing across the choppy Delaware River on Christmas Eve in 1776, breaking up ice as they go. Men and horses are trying to stand in rowboats in rough water without falling. The wind is blowing fiercely and the flag is flying wildly.

The Artist

Emanuel Leutze was born in Germany 40 years after George Washington crossed the Delaware River. He immigrated to the United States as a child. Leutze carefully researched information presented in his paintings. His dramatic style of representing historical events brought him private and government commissions.

The Historical Perspective

This painting shows an important period during the Revolutionary War. The Declaration of Independence had been signed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, earlier in that year of 1776. Through the fall, Washington led an army that was shrinking in size and hope. He had just lost an important battle in New York. His troops were suffering, surviving on little food and rest during an extremely cold winter. Washington's victory over the British troops that took place after he and his men crossed the Delaware River set the path for the final American victory in the war. Washington is an example of an American leader from humble beginnings who was willing to make great sacrifices for his country.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look closely at the painting. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the artwork.

Describing



- ✓ Look at the painting. What can you tell me about it?
- ✓ Can you tell which soldier is George Washington? Describe him (the way he stands straight and steady, looking forward; his white hair; his uniform).
- ✓ Can you find Washington's white horse in the picture? (It is in the boat behind Washington's.) A branch floating in the water? (It is on the left.)
- ✓ What does the weather look like? How does the water look? Would you want to be on a boat in this weather? Why?
- ✓ Have you ever tried to stand up in a boat? What about a merry-go-round while it's moving?
- ✓ Even though it was crowded in the boats, would it have been easy or hard to stand still and not fall overboard?
- ✓ What about the horses standing in the boats? Why did the soldiers take them?

Analyzing and Interpreting



Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- The title of this painting is *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. Why do you think it is named that?
- What did it feel like in one of those boats? How cold was the water? How can you tell?
- What do you think the men in the boat are thinking? Where are they going?
- Does the boat look stable? (It is very crowded and dangerously overloaded.)
- Is there anything else you would like to say about this painting?



Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

background	crew	rowing
blustery	distance	shore
bright	iceberg	storm
commander	icy	treacherous
courage	oars	turbulent



Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can:

- ✓ sing the song “Two Little Boats” while using baby dolls as props.
- ✓ play with boats and people during bath time.
- ✓ take art materials to a local body of water (river, pond, etc.) and draw what they see.

Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ Make a boat out of a box or blocks, or outside in the yard. Encourage children to talk about what they feel and see.
- ✓ Go to a river or lake to see people in boats. Are the boats like the ones in this painting? If not, how are they different?
- ✓ Visit a farm with horses and watch them for awhile. Do they stay still or move around? How do you think they feel on a boat?



Books

Row, Row, Row the Boats: Fun Song about George Washington Crossing the Delaware by Michael Dahl (Picture Window Books, 2004)

George Washington’s adventures leading up to the Battle of Trenton are depicted in words that can be sung to the tune “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”

Washington Crossing the Delaware by Mary Tucker (Teaching and Learning Company, 2002)

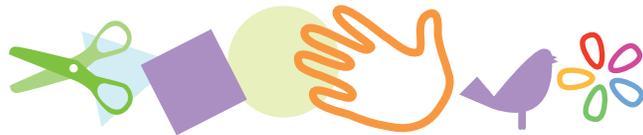
Poetry, discussion, and role play are used to convey what wartime conditions were like during the Revolutionary War.

When Washington Crossed the Delaware: A Wintertime Story for Young Patriots by Lynne Cheney (Simon and Schuster, 2004)

This book tells of George Washington’s leadership during the Revolutionary War battles of Trenton and Princeton.

Who Sank the Boat? by Pamela Allen (Putnam Juvenile, 1996)

Five animals are in a rowboat that sinks. The book prompts readers to guess which animal caused the boat to sink.



- ✓ Have children pretend they are the president of the United States. What would they want to do as president? Have them draw or paint themselves as president. Ask them what they would wear. What kinds of things would they have around them?

- ✓ Make a picture of water using paint, crayons, or other materials. Is the water calm or rough? Are any people near or on the water? Any boats? If so, what kind? Children might say motorboats, ocean liners, rowboats, sailboats, tankers, tugboats.

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.