

**Unit: Lowell and the Industrial Revolution**

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**Lesson Topic:** Literary and Artistic Responses to Industrialization

**Lesson Title:** Winslow Homer Artwork Interpretation

**Grade Level:** High School

**State Standards:**

**Class Time:** 45-60 minutes

**Objectives:**

- Students will interpret the painting, "The Old Mill" (The Morning Bell)
- Students will understand that artwork can have various interpretations that change over time
- Students will identify the focal point of the painting
- Students will describe three ways Homer created a focal point

**Prerequisite knowledge/Background Information:**

Students already have a basic understanding of the industrial revolution and life working in a mill.

**Materials:**

- Winslow Homer's "The Old Mill" (Morning Bell)
- Artwork criticism worksheet

**Procedure:**

- Group students in groups of 4
- Display the image of "The Old Mill".
- Students pass around the artwork criticism worksheet to each group member, and write in different colors to show which part of the interpretations was their contribution.
- Teacher explains the two interpretations of this piece as an example of how historical interpretations are constantly changing. Discuss with students if they agree on the interpretations and how they differed from their groups' interpretation.
- Ask groups to share what the focal point is and why they think it is the focal point.
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**Assessment**

Following the activity, students will create an abstract piece with a clear focal point that has something to do with a concept of the industrial revolution.

## **“The Old Mill” Criticism Worksheet**

Names (write in your color) \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Look at the painting and as a group, discuss the following questions. Each student should participate equally so each color should be equally represented in the work below.

Step 1: DESCRIBE THE PIECE OF ART:

1. What is the name of the artist who created the artwork?
2. What kind of an artwork is it (what is the medium)?
3. What is the name of the artwork?
4. When was this artwork created?
5. Name some other major events in history that occurred at the same time this artwork was created.

Step 2 – Analysis (Why and How?)

Try to figure out what the artist has done to achieve certain effects. You should refer to your first impressions and try to explain how the artwork achieves that reaction.

6. What is the focal point of this piece?
7. What are three qualities that draw your eye to this part of the piece?
8. What mood or feeling do you have when you look at this work of art?

Step 3 – Interpretation (What does it mean? What feelings do you get?)

Try to figure out what the artwork is about. Your own perspectives, associations and experiences meet with "the evidence" found in the work of art. All art works are about something. Some art works are about color, their subject matter, and social or cultural issues. Some art works are very accessible - that is relatively easy for the viewer to understand what the artist was doing. Other works are highly intellectual, and might not be as easy for us to know what the artist was thinking.

9. What is the work about; what so you think it means?

10. Why do you think the artist created this work?

11. Do you think there are things in the artwork that represent other things – symbols

Step 4 – Judgment

12. As a group, do you like or dislike this artwork?

13. Does your group think it is an important artwork? Explain why you feel the way you do about this artwork based on what you have learned about it.