South Dakota Artists
Curriculum Unit

Robert Aldern
“When Land Meets Sky”

Provided by the South Dakota Art Museum
Brookings, South Dakota
Unit of Study: Robert Aldern, painter

Title of Lesson Plan: When Land Meets Sky

Grade Level: 3 – 5
South Dakota Content Standards

Fine Arts:

Visual Arts Standard One 3-4:
Students will describe how visual arts tell stories, express moods, or convey ideas.

Visual Arts Standard Two 3-4:
Students will understand selected techniques which give artwork detail.

Visual Arts Standard Two 5-8:
Students will describe the various techniques which give artwork definition and detail.
South Dakota Content Standards

Geography:

4.G.1.2 Students are able to locate major South Dakota geographical and political features.

5.G.2.1 Students are able to describe how climate and geography influenced the way of life of Native American tribes and the movement and activities of settlers.
Assessment Strategies

- Class discussion
- Observation using VTS
- Creation of an art project graded by requirements in a rubric
Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about South Dakota artist Robert Aldern.
- Students will evaluate the art piece using VTS techniques.
- Students will define horizon line.
- Students will identify the horizon line in a painting.
- Students will create an art project showing contrast between the land and sky at the horizon line.
- Students will create an art project that includes physical features surrounding their region of the state.
Time Required

- One class period of 45 minutes

Materials/Technology Needed

- Image of Robert Aldern paintings: “Looking Toward North Dakota” and “South of Sioux Falls” (see link under resources)
- Construction paper
- White paper for the base of their project
- Tissue paper
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.
- Scissors
- Glue
Robert Aldern is known for his various church art by doing a variety of projects commissioned by various churches and businesses. He is also known for his series of prairie horizons. This lesson features some of those images.
Lesson Description

- Show students images of the following works from Robert Aldern: “Looking Toward North Dakota” and “South of Sioux Falls”.

- Using VTS observation, have students answer questions like:
  - What do you see?
  - What are you looking at?
  - What is the significance of the colors used in the images?
  - What do you hear?

- Discuss the answers to these questions as a class.

- Explain to students that these are images looking at the landscape of different parts of South Dakota - one looking north into North Dakota and one looking to the south of Sioux Falls.
Lesson Description continued

- Have students discuss the landscape differences between the different regions of South Dakota.
  - For students in the northern or southeastern part of South Dakota (or who are familiar with this part of the state) ask them if they think this looks like the landscape one would find in these areas.

- Discuss the horizon line and how it is the line that separates the land from the sky. How can they tell the difference in Aldern’s paintings?
Lesson Description continued

- For their assignment, have students create their own landscape. Have students create what they see looking in one direction from their location; but, have them imagine what it would look like without any buildings in their way. The goal is to get them to capture the landscape of their area (what the pioneers and Native Americans might have seen).

- Students will use a sheet of white paper for the base of their project. Then they can use construction paper to create land and sky keeping in mind to meet at the horizon line. Have students notice how the artist did not use many straight lines - except at the horizon. Their use of straight lines should be minimal. They should tear their paper for most of the project.

- To create variations in color, students can decoupage ripped tissue paper onto the construction paper which will also add depth to their project.
Enrichment

- Have students write a diary entry for one of the settlers that came upon this landscape image as they moved across South Dakota. Have students write down descriptions of the landscape and what the settler might have thought as they looked out over this new land.
Bibliography/Resources

- South Dakota Art Museum Collection
  - Robert Aldern


Robert Aldern Presentation to Students
Robert Aldern

Robert Aldern in his studio
http://www.robertaldern.com
Robert Aldern

- Born in Sioux Falls, SD in 1929
- Has had an impact on the art of South Dakota
- Growing up in South Dakota and other contemporary American painters have influenced artwork
- Artwork includes landscapes, liturgical, still life, and figure studies
Art Terms

- Landscape – artwork that shows an outdoor scene
- Liturgical art – artwork relating to religion that may be placed in a church
- Still Life – artwork that shows a group of objects placed together in an interesting way
- Figure Study - a painting, drawing, or sculpture where a live model is the subject
Bibliography


*For more information or to show students other pieces of artwork by Robert Aldern, go to his website at www.robertaldern.com or contact the South Dakota Art Museum.
Looking Toward North Dakota

http://www.robertaldern.com
South of Sioux Falls

http://www.robertaldern.com
Other Examples of Robert Aldern’s Artwork
Half Acre

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Floating Lantern

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Edible Earth

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Downpour

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum