

The Scout: Friends or Foes?

By Frederic Remington

Print Facts

- Medium: Oil on canvas
- Date: c. 1900-1905
- Size: 27 X 40 inches
- Location: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts
- Period:
- Style:
- Genre: American West
- Remington liked to paint works that asked a question. In this painting the Indian is asking if what he sees in the horizon is a friend or foe.
- The Scout is a member of the Blackfoot tribe
- Remington liked to experiment with painting night scenes. In this painting he is experimenting with moon light on the snow. Notice the horse's tracks and shadow.
- Remington also liked to compose paintings that posed, rather than answered, questions. In this painting, a lone Indian—unsure whether he faces, as the title suggests, friends or foes—stares at a distant encampment near the horizon where fires burn. The horse and rider seem tense.
- Watch a YouTube video about the painting: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHXnDnNy3v0>

Artist Facts

- Born October 4, 1861 in Canton, New York
- Died December 26, 1909 (48 years) in Connecticut
- He died from complications from appendicitis
- He was an artist, illustrator, sculptor and writer
- He specialized in scenes from the American west including Indians, cowboys and cavalry
- His father was a colonel in the Civil War
- Remington was an only child
- Remington attended Yale University and was on their football team
- Remington's father wanted him to attend the prestigious West Point, but Remington was not much of a student and wanted to be a journalist and do art on the side.
- After his father's death in 1880, he quit school and eventually journeyed to the American West. He was so excited by what he saw in the west he looked for work as a cowboy. He began sketching and drawing the people, places and animals he saw. He sent some of his sketches back to New York. They were bought and published in Harper's Weekly, a popular magazine at the time. He began illustrating and writing stories about the west.
- Remington created paintings and drawings, but he is also well-known for sculptures which captured the action and excitement of the American West.
- Although he did not always live in the West, he became skilled in roping and riding. He collected many artifacts from western life, which he referred to as he created realistic images for the world to enjoy.
- While employed by Harper's Weekly, Remington traveled to Arizona and South Carolina to complete sketches for them. He also traveled around the U.S., Mexico and abroad getting ideas for his sketches
- Remington wrote a novel, a Broadway play, and over 100 articles and stories
- Remington was sent to cover the Spanish-American war, but was appalled at the nature of war and did not find it heroic at all.

- From 1901 until his death in 1909, Frederic Remington produced a series of approximately 70 paintings that took as their subject the “color of night.” These paintings, in which the artist explored the technical and aesthetic difficulties of painting darkness, drew immediate approval from critics and were the paintings that allowed him to break decisively from his career as an illustrator.
- Remington was honored in the, Famous Americans Series postal Issues of 1940.
- Remington’s Self-Portrait on a Horse (1890) shows the artist as he wished he was, not the pot-bellied Easterner weighing heavily on a horse, but a tough, lean cowboy heading for adventure with his trusty steed.

Key Element of Design to Teach

- **Space** refers to distances or areas around, between or within components of a piece. Space can be positive (white or light) or negative (black or dark) and two dimensional or three-dimensional. Sometimes space isn’t actually within a piece, but the illusion of it is.

Possible Questions to Teach Space

- Where is there negative space in this painting?
- Where is there white space in this painting?
- Is this painting balanced?
- Can nothing balance something?

Keywords

- Contrast, space, color, balance, white space (positive space),

Other Possible Questions

- Cover the scout. What do you think is in this painting? What could be in the snow?
- What do you see on the horizon?
- What do you think the Indian is thinking?
- What colors do you see in this painting?
- Do you see any colors?
- Where do you think the Indian is going?
- What do you think he is trying to decide? (Whether to stop or keep going. Whether the people in the distance are friends or enemies.)
- What do you think the Indian should do? Turn around or keep going?
- What direction did the horse come from? How can you tell? (horse’s tracks)
- What time of day is it in this painting? Is it nighttime or daytime? How can you tell? (Night)
- In this painting he is experimenting with moon light on the snow. Notice the horse’s tracks and shadow.
- The Indian is in the foreground
- The background has people camping
- The Scout is a member of the Blackfoot tribe

Questions and Discussion for additional painting Turn Him Loose, Bill

- What do you think is happening in this painting? (Cowboys are breaking in a wild horse.)
- Why do you think this painting is called, “Turn Him Loose, Bill?”
- Where do you see movement in the painting? (The horse is leaping; the man is swinging into the saddle.)
- What details give the feeling of movement? (The horse’s mane, tail, dust, fringe on chaps, cords on vest)
- What details do you see in the background? (hill, fence, cowboys, horse)
- What details do you see in the foreground? (Horse and rider, cowboys, ropes, dust, shadows)