

Virgin Forest

by Henri Rousseau

Print Facts

- Medium: Oil on canvas
- Date: 1907
- Size: 18 x 25 ¾ inches
- Location: Kunstmuseum (art museum in Basel, Switzerland)
- Period:
- Style: Post Impressionistic
- Genre: Landscape
- A virgin forest is a mature woodland or forest that is undisturbed by human activity
- Rousseau never visited a tropical rain forest but painted them from his imagination
- He learned about the plants and animals from books and zoos

Artist Facts

- Pronounced (on-ree roo-SO)
- Born May, 1844
- Died September, 1910 (age 66)
- He was born in France, and never left France his entire life.
- His father was a tinsmith.
- People described him as having a delightful personality, and he was well liked by his peers.
- He married his landlord's daughter. They had six children (only one survived).
- He didn't start painting until his early 40's, and at 49 took an early retirement so he could paint full time.
- Before Rousseau began to paint, he held a post in the Paris Customs Service.
- He died of gangrene from a minor leg injury
- Rousseau is famous for painting jungle and forest scenes.
- He was one of the most important forerunners of the Surrealist movement because of the dreamlike quality of his paintings.
- Rousseau taught himself to paint later in his life.
- He said he had "no teacher other than nature."
- "Beauty is the promise of happiness"-Rousseau
- When he painted portraits he carefully measured his subjects with a tape measure.
- Rousseau earned supplemental money by playing the violin in the streets.
- He also composed songs.
- Picasso bought several of Rousseau's paintings.
- Rousseau was not taken seriously by the people of his time.
- Despite heavy criticism, Rousseau never doubted his own abilities.

Key Principle of Design to Teach

- **Repetition and Rhythm:** Repetition occurs when an artist repeats an item or element in a work of art. By repeating a particular element or combination of elements (such as color, shape or lines), artists can sometimes create the illusion of motion or stability or represent patterns and textures. Often this is done to help unify an artwork. The regular repetition of a particular element can make the artwork seem active or suggest visual vibration.

Possible Questions and Suggestions to Teach Repetition and Rhythm

- Show something that shakes and talk about "visual vibration"
- What shapes are repeated in this painting?
- What lines do you see repeated?
- Do you see any patterns repeated?
- What colors are repeated?
- Does nature repeat itself? (Show a tree branch and talk about how the branches and leaves repeat themselves throughout the tree.)
- Repetition and Rhythm create the illusion of movement. Does it look like the plants are moving? Why?

Keywords

- Repetition, rhythm, color, hue, shade, line, pattern, movement

Other Possible Questions

- Cover the sun. What colors do you see? Uncover? Now what colors do you see? Why do you think the artist does this?
- What colors do you see in this painting? Would you call them bright or dull?
- What color do you see the most in this painting?
- What colors grab your attention the most?
- How many different shades of green do you see? What would you call them? How do you think the artist created these different shades?
- What do you see in this painting? What do you see besides plants?
- What kind of animal is in this painting? A jaguar.
- Do you see the shadow of a man wrestling the jaguar?
- Would you want to visit this place?
- What kinds of lines do you see in this painting? Straight or curvy? Thick or thin?
- What is the first thing you see in this painting? Why?
- How would you describe the feeling of this painting? Playful? Energetic?
- Do you think this is how the jungle really looks? Why or why not?
- Do some things seem bigger or smaller than normal in this painting?