

Why Do Communities Live along Water?



focus artwork

Maurice Prendergast (1859–1924)
United States
New England Harbor, ca. 1919–23
The Edwin and Virginia Irwin Memorial, 1959.51

focus book

Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick
You, Me, and the Big Blue Sea
Brookfield Connecticut: Roaring Brook
Press, 2002

teacher information

unit overview

Communities, through time, in every country, have developed along waterways. Advancements in water transportation have occurred to meet the needs of people living in these locations. Artists have always been drawn to water and the life and landscape around it as a subject for their artwork, and these works can be a rich source of information for students as they explore how communities develop on water.

In this unit, students will closely examine and discuss the Focus Artwork *New England Harbor* and in doing so learn of the dependency communities have on water for their development. While reading the Focus Book *You, Me, and the Big Blue Sea*, students will understand the important role boats have played in the advancement of water communities. Finally, students will complete a writing activity comparing and contrasting the community depicted in the Focus Artwork with their own community. As a culminating activity, students will then create a seascape that focuses on their knowledge of water communities.

grade level: second

unit objectives

- Students closely examine Focus Artwork *New England Harbor* by Maurice Prendergast and discuss its subject matter as representative of how communities develop on water.
- Students understand that communities all over the world have developed on water and why.
- Students complete a series of research and writing exercises that detail their knowledge of water communities.
- Students will learn how to use different art media and techniques to produce their own artwork.

about the artist

American painter Maurice Prendergast was born in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, on October 10, 1859. In 1861, the family moved to Boston after their trading post business in St. John's failed. There Prendergast completed his formal education at the age of fourteen. Upon completing school, he took a job in a dry-goods store, where he spent his free time sketching. To support his artistic interest, his family apprenticed him to a painter of theatrical posters, and by 1883, he was working and supporting himself in this field.

In 1886, Prendergast and his brother, Charles, worked their way to England on a cattle boat with the intention to study art. Upon returning to Boston, they worked at routine jobs to save \$1,000 for a return to Europe. Five years later, in 1891, Prendergast, age thirty-two, went to Paris to study. The fledgling artist studied first at Colarossi's and then moved to the life class at the Académie Julian, where he made rapid progress. In the afternoons he worked at the cafés sketching the movement of life at leisure, a theme that, with variations in setting, was to preoccupy him throughout his career. He worked chiefly in watercolor, and his paintings from this time have a very light, free feel that is full of improvisation.

When Prendergast returned to Boston in 1894, he was an accomplished watercolorist and had incorporated qualities from Édouard Manet, James McNeill Whistler, Edgar Degas, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Pierre Bonnard, and Édouard Vuillard into his paintings. He moved to Winchester, not far from Boston, to live with his brother, who owned a business making ornamental doors, mantels, and picture frames. From Winchester, Prendergast made painting trips to area sites like Revere Beach and South Boston Pier. When he was not painting, he assisted his brother in making frames.

In 1898, Prendergast traveled to Venice, where he created some of his most enchanting watercolors. There he sketched the holiday crowd. During his year-long stay, he had a serious health scare and underwent two operations. Despite his illness, he did a great deal of work in Italy, traveling to Sienna, Rome, Florence, and Padua. While in Italy, his work became warmer and richer in color than the delicate, cool colors of his Paris work. The pieces he did at this time depicted the busy activity of large groups of people, while his Paris work confined his interest in movement to that of an individual figure or small group. The paintings that he created while in Italy were exhibited at the Chase Gallery in Boston, in late 1899, and in January 1900, at the Art Institute of Chicago.

Prendergast returned from Italy in 1899 and resumed living with his brother outside Boston. By this time his reputation began to develop quietly. A few Boston patrons were purchasing his work, and exhibitions were making him known elsewhere. During this period, the artist also became a prolific printmaker and was the leading exponent of the colored monotype. Between

1892 and 1905, Prendergast produced as many as two hundred monotypes, in addition to his watercolors and a limited number of oils. The artist saw importance in this medium and exhibited these works on three different occasions, between 1899 and 1901, in Boston, Chicago, and Cincinnati.

Starting in 1900 and into 1902, Prendergast traveled repeatedly to New York City to paint. During these visits he established a long friendship with fellow painter William Glackens and the painters that would be known as "The Eight." Most of The Eight were interested in representing the gritty side of life, of which Prendergast had slight interest. He diverged from this subject matter, preferring the happy and idyllic colorful images of crowds, parks, and celebrations. The works Prendergast created at this time are a wonderful record of leisure activities at the turn of the century. His extravagantly dressed crowds are a wonderful blending of grace and wit, of elegance and humor. In 1908, Arthur B. Davies, a fellow member of The Eight, invited him to participate in the now famous exhibition of the group organized to protest the conservative tendencies of the National Academy of Design. At the exhibition, Prendergast showed sixteen pieces.

Prendergast returned to Europe in 1909 for an extended stay in France and a shorter visit to Italy. He remained on the continent until 1912. In France, he painted mainly in Paris, St. Malo, and Dinard. In Italy, he worked chiefly in Venice, joining his brother who was in the city to study Renaissance picture frames. Upon his return, Prendergast renewed his friendship with Davies and his fellow artists in New York. That year, 1912, he was asked to join the Association of American Painters and Sculptors Incorporated and as a member took part in the International Exhibition of Modern Art, also known as the Armory Show, that was held in February and March of 1913. The seven watercolors he included revealed Prendergast as a major figure in American modern painting. He was one of the first to deliberately abandon a primarily representational approach to art and to let the subject matter be dominated by purely artistic means.

The artist went to Europe for the last time in 1914, intending to stay a year; however, his visit was cut short by World War I. Upon his return, he and his brother moved to New York. He spent the last decade of his life painting the idyllic scenes that he loved. He spent his summers in New England, where he painted in oil and watercolor brightly dressed figures on beaches and in parks, often painting with a tapestry-like quality that relied on intense color, loosely applied in unexpected areas, to suggest form, movement, and texture. As the mid-1920s approached, Prendergast's deafness caused him to become increasingly isolated. He died on February 1, 1924, in New York.



about the art

The Art Museum's painting *New England Harbor* by Maurice Prendergast was completed in the years from 1919 to 1923. In this image, we see Prendergast's favorite subject matter, a large group of people at leisure. Here we see a group, mostly women and children, enjoying a spring or summer day on the New England coast. In the foreground, the revelers enjoy a picnic while in the background ships are arriving in the harbor. Prendergast has used bright dabs of thick color to give the figures form and texture. The tapestry or mosaic-like appearance of this painting gives the work an abstract and free appearance.

This painting is a wonderful example of Prendergast's work in oil. His interest in painting in oil came upon his return to Boston from Italy. The artist painted his oils almost entirely in the studio, frequently copying watercolors he had painted outdoors. In these works, Prendergast worked on a very loosely stretched canvas. This loose canvas drew the heavy paint from the brush in an irregular way, giving his completed works a spongy appearance. Prendergast worked by trial and error and continuously reworked his canvases. This constant reworking of paintings is the reason for the long date range for this work.

information on focus book

Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick, *You, Me, and the Big Blue Sea*

You, Me, and the Big Blue Sea written and illustrated by Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick tells the story of a mother's and son's adventurous ocean journey. In this book, a mother tells her young son the story of a sea voyage they took when he was very little. Each page tells about the trip she is sure he would not remember. She does not realize that not only does the little boy remember the trip, but that he obviously saw many details on the trip that the grown-ups failed to notice.

Lesson #1

Learning to Look A Day at the Harbor

objectives

- Students closely examine the Focus Artwork *New England Harbor* by Maurice Prendergast.
- Students discover the influence of water transportation on communities.
- Students draw a representation of one part of the Focus Artwork.

vocabulary

(Definitions from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary www.webster.com)

canvas: *piece of cloth backed or framed as a surface for a painting*

community: *people with common interests living in a particular area*

harbor: *part of a body of water protected and deep enough to furnish anchorage*

horizon: *apparent junction of earth and sky*

perspective: *system used by artists to create the illusion of depth in a two-dimensional work of art such as a painting*

reproduction: *copy, or likeness, of an original painting or piece of artwork*



materials

large reproduction of Focus Artwork *New England Harbor*

world map

paper

pencils

crayons or markers

procedure

1. Share with students that they are going to begin a unit on water transportation and that, to start the unit, they will be looking at a work of art from the Cincinnati Art Museum. Tell students that they are going to have to look very carefully to see all the details in this painting.
 - A nice warm-up to reinforce the importance of focused looking is to have students look carefully at you for one minute. When the minute is up, move from the students' view and change one thing about your appearance: take off glasses, tie, earring, etc. Then come back and have students try to figure out what is different.
2. Once students have practiced looking closely, display a large reproduction of Focus Artwork *New England Harbor*, and have students discuss what they see in the picture. To lead the discussion, you may choose to ask the following questions:
 - What do you see?
 - What is going on in this picture? Why do you think that?
 - How does this picture make you feel? Why do you think it makes you feel that way?
 - Why do you think the artist might have chosen to paint this particular scene?
 - What are the different types of transportation shown in this painting?
3. Tell students the name of the painting is *New England Harbor*, and together locate New England on a world map.
4. Tell students that this painting depicts a community. Introduce/review the term community with students. Ask students to describe their community. Is it like the community in the painting?
5. Introduce/review the term harbor with students. Have them locate the harbor in the painting and on the map.

6. Have students think about why this community was built so close to the water. To lead the discussion, you may choose to ask the following questions:
 - Why have communities developed along waterways?
 - Why has the way people travel on water changed over time?
 - Why might people in a community depend on water transportation?
7. To encourage further looking at the Focus Artwork ask students to select one part of the painting that they particularly like and draw and color a representation of that part. Students will be asked to explain why they selected a particular part of the painting.

national standards

VISUAL ARTS

Standard 4: Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

GEOGRAPHY

Standard 11: Understands the patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface.

Standard 12: Understands the patterns of human settlement and their causes.

HISTORY

Standard 2: Understands the history of a local community and how communities in North America varied long ago.





Lesson #2

Who Lives on the Big Blue Sea?

materials

Focus Book *You, Me, and the Big Blue Sea*

large reproduction of Focus Artwork *New England Harbor*

world map internet access library access

paper pencils

procedure

1. Read and discuss the Focus Book *You, Me, and the Big Blue Sea*.
2. Discuss that the boy in the book "saw" many things that the mother did not observe and compare this to our Focus Artwork and how each student noticed different things in the painting. Talk about the kind of ship the boy and his mother traveled on, why they were traveling, and where they were going. Ask students if they think the boat will arrive in a harbor, much like that in the Focus Artwork.
3. Next, ask students to brainstorm the types of communities, other than that in the Focus Artwork that the people in the Focus Book might visit.
4. At this point, explain to students that all over the world, people have lived on and depended on water for their livelihood. You may wish to have students brainstorm reasons people would live on water.
5. Using a world map, have each student find a city that is on a major waterway. Example: Cairo, Egypt, is on the Nile River. Each student should find a different city.
6. Once students have chosen their city, tell them that they are going to research their city and report back to the class. Students should be encouraged to use visual aids in their presentation. Give students time to visit the library and work on the Internet to gather information on how their city developed because of its location on water.

time/setting

Large Group Time

objectives

- Students read and discuss the Focus Book *You, Me and the Big Blue Sea* by Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick.
- Students compare detail in the Focus Book and Focus Artwork *New England Harbor*.
- Students understand that people, throughout history and today, have lived on the water and why.
- Students research and report on a city that has developed on a major waterway.

vocabulary

(Definitions from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary www.webster.com)

cabin: *private room on a ship or boat*

deck: *platform in a ship serving usually as a structural element and forming the floor for its compartments*

mast: *long pole or spar rising from the keel or deck of a ship and supporting the yards, booms, and rigging*

porthole: *opening (as a window) in the side of a ship or aircraft*

waterway: *navigable body of water (e.g. river, ocean, lake, stream)*

national standards

GEOGRAPHY

Standard 4: Understands the physical and human characteristics of place.

HISTORY

Standard 2: Understands the history of a local community and how communities in North America varied long ago.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Standard 3: Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written composition.

Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.



Lesson #3

Comparing and Contrasting Communities

4. Have students look for things depicted in the painting that are the same as in the community in which they live. Students will list these ideas under the “same” label.
5. Inform students that they will now use their ideas to write a paper comparing and contrasting their community to that depicted in the painting. Completed papers will be shared with the rest of the class.

extension activity

You may wish to have students compare and contrast their community to the community they researched in Lesson #3.

national standards

LANGUAGE ARTS

Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.

Standard 3: Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written composition.

resources

Barrett, Norman S. *Ships*. London and New York: Franklin Watts, 1984.

Fitzpatrick, Marie-Louise. *You, Me, and the Big Blue Sea*. Brookfield, Connecticut: Roaring Brook Press, 2002.

Gibbons, Gail. *The Great St. Lawrence Seaway*. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1992.

LaMarche, Jim. *The Raft*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000.

Maestro, Betsy and Del Vecchio, Ellen. *Big City Port*. New York: Four Winds Press, 1983.

Morris, Neil. *Traveling Through Time: Ships*. Parsippany, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Press, 1998.

O’Brien, Patrick. *The Great Ships*. New York: Walker & Company, 2001.

Oxlade, Chris. *All About Ships: Amazing Maritime Facts*. London: Southwater, 2000.

Pallotta, Jerry. *Dory Story*. Watertown, Massachusetts: Charlesbridge, 2000.

Sturges, Philemon. *Down to the Sea in Ships*. New York: Putnam, 2005.

Wilkinson, Philip. *The World of Ships*. Boston, Massachusetts: Kingfisher, 2005.

objectives

- Students understand the similarities and differences between their community and other communities in the world.
- Students complete a writing activity comparing and contrasting the community depicted in the Focus Artwork with their own community

materials

large reproduction of Focus Artwork *New England Harbor* or individual laminated copies

paper pencils

procedure

1. Discuss with students the similarities and differences between their community and other communities in the world. Brainstorm with students some similarities that almost all communities have (grocery store, school, etc.). Now discuss the differences between communities (landscape, natural resources, etc.).
2. As a prewriting activity, ask students to fold a piece of paper in half vertically and label one side “same” and the other side “different.”
3. Ask each student to look closely at the Focus Artwork *New England Harbor* and identify items in the painting that are different from the community in which they live. Students will list these ideas under the “different” column.



Art-Making Experience Tissue Paper Seascapes

procedure

1. Tell students that today they will create a seascape using tissue paper and glue. Their seascape will show land, water, and sky as well as a boat or ship.
2. Show students a finished sample and have them notice that when dried, light will shine through their picture giving it the appearance of a stained glass window.
3. Demonstrate for students the process they will follow before students begin to make their own picture.

Students will complete the following steps

- Draw a simple seascape within the marked area on the paper.
- Cut out of tissue paper the details for their seascapes, such as boats, sails, clouds, etc. These will be set aside for later use.
- Be given a sheet of acetate that will be taped over their drawings.
- Collect colors of tissue paper they want to use to depict land, water, and sky. Students will be reminded that they will need to glue at least three layers of tissue over each place on their acetate to make it thick enough, when dried, to peel off.
- Lightly pour a small amount of the glue mixture on the acetate and spread it with the tongue depressor to the edge of the marked area.
- Tear the colored tissue paper and place it on their sheets of acetate adding glue for each new layer to show the sky, sea, and land.
- Add the details they had previously cut out and set aside. They will need to add more glue mixture for each layer. (The surface should be wet with glue when adding detail pieces.)
- Allow the seascapes to dry on a flat surface for at least 24 hours or until dry.
- Peel off the acetate and, if necessary, weigh down the pictures to flatten them.
- Frame the pictures and hang them in the window

time/setting

This art-making experience should be spread out over several days.

objectives

- Students create a seascape that reflects their knowledge of boats and water transportation.

vocabulary

(Definitions from Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary www.webster.com)

seascape: *picture representing a scene at sea*

horizon: *apparent junction of earth and sky*

materials

acetate sheets

white glue, watered down to about 50/50

small containers for glue

tongue depressors

drawing paper with an 8 x 10 in. area outlined in the center of the page

tissue paper in several colors

precut picture mattes

permanent markers

pencils

erasers

tape

newspaper

national standards

VISUAL ARTS

Standard 1: Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts.

Standard 5: Understands the characteristics and merits of one's own artwork and the artwork of others.



Maurice Prendergast, *New England Harbor*, ca. 1919–23, The Edwin and Virginia Irwin Memorial, 1959.51

Dear Adult Friends and Caregivers,

As you know, your child recently participated in an art-integrated curriculum created by the Cincinnati Art Museum that explored life on the water. During this series of lessons, your child had the opportunity to discover this painting by famed American artist Maurice Prendergast. The painting, entitled *New England Harbor*, inspired a variety of responses and conversations.

We hope that you will look at *New England Harbor*, together with your child and talk about it. Below please find a variety of extension activities that you and your child may wish to try to expand the learning they have begun in class.

1. Talk about how many different types of boats you've been on.
2. Sing rounds of *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* with your entire family...see how long you can go before someone laughs!
3. If your family belongs to a gym, try out the rowing machine to see how it feels (with adult supervision, of course).
4. Take two corks, and cut one in half long ways and the other in half short ways. See which is more stable in the water when placed flat side down or rounded side down. (like different types of boats)
5. Go to a local body of water that rents paddleboats or toy boats to sail and give it a try.
6. Visit the Cincinnati Art Museum. Call (513) 721-ARTS for more information, or go online at www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org. You can see the original *New England Harbor* while here.

Not from Cincinnati? Visit your local museum and look for images of boats and ships. Talk about where the boats you see may be going.



Maurice Prendergast (1859–1924)

United States

New England Harbor, ca. 1919–23

The Edwin and Virginia Irwin Memorial, 1959.51