



MOSES

Anna Mary Moses, *Path to the Village*, no date

INTRODUCTION

Path to the Village is an embroidery of an idyllic scene where two figures walk down a dirt path towards bright orange houses in a pastel sunset. As is representative of Grandma Moses' art, the work lacks signs of modern life and leans into a folk style.

ARTIST BIO

Anna Mary Robertson Moses (1860-1961), nicknamed "Grandma Moses," was a beloved American folk artist. Having been born before the Civil War and living until more than 100 years, Grandma Moses experienced the radical change which happened over that entire century. She grew up working on farms and continued farming into her adulthood. Accustomed to keeping busy with work, Grandma Moses also made art prolifically into her old age. Her primary artistic medium was needlework, but she was actually more well-known for her paintings. She turned to painting to "keep busy and out of mischief" after the death of her husband in her late 70s. In reality, the arthritis in her hands made the process of needlework too painful. Her work caught the public eye when Louis Caldor, a New York City art collector, saw Grandma Moses' paintings through a drugstore window—she was participating in a show of community artists put on by the local pharmacy. Caldor purchased every one of Grandma Moses' paintings and started working to bring her work to the art world.

STYLE & TECHNIQUE

At the beginning of Grandma Moses' lifetime, the main form of communication in the United States was through the Pony Express. By the end of her life, the majority of households had a telephone, and some homes had color TV. Despite living through so much change, she continued to depict idealized landscapes devoid of signs of industrialization. Grandma Moses rose to fame in the 1950s, fueled by an appetite for "outsider" artists without formal training. Growing up, her father gave her scrap newsprint to paint on and juice from berries to paint with. Like many other artists associated with Folk Art, Grandma Moses largely taught herself. Folk Art tends to be imaginative and expressive, and often depicts quaint and idealized scenes of rural life (as Grandma Moses' art does). The nostalgia evoked by artists like Grandma Moses offered a refreshing and cheerful distraction from the grim realities of World War II, and her artworks quickly rose to popularity in the last two decades of her life.

ARTWORK

Path to the Village is a needlework of an idyllic countryside. Near the center of the composition, two bundled figures walk down a dirt path amidst farmlands. The scene is depicted from a higher vantage point, giving an overview of the quaint setting. Grandma Moses preferred to feature subjects that were devoid of signs of industrialization, saying, "I'll start painting; then I'll forget everything except how things used to be and how to paint it so people will know how we used to live." Her needlework reflects that same sentiment. Threads act as brushstrokes to create painterly details and a sense of visual movement.

GOALS

Students will be able to:

- 1 Identify 19th and 20th-century technological advances
- 2 Compare different artistic mediums
- 3 Identify the connection between seasons and color
- 4 Design their own invention

LOOK AND DISCUSS

- Needlework is made by weaving colorful threads together to create a picture. How does this material differ from painting? What can one accomplish that the other cannot?
- What season do you think is depicted in this scene? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Close your eyes. When you open them again, look at the image and pay attention to the way your eyes move through the artwork. What do you see first? Where do your eyes go next?

CONTINUE THE STORY

Though she lived to be 101 years old and experienced radical change in her lifetime, Grandma Moses made artistic choices to leave out signs of industrialization in her art, which added to the nostalgic and folk-art feel of her work. Since Grandma Moses' lifetime, the world has seen even more changes with new inventions like the internet, mobile phones, video games, and great advancements in medicine. Scan the QR code to the right to look through an invention timeline by PBS. Find some of the inventions and technologies that were created during Grandma Moses' life, like roller skates, zippers, and frozen food. Which inventions from her lifetime have had the most impact on your life?



ACTIVITY #1: WEATHER WATERCOLOR RESIST

Materials: Paper, white crayons, watercolors, brushes, water cups

Subject Areas: Science, Visual Arts

Duration: 30 minutes

Just like Grandma Moses' needlework depicts a season, you can illustrate a season through color and line. Discuss the colors and types of weather that are often associated with each season, then decide which season you would like to portray in your artwork. Using a white crayon, draw an image of that season. Use watercolors to fill the paper (the crayon will resist watercolor and stay white). Think about what each color of paint communicates about the weather depicted in your scene.

UTAH STATE VISUAL ARTS LEARNING STANDARDS

Strand: Create (V.CR)

Students will generate artistic work by conceptualizing, organizing, and completing their artistic ideas. They will refine original work through persistence, reflection, and evaluation.

Strand: Connect (V.CO)

Students will relate artistic skills, ideas, and work with personal meaning and external context.

ACTIVITY #2: I'M AN INVENTOR

Materials: Paper, colored pencils

Subject Areas: Visual Arts, Social Studies

Duration: 30 minutes

Think of an imaginary invention that could have helped Grandma Moses or the people in *Path to the Village* fulfill one of the following purposes:

- Help someone with arthritis use their hands with more ease and less pain
- Simplify yard work
- Help an embroidery artist keep their threads organized
- Mend a fence
- Paint textures and patterns found in nature (trees, grass, rocks, etc.)

Draw and name this new invention.

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ASSESSMENT

Assessment for this lesson may include student engagement in learning activities or participation in group discussion. The activity "Weather Watercolor Resist" can be used to help students think about the relationship between color, weather, and seasons. The activity "I'm an Inventor" teaches students to think outside the box as they practice their problem-solving skills.