

View from Mount Holyoke (The Oxbow), 1836 by Thomas Cole [1801–1848]

1. An oxbow is a U-shaped piece of wood that fits under and around the neck of an ox, with its upper ends attached to the bar of the yoke. Where is the oxbow in this painting?
2. Have students find these objects.
 - a. An umbrella:
 - b. Thomas Cole sketching in a top hat:
 - c. Lightning:
 - d. Birds:
 - e. Smoke:
3. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the left and right sides of this painting. Which side is wilderness and which is cultivated farmland?
4. Why would someone living in a city in the 1830's want a picture like this in his home?
5. Pretend to be a TV weathercaster and give the weather forecast for the next few hours for this scene of the Connecticut River valley.
6. In the 1830s, America's wilderness was being settled. Untamed forests were transformed into cultivated farms and towns. What might the approaching storm over the wild forest symbolize?
7. Point out the double meaning of the Hebrew word (*Noah* and inverted *Almighty*) carved into the center hillside.
8. What might Cole's message be about the rapidly changing face of the American continent?.

Historical Connections: Puritans; the idea of a City on a Hill

Historical Figures: Ralph Waldo Emerson; Henry David Thoreau

Literary Connections and Primary

Documents: *The Ox-Bow Incident*, Walter Van Tilburg Clark "Essay on American Scenery," Thomas Cole; *Nature*, Ralph Waldo Emerson; *Democracy in America*, Volume 1 (1835) and Volume II (1839), Alexis de Tocqueville

Arts: Hudson River School; landscape painting