

Revised Sept. 2011

FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES: Norman Rockwell (1894 - 1978)

"No Swimming", Original Oil Painting

"Saturday Evening Post" Cover June 4, 1921

Supplies Needed:

- * Framed print "No Swimming"
- * Laminated visual aids from supply box (8 total)
- * Blank paper with Saturday Evening Post at top, in supply box
- * Students will need crayons, markers and/or pencils
- * Colored construction paper for matting from teachers' workroom
- * 10 pennies, in supply box
- * Project sample
- * laminated poster of **Saturday Evening Post** covers in supply closet (to the left of the shelves)
- * **Norman Rockwell: Storyteller with a Brush** by Gherman in supply box for reference

Reference Books:

- * A Rockwell Portrait, D. Walton (J Biography)
- * Norman Rockwell, J. Cohen (J Biography)
- * Norman Rockwell's People, S. Meyer (759.13 Oversize)
- * Norman Rockwell, M. Venezia (J Biography)
- * The Importance of Norman Rockwell, (J759.13ROC)

AHEAD OF TIME NOTE: Please make copies of master for "Famous Artist Series" take home note for students.

Is anyone here familiar with the name Norman Rockwell? Many of you may have seen his work and not even known it! For more than 60 years, he painted familiar everyday scenes that people felt reflected their lives. Life Magazine once estimated that his pictures have been seen by more people than all of Michelangelo's, Rembrandt's and Picasso's put together!

(Show them laminate #8 and a few of the other laminates that show his illustrations. Ask the children if they recognize any of these pictures.)

We will learn about this famous artist/illustrator today.

Norman Rockwell was born in New York City in 1894. He was a pale, skinny boy and kids often poked fun at him. His older brother, Jarvis, was a natural athlete, which made Rockwell all the more self-conscious of his clumsiness. But Rockwell soon discovered he was a natural at drawing. As a child, he often did creative projects such as building battleships out of cardboard, sketching characters from the Charles Dickens stories as his father read, and drawing holiday scenes for his teachers on the chalkboard at school. Shocking everyone,

he quit high school after his sophomore year when he was only 15 years old to go to art school.

(Show laminate #1 of Rockwell as a boy).

Norman Rockwell's most famous pictures are **illustrations** he made for books, advertisements and especially magazine covers. **(Show the laminated poster of Saturday Evening Post covers)** Illustrations are pictures that help tell a story. Usually publishers hire artists to draw illustrations. Norman Rockwell once said, "Some people have been kind enough to call me a fine artist. I've always called myself an illustrator. I'm not sure what the difference is. All I know is that whatever type of work I do, I try to give it my very best. Art has been my life."

At the age of 19, Norman Rockwell began working as art director for Boys Life Magazine, the official Boy Scouts publication. His dream of becoming a top illustrator was starting to come true. His goal, though, was to illustrate the front cover for the Saturday Evening Post. The Post was the most popular magazine in the United States. It was started in 1728 by Benjamin Franklin. Only the best artists were asked to illustrate for the Post. In 1916, at the age of 22, one of his illustrations was accepted for the cover of this popular magazine. It was called "Boy Pushing Baby Carriage".

(Show laminate #2 "Boy Pushing Baby Carriage". Two boys are making fun of a 3rd boy who has been forced to baby-sit for his sister and can't play. Note the baby bottle in his coat pocket!)

He became a very popular "cover artist". Over his career he drew 520 magazine covers and as well as 4,000 paintings and drawings. He was a very hard worker. He worked every day of his life. Even Christmas morning he would watch his family open gifts and then work in his studio all day. ***(Show laminate #3 of Rockwell in his studio.)***

Most of Rockwell's illustrations show his sense of humor and love of people. His hopes were to paint everyday situations in a way that people could enjoy and understand. He once said that he "painted life as he would like it to be". One writer said of him, "He made the average American special."

Rockwell used many models for his illustrations. He used his family, neighbors, local schoolchildren and townspeople. People looked forward to posing for him and he always made it fun and played music in the studio. Rockwell always insisted on paying his models. For the children he used as models, he came up with a way to keep them interested. At the beginning of the session he would stack up nickels for the older kids and pennies for the younger. At each rest period, he would move 5 coins to the other side of the table as payment. ***(Show laminate #4 of boy modeling a pose for Rockwell. You may also use***

pennies in a stack and move 5 over to show the students Rockwell's method.)

One thing that makes Rockwell's illustrations so engaging is the way they tell a story without words. Let's take a look at some of his illustrations to see if we can figure out what he is trying to tell us.

(Show laminate #5, "Doctor and Doll", March 9, 1929. Who do we see here? (Point to the Doctor and the little girl) How old do you think they are? Where do they seem to be looking? The doctor's eyes are looking upward. The little girl's eyes are fixed on the doctor. What do you think the little girl is thinking? She is afraid and hasn't even taken her jacket off. The doctor is trying his best to put her at ease by entering her pretend world and putting his stethoscope to her doll's chest. Where is this taking place? In the doctor's office. How is this office different than your doctor's office? Does your doctor look like this doctor? Do you think the picture on his desk is one of Norman Rockwell's favorite artists? Yes, it looks like a painting from Rembrandt.)

(Show laminate #6, "The Shiner", May 23, 1953. Ask the students if they know what a "shiner" is. Note on the back of the laminate is a picture of the actual girl who modeled for Rockwell. What happened to her? (point to girl on bench) Look at her face. How does she feel? She is proud of her black eye. Did she win the fight? Who do think she fought? A boy or a girl? Does everyone agree? Look at these people. (point to principal and teacher) Who are they? How do the principal and teacher feel? The teacher and principal are not happy about her reaction. She should feel bad or be crying because she got a black eye. Where is this taking place? In the hall outside the principal's office. What type of expression might you have if you were sent to the principal's office?)

(Show laminate #7, "Triple Self Portrait", February 13, 1960. Who do we see here? (point to Norman Rockwell sitting down) Is the picture he is painting the same as the reflection in the mirror? He is younger on the canvas with his eyes wide open and inquisitive. What about these pictures? (point to the pictures clipped on the canvas) Van Gogh, Picasso, Rembrandt and Durer -- all of his favorite artists. Look at the props to tell you something about the artist. What was his favorite drink? Coca Cola. Was he an American? Yes, look at the American eagle and flag above the mirror. What kind of book do you think is on the chair? An art book. What is the trash can made of? Why? Metal so he could throw away his pipe tobacco. Rockwell loved smoking a pipe. Where is this taking place? His art studio.)

(Show framed print “No Swimming”, June 14, 1921. Why are the boys running? Can anyone read the sign? Do any of the boys look wet? Yes, the boy in the front. How can you tell? He has wet hair and no clothes. Look at their faces. Let’s make faces -- like you got caught doing something wrong! Remember we said Rockwell paid kids to pose for a picture. They had to hold it for a long time. How do you think he had the kids pose? Rockwell would pose one part of the body. The right foot, left arm, etc. Show laminate #4 again. Have the kids try to hold a pose like this picture.)

In 1976, the town of Stockbridge, where Rockwell had lived since 1953, celebrated Norman Rockwell Day and had a parade that lasted more than two hours. He was their most famous resident and over 10,000 people came! In 1977,

Rockwell won the **Presidential Medal of Freedom** for his illustrations of the people of our country, ranging from a Boy Scout to our presidents. He celebrated kindness, decency, friendship, family and patriotism. He painted America at its best. He died in his beloved town of Stockbridge, Massachusetts at the age of 84.

Project-

Today you are going to have a chance to be an illustrator like Norman Rockwell. You have just been commissioned to draw a cover for the Saturday Evening Post. Have your illustration tell a “story” of something in your everyday life. Show laminate #8 of two Saturday Evening Post Covers, “Saying Grace” and “The Runaway”. Pass out the blank paper with Saturday Evening Post printed at the top. The students may start with pencil if they wish, and can use their crayons or markers to color. Use construction paper to matte covers when completed. Leave time at the end of the class for the students to show their work.

FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES

Norman Rockwell

Today in class a volunteer parent presented the works of American artist/illustrator Norman Rockwell to your child's class. They learned about Rockwell's life and created a cover for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Ask your child about Rockwell and what an illustrator does. Rockwell used models – ask your child who were Rockwell's favorite people to use as models.

The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge in Stockbridge, MA has the largest collection of Norman Rockwell's originals. (over 500)

The Norman Rockwell Museum in Philadelphia, PA has all of Norman Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* covers in the Curtis Publishing Building, where Norman Rockwell sold his first Post cover.

Sincerely yours,

Art Volunteer