



1st Grade: OCTOBER

The Peaceable Kingdom

Edward Hicks

Debra J. Herman, M.F.A., Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois
Funded by the John and Frances Beck Foundation, Chicago, Illinois
Edited by Constance Kammrath, M.A., Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois

About the Artist

The following information is provided to give classroom teachers a comprehensive understanding of the artist and artwork. Use your judgment on what to share with your students based on their level of curiosity, observation/inquiry skills, comprehension and age-appropriateness.

Edward Hicks

Edward Hicks was born April 4, 1780, in Langhorne, Bucks County, Pennsylvania to Isaac and Catherine “Kitty” Hicks. Edward Hicks’ parents were considered affluent due to their land holdings and assets which included slaves. During post American Revolutionary War years, Isaac Hicks was considered a traitor to American interests therefore he moved his family to New York City. The family, which included three young children accustomed to a life of privilege, now found themselves living modestly. Adding to the stress of the time, Catherine Hicks fell ill and died when Edward was still a toddler. Isaac Hicks, unable to care for his children, placed each of them in a different foster home. Edward was given into the care of family friends, Elizabeth and David Twining, who raised him along with their four daughters. His early years were highly influenced by the Quaker faith in which he was raised. As a Quaker, he believed life should be lived simply and humbly. He was brought up to believe the arts were distractive and unnecessary. In fact, arts were despised by his adoptive Quaker community.

To his credit, Isaac Hicks remained in contact with his children despite the living arrangements. Isaac arranged for Edward, at thirteen-years old, to begin an apprenticeship with a local carriage maker. For the next seven years, Hicks became skilled in preparing paint and varnishes and also trained in drawing and painting as he decorated carriages for clients. At age twenty Hicks, an experienced painter, opened his own business painting houses, signs, furniture and other household objects. Of course, this “worldly” line of work was not viewed favorably by his fellow Quakers. Wanting to formally join the Quaker religion and marry within the faith community, Hicks put aside his painting endeavor. In 1803 Hicks took up farming, which was a more honorable occupation, for his new Quaker wife, Sarah Worstall. Although he tried, farming was difficult for Hicks and he soon lost all the money he had invested.

Virtually penniless, Hicks went back to painting with approval from the Quaker community which now viewed it as honest work — providing he painted within the bounds of the Quaker code. In doing so, he avoided painting portraits, as they were far too ego-centered. Hicks focused on paintings in which he could incorporate his religious beliefs. In time, Hicks developed a good reputa-

tion as a painter both in and beyond the Quaker community. Of equal importance to his painting career was his dedication to the Quaker community. He became a spokesperson, a preacher, often traveling from Virginia to Canada. Hicks believed in an “Inner Light,” the power which was in everything. This sense of spirituality, a purity, Hicks sought to capture in his paintings. His belief in animal symbolism relating to human personality traits and a desire to portray harmony on earth became the themes in the majority of his work. Images of a peaceable kingdom were inspired by the words from Isaiah 11:6: “*The wolf shall also dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*”

Between 1820 and 1849 Hicks painted approximately one-hundred works with the “peaceable kingdom” theme, often as gifts for friends and relatives and sometimes as commissioned works. It is said that even the night before his death, Hicks was working on a painting of the peaceable kingdom for his daughter Elizabeth. Almost half of these paintings survived the years and fortunately are safe in museum collections for all to enjoy. In addition to his peaceable kingdom themes, Hicks painted other religious works as well as patriotic and agrarian images. Edward Hicks died at the age of sixty-nine on August 23, 1849, in Newtown, Pennsylvania.

Edward Hicks is considered a folk artist because he was never trained as a formal painter. However, his ability to paint developed over the years to a very sophisticated level. He is praised for his artistic technical ability and is considered to be America’s greatest and most influential folk artist. In some circles, Edward Hicks is most remembered for his role as a minister in the Society of Friends and his contributions to the Quaker community.

About the Art

The Peaceable Kingdom was painted oil on canvas around 1834. *The Peaceable Kingdom* is 30 inches in height and 35 1/2 inches wide. It was given as a gift to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Hicks painted many works under the theme of “peaceable kingdom” during a spread of twenty-nine years, using skills acquired during his apprenticeship. Hicks also applied his conservative Quaker aesthetic in the use of lackluster colors. This work is an asymmetrical composition with the primary focus being the placement of animals on the right side of the painting. Of secondary importance are the figures on the left side, placed lower on the canvas, smaller in size, and considered in the background. Since Hicks didn’t paint from life, he used printed imagery, such

Discipline-Based Art Education

The following components are integral to students having a complete, well rounded art experience.

Art Aesthetics

Providing opportunities to develop perception and appreciation of visually expressed ideas and experiences.

Art Production

Providing opportunities to develop skills and techniques for creative visual expressions of emotions and ideas.

Art History

Providing opportunities to develop an understanding of the visual arts as a basic component of personal heritage.

Art Criticism

Providing an opportunity to develop an intellectual basis for analyzing and making aesthetic judgments based on an understanding of visual ideas and experiences.

ELEMENTS OF ART

- Line: A continuous mark
- Shape: Area enclosed by a line
- Color: Hue, reflection of light.
- Texture: Surface quality, real or implied
- Form: 3D shape or illusion of 3D
- Value: Graduated areas of light/dark
- Space: Illusion of depth

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

- Repetition: Imagery repeating pattern
- Variety: Contrast/variation
- Rhythm: Issues of eye movement
- Balance: Even visual weight
- Emphasis/Economy: Dominance/minimalism
- Proportion: Compare size relationships

COMPOSITION

- Symmetrical: Mirrored imagery
- Asymmetrical: Random placement
- Radial: Mirror image from center point
- Repetition: Repeating pattern, motif

ARTISTIC STYLES

- Realism: Realistic representation
- Abstraction: Personal interpretation
- Non-Objective: No recognizable depiction

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN IN PICTURE BOOKS

Children's literature that relate to this lesson due to elements of art or story content are:

- *Noah's Ark* illustrated by Peter Spier
- *Noah's Ark* by Jerry Pinkney
- *Once a Mouse* by Marcia Brown
- *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey

REFERENCE/BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hughes, Robert. *American Visions, The Epic History of Art in America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1997
- Janson, H.W. *History of Art*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1999
- www.albrightknox.org/ArtStart/sHicks.html

as pictures of animals, to reference as he painted. The most active portion of the painting is, of course, the animal grouping filled with lines and shapes that encourage eye movement. Animals are placed in a rather tight grouping. Amidst the animals are children who appear safe despite their ferocious "friends." Looking closely we see a mix of wild animals who co-exist with each other in a peaceful, contented environment. The animals have pop-eyes, a style that is associated with Hicks.

Contrasting with the busyness of the right side is the vast open space on the left. The open sky supports the illusion of depth and makes way for the vignette of people identified as William Penn and friends as they conclude a peace treaty with Native Americans.

Edward Hicks used this theme to tell another story besides providing imagery for a Bible passage. Here in this work is a delicate balance of two worlds—that of creation and nature and that of politics. Hicks invites the viewer to examine the possibility of attaining peace on earth. He encourages people to be well-behaved, work together and treat others with dignity and kindness. The new day, refreshing waters, and mutual admiration toward one another are all symbolic of new beginnings and a preferred way of life.

Directed Observation

Show students an image of *The Peaceable Kingdom* and tell them it was painted by Edward Hicks. Share some of his background information. Invite students to quietly study the work, then encourage students to share what they see. Welcome all comments. The following questions are provided to help students use art vocabulary to talk about the work.

1. What is the setting? Describe it. What time of year is it?
2. Who/What do you see in the painting?
3. How does the artist show the animals are very important?
4. We see a group of animals and children in this painting. What is unusual about this group? Is this real or imagined?
5. We see a group of men on the left side. Who do you think they are and what are they doing?
6. The artist used a Bible verse as inspiration for this painting. (Share verse) Did Hicks do a good job at painting the verse?
7. Edward Hicks wanted us to feel AND think about something when we look at this painting. What do you think he wants us to feel and do?
8. Edward Hicks's religion didn't allow him

to use bright colors when he painted. How would this painting look different if he had? Would you like it better or not?

9. Why do you think the artist painted the animals' eyes so large?
10. Find the object closest to you in the painting and the farthest point. How does the artist show distance?
11. Why do you like/dislike this painting? What might you change to make it better?
12. If you were to paint animals, how would you paint furry? Hairy? Feathered?
13. How does this painting show America as a beautiful place? What would you paint to show America's beauty?

Things to Do

1. Examine the work of other artists who painted animals. Compare and contrast their style in portraying animals.
2. Visit the zoo and sketch animals you see. Create a story about the zoo animals at night when people are gone.
3. Choose an animal that best fits your personality. Make a drawing of it and present it to the class. Consider a group portrait where everyone draws an animal choice on a large piece of paper.
4. Visit www.albrightknox.org to find effective ideas for an art project involving carnivores and herbivores.
5. Divide the class into groups of three or four. Ask each member to choose a different animal. Each group then creates a story involving the animals in the group. Stories can be recorded on tape or put in book form.
6. Use your imagination to invent a new animal. Use parts of different animals to create your animal or invent one.
7. Write a story as if you were an animal.
8. Edward Hicks painted an image to teach a lesson. Identify something you would like to teach others and create a painting to show this.
9. Edward Hicks did a great job of creating space—the illusion of depth by placing animals in the front, people in the middle, and trees way in the back of his painting. Create a drawing of a landscape that has objects placed in the front, middle, and back to create the illusion of depth. Take a walk outside and practice looking for things near, not so far and really far.
10. Choose a story that is part of your religious faith or heritage and draw it. Or consider illustrating a fable, nursery rhyme, poem, or lyrics of a song.
11. Everyone create a different animal. Glue animals on a large sheet of paper. Place large animals in the back and small animals in the front to create a mural.