
Masterpiece: *The Sleeping Gypsy*, 1897 By Henri Rousseau

Pronounced: Ahn-ree Roo-So
Keywords: Imagination, Color, Texture
Grade: 2nd Grade
Month: November
Activity: Fantasy Landscape Painting
TIME: 1.25 Hour



Meet the Artist:

- Rousseau was born in France in 1844.
- As a boy, he disliked school. He did, however, enjoy poetry and music.
- In the art world, he is considered a "Folk" artist which means he had no education or formal training in art.
- As a young man, he spent some time in the French Army but decided he was not a military man either.
- Upon returning home, he took a job at a toll house. Here he collected money from the local farmers who brought their merchandise into the Paris markets. It was then that he began sketching.
- He spent his weekends at the zoo where he could see plants and animals that fascinated him.
- Due to his lack of formal training, he was rarely taken seriously as an artist. Pablo Picasso was the only one who took an interest in Rousseau's work and became an avid collector.
- He became known as "Le Douanier" (le Doo-an-E-A) Rousseau, meaning "Customs Officer" in French.
- In 1893 he took a chance and retired at 49 to be a fulltime artist. He gave violin lessons and played as a street musician to help supplement his income.
- Rousseau died in 1910 and left behind some of the most fascinating zoological and botanical paintings ever created.

Possible Questions:

- What does the texture look like? (Experts say that it was his paintings had a polished quality about them, making them look smooth.)
- Do you think Rousseau had an active imagination?
- What colors do you see? Are they warm, cool, neutral?
- What would you title this painting?
- Does the lion look frightening or friendly?
- Does the gypsy look like he is having a good dream or a nightmare?

Activity: Dreaming in a Fantasy Landscape

Materials Needed:

For the landscape Painting:

1. 9"x 12" watercolor paper
2. Liquid Watercolors: all colors
3. Paint Palettes
4. Paintbrushes
5. Water Bowls

For the Portrait drawing

1. 9 X 12 construction paper
2. Colored markers
3. Scissors
4. Liquid Glue

Explain activity - students paint an imaginary landscape and then glue cut-out portraits into the scenery.

Process:

1. For the Landscape Painting: Provide each student with the following materials: watercolor paper, watercolors, paintbrushes, small cups for water.
2. Label back of paper with name/teacher tag provided.
3. Have the children close their eyes. Tell them to picture themselves outside, asleep. Ask them to think about their sleeping place....
 - a. Is it in a forest with lots of trees; what kind of trees?
 - b. Is it in the desert; what kind of plants are around you?
 - c. Is it on a raft floating on water? Is it in outer space; what planets are nearby?
Is it near a lake or river or waterfall?Tell them to notice what sounds they are hearing?
 - d. What smells do they smell?

- e. Are they dreaming in color?
- f. How are they sleeping (i.e. on their back, side, stomach)?
- g. What other animals may be in the trees or bushes or grass?
- h. What kinds of clothes are they wearing?

Next, tell them to imagine a wild and unexpected animal coming up to them in their sleep to smell them.

4. Tell the children to open their eyes.
5. Have them begin painting their imaginary landscape with the watercolors. Have them include pictures of the plants and other objects that was a part of their dream. Encourage them to be creative.
6. While the paint is drying, hand out the drawing paper and markers and have them draw a self-portrait of them sleeping and to also draw the animal that is taking interest in them. Remind them to think about where they are and the placement of the other things around them.
7. When finished with their portrait and animal, cut out and spread the back with a little glue.
8. Press the self-portrait and animal onto the landscape scene where they envisioned.
9. Make sure they sign their masterpiece and make a title for it.

Portrait of Henri Rousseau and other Works



