



Howard Terpning
1927-
“Offerings to the Little People” (1998)
oil on canvas (62 X 40)
Phoenix Art Museum Collection

Power Point Presentation available on CD in Box

Definitions:

Offerings- anything offered as a gift, usually for a religious purpose

Medicine Bag-is a traditional North American Indian container for various items of supernatural power. While anyone may have one, usually it would be the medicine man of a tribe who would carry one.

American Artist- Artist born in America, usually lived much of their life in the United States as well.

Ceremony- a formal religious or sacred activity conducted on an important occasion.

Artist Biography:

Howard Terpning often referred to as the “Storyteller of the Native American” was **born** Nov. 5, 1927 in Oak Park, Illinois. His **father** worked for Northwest Railroad and his **mother** was an interior designer. As a boy he wanted to be either an artist or a pilot. (His **brother** Jack became a B-24 bomber pilot and died in WWII). Joined **Marine Corps** at 17 and served as infantryman in China. He went to **school** at Chicago Academy of Fine Arts and the American Academy of Fine Art. He became an **apprentice** to Haddon (Sunny Sundblom) for \$35 a week. 8 years later moved to New York and became a **commercial Artist/Illustrator** he painted 7 days a week, often 13 hours a day. In 1967 went to Vietnam as a **civilian combat Artist**. His weapons were a camera, sketchbook and pencils. From this experience “he gained a much-diminished regard for material things

and a heightened empathy with distressed and deprived people.” (this carried over into his paintings of Native American people)

Worked as a **commercial artist** for 25 years creating over 80 movie posters, covers, story illustrations and advertisements for magazines such as Time, Readers Digest, Newsweek. He took time off in 1974 (age 47) and began painting for his own pleasure. In 1976 he quit working as a commercial artist to do **Fine Art** and within 2 years he was one of the giants in his field.

Moved to Tucson has lived there every since. His comment about being able to see 34 of his paintings hung together “*It’ll be like visiting a lot of old friends, and some newer ones.*”

“He prefers to depict the everyday activities, ceremonies, and reflective moments of his subjects rather than their battles. “ He hopes his work will give people a greater awareness of and appreciation for the history and people of the American West.” “*I have always tried to paint people in an honest light; I have tried not to romanticize them. But I certainly have painted them in a favorable light.*” “Terpning is quiet and soft-spoken and modest, with a greater inclination to talk about the subjects of his painting than about his own creative intentions.”

Print:

What is the first thing you notice in this print? What do you think is happening in this print? This print tells a story/ part of history? (see below) Art can tell of the past. What parts of the tobacco ceremony do you see? I made offering sticks that I had different students open and then tell the class what was in them. Then I asked them why they would have given these "gifts or Offerings." There are little clothes, berries, herbs, and goat manure (dried and in a baggie). They think it is funny that they would give that as a gift, but it would have made the crops grow better. Those will be in the box.

Who do you think would participate in this ceremony?

What techniques did the artist use to keep your attention? What colors did the artist use? What feelings are associated with those colors? Look in the background, what do you see there? (tree limbs with feathers and ribbons) Why do you think they had them placed there? (to attract the little people) What type of art do you think this is? Cowboy/American Why do you think it is called this style?

Offerings to the Little People *by Howard Terpning*

Howard explains the little-known Crow custom that inspired this work: "Planting tobacco seeds was a religious event performed by the tobacco society. After the ground was prepared, members placed branches around the garden to protect the plants. Small offerings, such as bits of ribbon and feathers, were tied to the branches. Once the seeds were planted, sticks about 18" long were inserted into the ground with small medicine bundles attached. The Crow believed that little people lived in the ground and helped make the tobacco plants grow, so the bundles, containing berries, herbs etc., along with tiny moccasins and other miniature articles of clothing were given as offerings".

Project:

The project is drawing a picture of a family tradition. Have the students think of family events or times such as holidays, birthdays, special time of the day or week. There will be a sample in the box. Option number 2; Have the students create a medicine bag on brown craft paper. Create a symmetrical pattern. Next, outline with a black sharpie. Color in shapes with crayon coloring heavily. Display them flat and mount on black construction paper.

