Theophilus Wylie, *Political Scene in Early Bloomington* (ca. 1837)

Theophilus Wylie (1810-1895), cousin to Andrew Wylie, the first president of Indiana University, was born in Philadelphia and came to Bloomington in 1836 to join the faculty as a professor of mathematics, natural philosophy, Greek, and chemistry. An inventor and amateur painter in his spare time, Wylie painted this image of a political rally near the original courthouse in Bloomington around 1837. Wylie remained on the faculty until 1886 when he was made Professor Emeritus.

To many American artists of this period, most notably George Caleb Bingham, scenes of the American political process in action provided pictorial material that was lively, informative, and patriotic. The sight of a stump speaker bringing his ideas to small-town voters affirmed the principles of President Andrew Jackson, who celebrated the “common man” and gave new power to the Western states. In scenes such as the one depicted here, a candidate or supporter might dramatically praise the candidate’s humble beginnings, as well as supply onlookers with liquor and food, in order to gain the common man’s vote.

This work may have been the first painting in the university’s collection. This painting is even more interesting because it was not produced by a classically-trained master. Upon closer examination, one sees the technique of an American amateur painter. The craft of painting was open to anyone with canvas, pigment, and the time and dedication to practice. Although Wylie and his politics are now nearly lost to history, this painting shares with other American artworks a concern for the genre of political discourse between ordinary men.

In American genre painting, an artist depicts ordinary incidents in the lives of anonymous people; here, Wylie, an ordinary artist, gives shape to the political life of an ordinary community. In this period of history, significantly more Americans were involved in the electoral process. Although it would be decades until suffrage
would be granted without consideration of ethnicity or gender, politics excited the general population.
Questions to Consider

1. What is the main focus of this painting?
2. What are some of the activities people are doing in this painting?
3. What different types of people can you identify in this painting?
4. How would you describe the colors in this painting?
   What title would you give to this painting?
5. What do you like most about this painting? What do you like least?
   How would you describe the mood of this painting? How has this artist suggested a mood?

Connections

Art: Genre painting, George Caleb Bingham, vernacular architecture.
Politics: President Andrew Jackson, electoral process, voting, suffrage, campaigning, stump speeches.

Further Reading

Teachers’ Resources

Work: Political Scene in Early Bloomington (ca. 1837)
Artist: Theophilus Wylie
Location of work: Indiana University Art Museum (IUAM)

Vocabulary/Key Concept(s):
- **Suffrage** Right to vote
- **Suffragette** A woman who advocates suffrage for other women
- **Susan B. Anthony** 1820-1906 Key leader of the women’s suffrage movement.
- **Electoral Process** Formal process by which voters make their political choices on public issues or candidates for public office. Regular elections serve to hold leaders accountable for their performance and permit an exchange of influence between the governors and the governed.
- **Stump Speaker (Stump Speeches -campaigning)** A political ‘stump speech’ is a standard speech used by [delivered by] a politician running for office. The term derives from the custom in the 19th century America for political candidates campaigning from town to town to stand upon a sawed off tree stump to deliver a political speech.

Art Connection(s):
- **Genre** The term that refers to art that shows scenes from daily life.
- **Vernacular Architecture** is a term used to categorize methods of construction which use locally available resources and traditions to address local needs. Vernacular architecture tends to evolve over time to reflect the environmental. Cultural and historical context in which it exists.

Geography Connection(s):
- Bloomington, Indiana

Time Line Connection:
- 1837

Resources:

Connect to web links below by clicking on individual address or access through the NEH site for Additional Resources at: [http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/about.php?subPage=about_ad_res](http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/about.php?subPage=about_ad_res)
National Endowment for the Humanities, EDSITEment, *Everything in Its Right Place*, a curriculum overview to a four-part lesson on the structural elements of a painting, featuring Emanuel Leutze’s *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, for Grades 9-12.

National Endowment for the Humanities, EDSITEment, *Horse of a Different Color: An Introduction to Color in the Visual Arts* has two lesson plans on color; the first: In-Depth with the Full Spectrum, for Grade 9-12, introduces students to color basics, the color wheel, and how artists manipulate color to draw attention to the aspects of their work.

National Endowment for the Humanities, EDSITEment, *What Portraits Reveal*, for Grades 9-12. A lesson on portraits that engages students in looking at a portrait to discover not only the physical description of a person, but how to interpret what is viewed. Also discusses manipulation of the image, including caricature.

Getty Museum Education department Web site, *Teachers’ Programs and Resources*, is designed for K-12 teachers who wish to introduce art and art history into their classrooms. The site uses works form the museum’s collection along with pages A Grade-by-Grade Guide, *The Elements of Art* (teaching the formal components of art such as line and color) and a PDF file, *Lesson Template*.

Art Institute of Chicago Education department Web site, Art Access, is arranged by subject matter. Click on the link to open a page with essays on selected works, a link to lesson plans, online family activities, a glossary and maps. Artists covered are: Bearden, Cassatt, Copley, Homer, Lawrence, Sargent, Tiffany, and Whistler.

National Gallery of Art Web site, *Themes in American Art*, covers topics such as abstraction, historical subjects, narrative art, and portraiture; illustrated by works in the collection. Includes a glossary.

National Endowment for the Humanities, EDSITEment, *Realistic Impressions: Investigating Movement in the Visual Arts*, for Grade 9-12, teaches students about the meaning of the terms “movement” in the visual arts, and covers the major movements of Impressionism, Realism, and Romanticism, with links to other movements in the arts.

Monroe County Public Library (MCPL) Bloomington, Indiana University (812) 349-3050 – To Reserve Resource Materials
Voting/Electoral Process:

Eyewitness Discover Books: \textit{VOTE} by Philip Steele Call Number: J324.6 Ste (Children’s Collection)

\textit{Holidays for Children: ELECTION DAY} – DVD Video Series – Call Number: J324.973 Ele (Children’s Collection)

Schoolhouse Rock: \textit{Schoolhouse Rocks the Vote} CD (musical selections) Call Number: J781.546 Sch (Children’s Collection)

American Government for Children: \textit{The History of American Government} DVD Video Series – Call Number: J320.473 His (Children’s Collection)

Citizens Rule: \textit{How We Elect A President} (electoral process) – Call Number: J324.973 Cit (Children’s Collection)

Suffrage/Suffragette:

\textit{People at the Center of Women’s Suffrage} by Debra Kops Call Number: J324.623 (Children’s Collection)

Great Americans for Children: \textit{Susan B. Anthony} DVD Video Series Call Number: J921 Ant (Children’s Collection)

\textit{America in the Time of Susan B. Anthony: The Story of Our Nation from Coast to Coast, from 1845 to 1948} by Sally S. Isaacs – Call Number: J973.6 Is (Children’s Collection)

Web sites:

Women’s Suffrage

\url{http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/ushistory/womenssuffrage/preview.weml}
Includes: definition, additional information, resources and animated movie link

Electoral College (Electoral Process)

\url{http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/eclectoral-college/about.html}
Includes definition, additional information web links and resources

\url{http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/usgovernmentandlaw/presidential_election/}
Includes: definition, additional information, resources and animated movie link

\url{http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/usgovernmentandlaw/voting/preview.weml}
Includes: definition, additional information, resources and animated movie link

Stump Speech

\url{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stump_speech_(politics)}
Includes: definition, image – \textit{Stump Speaking} (1853-54) by George Caleb Bingham

Vernacular Architecture

\url{http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vernacular_architecture}
Includes: definition, images, literature selections, references

\url{http://www hvva.org/hvvanews6-7pt2.htm}
\url{http://www hvva.org/hvvanews7-2pt3.htm}
Indiana Academic Standards – Visual Arts Grade/Level 5

RESPONDING TO ART: History

Standard 1

Students understand the significance of visual art in relation to historical, social, political, spiritual, environmental, technological, and economic issues.

5.1.1 Identify the relationship between a work of art and the geography and characteristics of the culture, and identify where, when, why, and by whom the work was made (Focus: North America).

5.1.2 Identify and compare works of art and artifacts with similar functions.

5.1.3 Identify themes and symbols used in works of art and artifacts throughout history that portray universal ideas and beliefs.

Standard 2

Students recognize significant works of Western and non-Western art and understand the chronological development of art movements.

5.2.1 Identify and be familiar with a range of selected works of art identifying artists, culture, style, and period.

5.2.2 Identify distinguishing characteristics of style in individual artists work and art movements.

5.2.3 Begin to identify works of art and artifacts from major periods or movements of Western art and place on a chronological time line.

RESPONDING TO ART: Criticism

Standard 3

Students describe, analyze, and interpret works of art and artifacts.

5.3.1 Analyze the artist’s use of sensory, formal, technical, and expressive properties in a work of art.

5.3.2 Construct meaning in the work based on personal response, properties found in the work, and background information on the context of the work.

5.3.3 Use appropriate art vocabulary.

Standard 4

Students identify and apply criteria to make informed judgments about art.

5.4.1 Listen to multiple critiques of works of art by peers, teachers, people from the art world and identify criteria used.

5.4.2 Apply criteria based on properties found in the work and research from the historical context of the work to make informed judgments.

INTEGRATED STUDIES

Standard 13

Students identify and make connections between knowledge and skill in art and all other subject areas such as humanities, sciences, and technology.

5.13.1 Compare characteristics of a theme, historical period, or event through the multiple perspectives of different disciplines.
5.13.2 Create products or performances (debates, critiques, papers) that communicate in-depth knowledge gained through integrated study of a theme, historical period, or event.

**National Academic Standards – Visual Arts – Level 5**

**Content Standard #3:** Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas  
*Achievement Standard:*  
Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks. Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks.

**Content Standard #4:** Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures  
*Achievement Standard:*  
Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures. Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts. Students analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas, and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.

**Content Standard #5:** Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others  
*Achievement Standard:*  
Students compare multiple purposes for creating works of art. Students analyze contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry. Students describe and compare a variety of individual responses to their own artworks and to artworks from various eras and cultures.

**Content Standard #6:** Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines  
*Achievement Standard:*  
Students compare the characteristics of works in two or more art forms that share similar subject matter, historical periods, or cultural context. Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.