WILD WILD WEST

Grade Levels: 7–9
Estimated Time: 2–3 hours

Introduction:
At the end of the 19th century, Frederic Remington’s The Bronco Buster (see page 37) captured one of the most enduring aspects of American culture—the Wild West. Growth in the American West coincided with the notion of Manifest Destiny in the late 1840s, accelerating with gold strikes in the 1850s, the extension of railroads in the 1860s, and the booming cattle industry through the 1880s. The cattle industry attracted many cowhands, who learned to rope and ride in order to lead cattle drives. Of all the mythic heroes of the “Wild West,” none was more popular than the cowboy. Bronco Buster captures a moment when the horse and rider are pulled together at the instant of utmost exertion. It can be seen allegorically as a symbol of the untamed wildness coming under control of the conquering cowboy.

Lesson Objectives:
• Critically analyze a work of art and examine the historical context during which it was created.
• Create or reconstruct a sequence of events based on a work of art
• Learn about the westward expansion in the United States from the late 1840s through the 1880s.
• Develop comic strips to depict events.

Key Terms:
• allegory
• Manifest Destiny
• myth

Instructional Materials:
• pencil
• paper
• black marker
• ruler
• Before and After worksheet (see page 95)
• color pencils

Procedures:
Discussion:
• Using image 10 or the enclosed CD, have students look at The Bronco Buster. Ask students to describe the sculpture. What is the subject? How does the artist create a sense of energy and action?
• Using the information in the introduction and on page 37, give students background about the sculpture, including when it was created. Ask students the following questions: Why did Remington choose to make a sculpture of a cowboy? Why do you think he depicted the moment when the horse rears up? Does the sculpture tell a story? Define “myth” and “allegory” for the students. Ask: How does this sculpture represent the American West in the late 19th century? Discuss the idea that *Bronco Buster* can be seen allegorically as a symbol of the American West in the late 19th century: untamed wilderness coming under control of the cowboy.

**Activity:**

• Remington freezes the action at the instant when the horse rears up and the cowboy leans forward, clutching the reins and the horse’s mane. Ask students to imagine what came before this scene. What would the scene have looked like five minutes before this moment? 30 minutes before? Have students predict what would happen in one minute, 15 minutes, and one hour after the current scene. Using the Before and After Worksheet (see page 97), have students write their responses and sketch what the scenes would look like.

• Using the Before and After Worksheet, have students develop a comic strip. Ask students to choose an idea or event from 19th-century America, such as the notion of Manifest Destiny in the late 1840s, the California gold rush in 1849, the construction of railroads in the 1860s, or the growth of industry through the end of the century. Have students conduct research on their event, using the Before and After Worksheet to develop images and dialogue and/or captions. Tell students to use the ruler and black marker to create five or six squares in a sequence to create their comic strip, coloring their images with colored pencils.

• Have students present their comic strips to the class, explaining what event they chose and how they chose to depict it in their comic strip.

**Follow-Up:**
Have students expand upon their comic strip and further develop the story to create a comic book.

**Evaluation:**
Base students’ evaluations on their participation in class discussion, ability to describe and analyze a work of art, completion of research, and final comic strip content and execution.

**Illinois Learning Standards:**

- English Language Arts 5
- Social Science 16, 17
- Fine Arts 25, 26

For more detailed information on the Illinois Learning Standards, see [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/).
**WORKSHEET**

Before and After

Before  

Draw what is happening in the picture now.

After

On the lines below, describe the action or activity taking place in each of your three drawings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>Draw what is happening in the picture now.</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>