



# BOULEVARD

## GRADES K-5

### A Few Key Points

- Artist John Constable painted many pictures of the countryside around his home in England
- Constable was very interested in observing and researching nature, especially various types of trees and clouds
- The artist tried to be as accurate as a scientist. He also felt, however, that depictions of special places and of the sky could be used to express emotion and personal feelings
- J.M.W. Turner loved to visit parts of the English coast; he represented this scenery in a range of images, from calm beaches to rough storm-tossed seas
- J.M.W. Turner's paintings focus on exciting atmospheric effects and light, especially in maritime scenes
- Many of the paintings in this gallery were painted more sketchily than early 19th century audiences expected or appreciated
- It was unusual at this time for artists to paint completely out of doors or to draw so heavily upon the effects of outdoor sketches in finished paintings
- Many British people liked to have paintings of animals, especially dogs and horses, in their homes; some artists specialized in the depiction of animals

### Sparking Discussion

- Which paintings draw your attention and why?
- Which paintings have the most going on? How is this expressed?
- What do you think the artist felt about nature? What makes you think this?
- What time of year is represented in each of the paintings? What time of day? What evidence do we have for this?
- Why do you think John Constable painted six-footers (monumental landscape paintings)?
- How many different animals can you find in the pictures throughout the gallery?

- How many different types of trees do you think are represented? How are they used differently in various compositions? What about clouds?
- Which pictures provide information about what life was like for people living in the 19th century?

## Activities

### 1. Drawing Weather Patterns

Have students make their own visual ‘weather diary,’ recording skylscapes at regular intervals and making notes of wind, rain, sunshine, and temperature. Artist John Constable often noted these types of precise details on the back of his sketches of clouds and skylscapes. This project should take place over an extended period of time, for instance one month, or the entire spring or fall terms. Recording can be done daily, weekly, or monthly.

### 2. Observing Nature

(Discussion) Find a Constable painting in the gallery that includes sky and clouds. How has the artist depicted light and shadow? How would the day feel if you were in that scene? How has the artist created a sense of atmosphere or mood? Find examples of Constable’s paintings that include trees, rivers, and rocks. From one material, (oil paint) Constable has depicted a huge variety of natural materials (bark, leaves, water, and stone). How has the artist used shade, hue, and brushwork to capture their different qualities? How would you describe his depiction of each of these natural materials to someone who could not see the painting?

### 3. Seeing Rainbows

The Romantics saw the rainbow as a symbol of everything in life that was beautiful, but transitory. Artist John Constable himself wrote: ‘Nature in all the varied aspects of her beauty exhibits no feature more lovely nor any that awakens a more soothing reflection than the rainbow.’

Have students discuss the meteorological cause of rainbows. Give them time to draw a rainbow within the context of a landscape and to share their work with the rest of the class. Then, have students write a poem (together or individually) about a rainbow and how it makes them feel.

### 4. Drawing Upon the Art of Others

Select a painting by John Constable and another work in the gallery by a different artist (J.M.W. Turner, John Crome, Peter De Wint, James Ward, or John Frederick Herring, Sr.).

- Why do you think Constable was interested in this artist's work?
- What lessons did Constable learn from this artist? Think about subject matter, composition, and techniques used?
- Discuss the benefits and disadvantages of taking inspiration from other artists.
- Which artists inspire you?

Have students pick 1 of the 17 paintings in the gallery that he/she finds inspiring. Then, have them make their own drawing that is influenced by it, but not a direct copy.