



BOULEVARD

GRADES K-5

A Few Key Points

- A still life is a work of art that represents something that is NOT moving—usually a group of objects, sometimes food, on a table, a ledge, a shelf—or tacked to a wall
- Objects can express meaning because they can be read as symbols, or because they are personal to us
- Paintings are 2-dimensional objects (paint on a surface), but many artists like to create an illusion of objects within a 3-dimensional space
- Some artists go to great lengths to emphasize just how much they can fool the eye or trick us through making works that look absolutely dimensional and real

Sparking Discussion

- Which fruits do you recognize?
- What other objects can you identify?
- Would you want to eat the food in the painting?
- Do you feel like you could touch it or take it out of the picture?
- Does it look real to you?
- Is art better if it looks like reality? How important is imagination in creating art?
- What environment does each painting show? What clues tell us this?
- Why did the artist put these objects together?
- Does the group of objects seem to tell a story?
- Can a group of objects serve as a type of portrait?
- What can we learn about American life in the 19th century from these paintings?

Activities

1. Appealing Fruit

How many different kinds of fruit do students see within the gallery space? Have them discuss whether they have tried all these fruits before and share which is their

favorite. Make a chart showing how many chose which favorite fruit. (A different student can be asked to write/spell the name of each fruit; one student can keep the tally). Draw a bowl of fruit combining at least 3 of the types of fruits seen in the various paintings. (Extra: make a fruit salad with the class and/or have them create/write out a recipe for fruit salad).

2. Still (Life) or in Motion?

Have students sketch the teacher while he/she stands in a hard-to-hold pose (for 3 minutes). Then have students sketch a couple of simple objects arranged on a table (for 3 minutes). Ask students to compare which task they preferred and which was easier for them. Then break class into smaller groups. Give each group a cloth for draping the table, and a bunch of objects to select from. Using their selected objects, each group will create an arrangement for sketching. When the still lifes are composed, ask each group to explain why they chose certain objects and arranged them in the way they did. After all groups have finished explaining, have each of the students select a still life arrangement from around the room. Give them 10 minutes to sketch. Have students compare their drawings and discuss what they learned from this exercise.

3. Object-Portrait

Throughout history, artists have included and used objects as emblems or symbols. Though William Keane's *Old Banjo* (c.1889) doesn't include a person, it seems to tell us a lot about a particular individual. It almost acts as a portrait. Discuss what clues are given about the supposed owner's identity. Have students make a list of several objects that could tell us about them as individuals (clothing, collectibles, favorite foods, music, electronics, etc.).

Have them briefly draw a picture incorporating 4-5 of their chosen objects and explain what they mean personally to the student. Ask them if there is one object that could stand in for them. Alternatively, have students write a description of their imaginary wall hung with their own selected objects. Distribute these texts among students, have them take turns reading out loud, and then guess which peer is being described.

4. Written Time Capsule

John Haberle's *The Slate (Memoranda)* (c. 1895) pretends to show the handwriting of a schoolboy on slate at the end of the 19th century. Have students write 1-2 pages telling someone in the future what their school life is like in the present day.