

REYNOLDA

DISCOVERY LESSON (AGE 3-5)

Storms



George Inness, *The Storm*, 1885. Oil on canvas. Reynolda House Museum of American Art, Gift of Barbara B. Millhouse, 1966.2.11.

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WHAT YOU NEED

- **Discovery Lesson:** George Inness' *The Storm* on this card or on your computer screen. To zoom in and learn more about the artwork, visit reynoldahouse.org/collections/object/the-storm.
- **Literature Connection:** "[Who Has Seen the Wind](#)" by Christina Rossetti and "[The Storm](#)" by Laurie Esposito Harley
- **Hands-on Activity:** Ice cube tray and water, plus additional warm water in a measuring cup or pitcher, blue and red food coloring, baking dish or large clear container
Additional activity: watercolor paint and brush, smock/play shirt, plain copy paper or watercolor paper

DISCOVERY LESSON

Introduce these two keywords to the child:

Storm - a heavy fall of rain, snow, or sleet often with strong winds

Poem - artistic writing that attempts to stir a reader's imagination or emotions. Poems may or may not rhyme.

Begin by asking if the child knows what each word means, or what he or she thinks it means. Help build on the child's understanding as needed and try to find an example of something in the child's life such as a familiar nursery rhyme as an example of a poem or a time they remember a storm.

Next, **look together** at the painting *The Storm*, painted by George Inness in 1885.

Start by inviting the child to name all the things he or she sees in the painting.

- Ask "What is happening in this picture?"
- Ask "Are there things in this painting that might happen before, during, or after a storm?"
- Follow with questions like: How does this painting make you feel? Why? What would you hear if you were in this place? Are there any people in this picture? If so, what are they doing? Do you see a faint rainbow in the distance? What might that mean?

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After spending several minutes exploring together, ask the child why she thinks this painting was named *The Storm*. Have him recall a time a storm was approaching, perhaps a thunder break at the pool or feeling a strong breeze and seeing the sky darken.

As appropriate, share information about the painter George Inness, found on Reynolda's website and in the box below.

George Inness

- George Inness was born near Newburgh, New York in 1825. His father was a grocer.
- As a child, Inness suffered from epilepsy. When he was a teenager, he had a private tutor to teach drawing. Then, he worked in a print shop for an engraver and was able to take art classes.
- As a young artist, Inness focused on painting natural landscapes in close detail. At the end of his career, he painted with less detail and more expression with his brush.
- Inness used a "bird's eye" perspective in his early work, placing the viewer higher above the scene than ground level. However, in this painting, Inness brings the viewer down to earth for a closer view of nature.
- He had five children

LITERATURE CONNECTION

Continue thinking about storms while you read or listen to the literature. While reading, pause and ask questions to extend on the ideas you have been discussing.

- Listen to "[The Storm](#)" by Laurie Esposito Harley, read by the author. As you listen, ask questions like "What is the storm doing in this poem?" and "How do you think the person writing the poem felt about this storm?"

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→ Read the next poem out loud: “Who Has Seen the Wind?” by Christina Rossetti.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling,
The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the trees bow down their heads,
The wind is passing by.

After reading, ask if there are words that the author uses more than once. Count how many times she writes the word “wind.” Talk about the wind. (Can you see the wind? How do you know the wind is blowing?)

Now, act it out! Can you *tremble* like a leaf in the wind? What would it look like for a tree to bow its head?

CONNECT

After reading each poem, invite the child to make connections about how the poem and painting are similar. Perhaps re-read the poems while the child looks at the painting; pause as you discover similarities and differences. Ask the child to show examples of the wind by looking at the trees in the painting.

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HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

Prepare for this activity by making blue ice cubes in an ice cube tray (use about 4 drops of blue food coloring for each cube; make about 2 cubes for this activity).

Young artists can explore what happens during an approaching storm by mixing colored ice cubes--very **cold** water!--with **warm** water of a different color. This visual representation will help recreate the scene shown in the painting.

1. Place a clear container, like a baking dish, on a flat surface. Pour in enough warm water to fill the dish a little over half way.
2. Add two blue ice cubes to one end of the container.
3. Drop approximately 6 drops of red food coloring into the other end of the container.
4. Observe what happens. What do you notice? How quickly does the blue water move and where? How quickly does the red water move and where does it move? Observe how the warm water and cold cube create a reaction that is similar to the approaching storm illustrated in George Inness's painting. Ask the child to point to where he or she sees the swirling and motion that resembles an approaching storm. Does the water get darker? Does the sky typically get darker during a storm? Reference the painting and how the sky was darkening all except a small spot of blue sky and sun.
5. The movement of the colors looks like how the wind blows during storms yet it also shows us something about weather science! Cold water is denser than hot water, so it sinks while the warm water rises. These actions are similar to what happens with air outside. When a cold mass of air (imagine the blue water) meets a warm mass of air (imagine the red water), the warm air rises quickly and this unstable air movement can create a thunderstorm in the right conditions.