

REYNOLDA

EXPLORE REYNOLDA (AGES 3+)

Framing Landscapes



Thomas Doughty, *In the Catskills*, 1835 Oil on canvas, Reynolda House Museum of American Art, Museum Purchase, 1977.2.5

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WHAT YOU NEED

- Thomas Doughty's *In the Catskills* on this card or on your computer 3 to adult screen. To zoom in and learn more about the artwork, visit reynoldahouse.org/collections/object/in-the-catskills
- A conversation partner
- Empty frame or piece of paper and scissors
- Note card
- Drawing materials (colored pencils, markers, etc.)
- Optional: camera

WORDS TO KNOW

Landscape: an image or representation of a view of natural scenery

Foreground: the part of the view that is closest to the viewer

Background: the part of the view that is farthest from the viewer

Picturesque: The word picturesque refers to a landscape that has an artistic appeal, in that it is beautiful but also with some elements of wildness.

DISCOVERY ACTIVITY

Here at Reynolda, our **landscape** was purposefully planned out and designed by landscape architects. **Landscape architects** and engineers work to shape and design outdoor spaces and natural areas to create and frame beautiful landscapes for people to be in and admire. For example, the design firm Buckenham & Miller chose to place Lake Katherine behind the house, so the family and visitors can look out and admire the beauty from the back porch. For the formal gardens, landscape architect Thomas Sears considered what plants to group where and how. He designed small buildings like tea houses to offer points of interest among beautiful plants.

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In the same way, artists (such as Thomas Doughty with his painting *In the Catskills*) frame and depict beautiful views and landscapes in their art. To explore the idea of framing landscapes, start by looking together at Thomas Doughty's painting *In the Catskills* and consider the following questions:

- What do you see in the painting? What were your eyes drawn to first?
- Do you see any people or animals? What do you think they are doing?
- What is in the **foreground**, or, what is closest to us in this painting? What is in the **background**, or, what is farthest away from us in this painting? What's in the middle?
- What do you think is the focal point of the painting? Why?
- Look at the size of things—What are the biggest objects in this painting? How big do you think they are related to a person? How do they compare to the size of things around it?
- Notice the light—Where is the light coming from? What is it shining on? Where is it not shining?
- How does this painting make you feel? Why?

Then, consider other examples of **landscapes**. Have you ever made a landscape painting or drawing? Have you ever visited a garden or lawn that was carefully designed or “landscaped”? Talk together about what each word means, or what you think it means. Help build on your understanding as needed.

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

1. For this activity, start by emptying a picture frame by removing the backing and the glass. Alternatively, you can make a frame out of paper! Start by folding a sheet of paper in half and cut out the middle of the paper, leaving room on the edges to make a frame when unfolded.
2. Next, take your frame outside! Pause and observe the nature around you. After you have observed for a while, look through the frame at the areas you found beautiful. Observe and connect concepts like foreground, background, color, light, etc. that you discussed together in the painting *In the Catskills*. If you brought a camera, you can also take multiple pictures through the frame. Then, compare and contrast different kinds of landscapes you might see.

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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY: POSTCARD

To begin this activity, think about some of your favorite outdoor spaces you've been to, for example a beach, the mountains, a garden, your backyard, etc. Sketch out your favorite landscape on the front side of a notecard. Keep in mind the ways Doughty framed the landscape in his painting. On the lined side, write a letter to a friend or family member about why this is your favorite place, and what your favorite activities to do in this landscape are.