

Antebellum American Art

Ms. Susan M. Pojer
Horace Greeley HS Chappaqua, NY

Issues/Themes Addressed by the Antebellum Artists

- ▶ Transcendentalist thinking.
- ▶ Westward expansion.
- ▶ American nationalism --> **What is America?**
 - * Creation of a national mythology.
- ▶ Racism and Native Americans.
- ▶ Concern for political extremism.
- ▶ The price paid for progress and the advances of civilization.

The Hudson River School:

1820s–1870

Background

- ▶ These artists captured the undiluted power of nature.
- ▶ Paint the nation's most spectacular and undeveloped areas [the new Garden of Eden].
- ▶ Nature was the best source of wisdom & fulfillment.
- ▶ They created visual embodiments of the ideals of the Transcendentalists.
 - * Painting is the vehicle through which the universal mind could reach the mind of mankind.
 - * Art is the agent of moral & spiritual transformation.

Characteristics of the Hudson River School

A new art for a new land.

1. Paint grand, scenic vistas.
2. Humans are an insignificant [even non-existent] part of the picture.
3. Experiment with effects of light on water and sky.
4. Symbol of the school → a broken tree stump

In Nature's Wonderland Thomas Doughty, 1835



Niagara Frederic Church, 1857



View of the Catskills, Early Autumn Thomas Cole, 1837



View from Mt. Holyoke: The Oxbow Thomas Cole, 1836



The Course of Empire: The Savage State

Thomas Cole, 1834



The Course of Empire: The Arcadian or The Pastoral State – Thomas Cole, 1836



The Course of Empire: Consummation

Thomas Cole, 1836



The Course of Empire: Destruction

Thomas Cole, 1836



The Course of Empire: Desolation

Thomas Cole, 1836



Kindred Spirits – Asher Durand, 1849

