
Art Masterpiece: Indian War Canoe, 1912

Emily Carr 1871 - 1945

Keywords: totem poles, dugout canoes, color, shape
Grade: Second
Activity: War Canoes



Meet the Artist:

- Born in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.
- She lived in a large house on lots of land, with her four sisters.
- She took art lessons at age 8 and had a natural talent for it.
- She loved all of nature, both the forest and the animals.
- By the time she was 17, both her parents had died. She went to art school and then taught art.
- She lived with Native Americans on Vancouver Island. They called her “Klee Wyck” which means “Laughing One”.
- In 1907, she traveled to Alaska with her sister and became fascinated with totem poles.

About the Art Style:

Expressionism

Art that is meant to express emotional experience.

First Nations

- First Nations is the name given to Native American tribes who lived in Canada. Totem poles and canoe were decorated with symbols of animals. These stylized animals can be bears, birds, rodents and other animals. They can represent families or people and can tell a story. Animals such as the eagle, bear, beaver, wolf, salmon, whale, and raven were very important to the First Nations people. Some were food, others were viewed as protective spirits.

Questions about Indian War Canoe

- What do you see in this painting?
- What is in the background?
- Do you see the kids playing near the water?
- Who do you think used this canoe?
- What is the canoe made of? What is painted on the side of the canoe?
- What do the animals represent?

Activity

Colorful War Canoes

Supplies

- 9" x 12" brown construction paper
- Pastels
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Paper towel and wrapping paper tubes

Directions

- Show examples of West Coast Native art, such as totem poles.
- Give each student a pre-cut piece of brown paper for a canoe.
- Ask them to imagine some wild animals to decorate their canoe.
- Using the pastels, they can draw the animals' faces, adding features such as eyes, nose, mouth, teeth, ears, etc. Keep the designs simple and bold.
- They may also add paws, claws, fins, wings, etc.
- When the canoes are decorated, you will need to staple the ends closed, and also staple a toilet-paper tube, cut in half lengthwise, on the bottom.