

Tour: “Water Gives Us Life”

Introduction key points:

- All plants, animals, and people need and use water to live and grow.
- You saw how water changes form during the Science Museum’s visit to your school. Scientists closely observe what happens to water in nature.
- You will see how plants need water to live and grow at the Arboretum.
- At the museum today, we’ll see how artists make close observations of nature to create images of water and decorate vessels for carrying water.
- Works of art tell stories about how people around the world use water and its importance to our life.
- We’re going to be like scientists and do some very careful looking at the art, so we can see how “water gives us life.”

You are encouraged to use a selection of objects from the six works of art listed below. The classroom teachers requested that the children see the same objects on their tours for consistency. You do not need to show all six objects in 40 minutes. The transitions and questions are suggestions; you are welcomed to create your own tour based around the theme of “Water Gives Us Life.”

Jacopo and Francesco Bassano, *The Element of Water*, about 1576-77

This night scene shows a fish market being set up on a riverbank at dawn. The vendors display a variety of seafood, while other activities involving water, such as laundering, ferrying, and drinking, take place nearby. Neptune, god of the sea, drives his chariot across the sky.

What are the people using the water for?

- Fish market being set up at dawn in Venice, Italy
- Shows water’s importance in daily life; people are engaged in a variety of activities requiring water: washing laundry, ferrying, fishing, carrying for use at home, drinking
- Fish offered for sale at the market are accurately depicted: one clearly identifiable fish is Northern pike, the same species we have here in Minnesota
- People choose to live by water for all the resources water provides – and learn to access/navigate the water by boats and bridges. Engineering.
- Along with objects that relate to water, Neptune, the god of the sea, rides a horse-drawn chariot across the darkened skies – water as magical/mystical.

(There was a question as to why if Neptune was the god of the Sea was he depicted in the sky. German scholar H. Petersmann proposed an etymology from IE rootstem *nebh- related to clouds and fogs, *nebh-, having the original meaning of damp, wet, has given Sanskrit *nábhah*, Hittite *nepis*, Latin *nubs*. However, most likely it is the artists' prerogative to place him in the skies.)

TR: We've seen many activities here that depend on water. . . What if you had to depend on water and a boat to get to school every day?

Canaletto, *The Grand Canal, Venice*, c. 1740

This placid scene shows where the Grand Canal in Venice begins to curve toward the east. Many of the palaces and monuments pictured here still stand.

What are the people doing in this picture? Imagine you are in the painting, on the boat in the canal. How would it feel to be on a boat on this canal? Which boat would you choose to be in? Why? What sounds would you hear? What smells might you smell?

- In Venice, Italy, water canals are the roads that people travel on—to go school, to work, to visit their friends, etc. (Some people are standing up in the gondolas.)
- See how the buildings are right on the water. This required an engineering decision about how to build so close or even over the water.

What time of year do you think it is?

Artists in Venice love the sunlight and show how it reflects off the buildings and the water

What would be different if it were winter (like we have in Minnesota)?

This is a chance to talk about how water changes form, from liquid to solid.

TR: We've been looking at water as a way to travel. Let's explore how we use water for playtime activities.

Eugene-Louis Boudin, *Vacationers on the Beach at Trouville*, 1864

Eugène Boudin's painting of the Normandy coast in northern France working at Trouville, a summer resort served by the new train lines from Paris. There, well-to-do city dwellers enjoyed a new type of vacation: the beach holiday. Some people actually swam (wearing the daring new bathing costumes), but many gathered just to enjoy the sea air and socialize.

What would it feel like to be on this beach in France? How are the people dressed? How do you dress to go to the beach? Imagine you are on this beach. What is the weather like? What sounds might you hear? What kinds of play/activities do you do in/on the water? (Summer, Winter)

- Swimming as leisure activity on the water – fun
- Going to the beach for health reasons – fresh sea air
- At the turn of the century, the bathing machine was used for sea bathing, more rigorously enforced upon women than men. Bathing machines were roofed and walled wooden cabanas rolled into the sea, so that the bather descending from the machine by a few steps is concealed from the public view.

TR: we have explored how we use water for fun and relaxation; now let's go take a look at a very important use of water to travel the world.

Abraham Storck, The Four Day's Battle, 1666

This patriotic scene chronicles the Four Days' Battle (June 11-14, 1666) between the Dutch and the British fleets in the English Channel. The Dutch squadron's two principal ships, the Gouda and the Spiegel, appear toward the center of the composition. This battle, one of several naval engagements during the protracted trade wars between these two countries, ended favorably for the Dutch.

No one owned the oceans. This informal agreement was referred to as the Freedom of the Seas doctrine. The doctrine granted exclusive rights to a three-mile extension of terrestrial boundaries into the ocean to areas that abutted a coastal nation's boundaries. When any foreign nation enters these waters belligerently or without permission, it's tantamount to an invasion of sovereign soil. The remaining majority of the sea was to be shared by all nations -- including landlocked ones -- for trade and commerce. Since the oceans are international waters, one nation attacking another's ship on the open sea could be construed as an act of war. At the root of this shift in perception of ownership of the world's oceans was money.

How are these boats different than the boats on the canal in Italy? Or Compare the small life boat in the painting with the large ships. How would you describe the waves in this painting? What kind of day is it out on the sea?

- Before airplanes, ships were the best way for people and things to get from one county to another.
- The world's five oceans are connected and cover 71 percent of the planet [source: [NOAA](#)].

- Arguments about who owned areas of the sea happened a long time ago when ships were used to transport goods back and forth between countries, as they still are today. Holland and England fought over who controlled the sea and who got to sail their boats between countries.
- They had a battle on the water which last for four days, with Holland winning the battle.
- Engineering – building boats that could traverse the seas and carry large amounts of cargo.
- Water as powerful and dangerous – wind, waves and currents
- Oceans provide valuable resources – minerals and oil

TR: We have seen one of the most powerful examples of water by way of the ocean, now let's go look at another form of water that can be both delightful and dangerous.

Goodwin, *Bear Chance*, 1907

The Cream of Wheat Company originally commissioned this painting as advertisement for their cereal. Philip R. Goodwin, an artist known for his wildlife paintings

What form(s) of water do you see here? Where do you see snow in this painting? Look at the sky. What would it feel like to sit in the snow with this bear? If you were paint a snow scene what colors might you use? If you were to paint a sky that was about to snow, what colors might you use?

- Liquid form of water changes to snow and ice when the temperature drops
- You talked about animals and hibernation during winter with the Science Museum
- Bear comes out of hibernation because Cream of Wheat is so tasty.
- You make cream of wheat with boiling water – heat/melt snow to make water. Fresh water vs. salt water for drinking and cooking with.

Where are the plants?

- No plants growing or visible except for trees that keep needles during winter
- Plants are covered by the snow
- Snow as insulation in the winter, melts into water in the spring

TR: Think about when the Science Museum visited your school. We're going to see a painting that shows what you did in the classroom.

Koehler, Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue, about 1902

With loose brushwork and soft, misty definition of forms, Koehler paints a rainy evening on Hennepin Avenue. Prominent in the picture are the artist's wife, Marie, and their son, Edwin, along with the family dog.

What's going on in this picture? How does the artist show us that it's raining? What would it feel like to be walking in this picture? If you were to paint a picture of a rainy day, what colors would you use?

- From snow (solid) to rain (liquid) to clouds (gas)
- The water goes into the air (evaporation)
- You saw warm air hitting cold air and results in condensation (Science Museum demo)
- The water that comes from the clouds is called precipitation
- This is a mom, her son, and their dog in downtown Minneapolis over 100 years ago
- We may not like rainy days, but we need them to provide water for humans, animals, and plants

TR: We have been looking at people using water and the forms it takes; now let's see some plants that need water and how those plants are important to humans and animals.

Conclusion:

We've seen how humans use water and depend on it. We know that humans, plants, and animals all need water to live. We need to protect this precious resource so that clean water is available for us as well as all the animals and plants on the earth.