

Andrew Wyeth, *Christina's World*, 1948  
Realism – painting



**Key Facts:**

**Artist:** Andrew Wyeth, 1917-2009

**Art period/style:** American Realism, Regionalism

**Key characteristics of that period:** Realism and Regionalism in America

Art of these styles were traditional, naturalistic and realistic. These artists depicted scenes of rural, small-town life in America.

**Techniques:** Tempera paint, watercolor

Andrew Wyeth is known for his dry brush technique. When using this method, he would apply a very small amount of damp paint to a brush, using no water or medium to dilute the paint. He would then painstakingly create minute details in his paintings with the very tip of a brush.

**Some Background:** Andrew Wyeth is well known for his realistic paintings of farm country in Pennsylvania and Maine. His paintings are simple, realistic, and natural. His paintings had muted, natural tones and amazing detail.

## The Five Core Habits:

Practice the *Five Core Habits of Grammar* with art - NAMES (found on pgs. 18-19 in the Foundation Guide). Part of teaching is learning to ask a student good questions. This is a great activity for looking at art! Plus, you get to sneak in a little art history and technique along with.

### 5 CORE HABITS



#### NAMING

1. What do you call this?
2. Where does this name come from?
3. Are there any other names for this?



#### ATTENDING

1. What are the parts of this?
2. Where do you usually see this?
3. What makes this special?



#### MEMORIZING

1. What would help you memorize this? An acronym, a song, a chant, a picture, etc.
2. What did you already know about this?



#### EXPRESSING

1. Could you draw a picture of this or write a song about it? Could you act it out?
2. How does this make you feel?



#### STORYTELLING

1. Can you tell me a story about this?
2. Can I tell you a story about this?

N names (name things specifically)

A attending (look and listen carefully. Also- taste, smell, touch. Compare things.)

M memorizing (soak up facts and ideas. Memorize facts and relations of things to recall, connect, and expand new ideas to older ones from past memorizations.)

E expressing (express ideas creatively- reciting, drawing, singing, dancing)

S storytelling (hear and tell stories)

This helps us grasp the basic elements, vocabulary, and rules of any subject, and helps us progress more quickly toward comprehension and creativity in future studies.

Using the image on the first page, go through these questions:

#### N – Names:

- Name the artist, era/art style, and technique
- What can you find? Name the things you see
- How many people are there?
- Who are the people? What are they doing?
- What do you see?
- What colors do you see?

#### A – Attending

- What do the people in the painting see? Hear? Smell? Taste? Feel/touch?
- What emotions might the people be feeling?
- Does the image give you any emotions?
- How is color used?
- What is happening in the painting?

Attending to details – here are a few close-ups. What else do you notice now?



## **M – Memorize**

Memorize the artist, time period, and facts about the artwork/technique.

## **E – Express**

Express your thoughts and ideas about the art.

You can also express by trying the technique on your own.

Have your students create a painting in the style of Andrew Wyeth. First, it is important to choose subject matter that is similar to his work, such as a landscape. The use of color is another important factor to consider. Make sure you limit the palette to subdued earth tones (browns, greens, yellows, oranges, and black).



Materials: tempera paint, acrylic, or watercolor paint, brushes, watercolor paper

Here are a few simplistic landscapes by Andrew Wyeth that could be good inspiration for this project:







After showing them these paintings for inspiration, have them imagine their own landscape.

Have them sketch out their landscape on watercolor paper. The grass and hills should be the main part of their composition.

Then, they could add a small figure or maybe a small house or barn in the background.

Once they have sketched out their composition, have them paint the image with subdued earth tones. Try the dry brush technique to get texture for the grass. For this- you will want to have your paint brush dry, and preferably use a bristle brush if you can. Get a small amount of paint on the very tip of the paint brush and then make small short strokes to create grass texture.



A few more examples of Andrew Wyeth's paintings:



*Her Room*, 1963



*Wind From the Sea*, 1947



*That Gentleman, 1960*



*Braids, 1977*



## **S – Story telling**

Tell the story about this work of art.

Refer to image on first page.

*Christina's World* by Andrew Wyeth is one of his most famous paintings. It is a tempera painting on wooden panel. The sense of mystery immediately grabs the viewer's attention. The painting is set in the landscape of coastal Maine. The woman in the painting is laying on the ground, yet she is propped up and alert. She seems almost frozen as she stares at the distant farmhouse.

Wyeth's neighbor Anna Christina Olson inspired the composition, which is one of four paintings by Wyeth in which she appears. As a young girl, Olson developed a degenerative muscle condition—possibly polio—that left her unable to walk. She refused to use a wheelchair, preferring to crawl, as depicted here, using her arms to drag her lower body along. “The challenge to me,” Wyeth explained, “was to do justice to her extraordinary conquest of a life which most people would consider hopeless.”

The high level of detail Wyeth gave to every object in his paintings encourages intense inspection, but his titles reveal the inner significance of their outwardly straightforward subjects. The title *Christina's World*, courtesy of Wyeth's wife, indicates that the painting is more a psychological landscape than a portrait, a portrayal of a state of mind rather than a place.

(<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78455>)