



## THOMAS EAKINS: SCENES FROM MODERN LIFE

### Lesson 1: Comstockery vs. Eakins

Estimated Time: 7 sessions (within a 45 minute period)

#### Introduction

Thomas Eakins' career as an artist and a teacher was not without controversy. In this lesson, students will explore the circumstances that led to Eakins' forced resignation from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In preparation for a "mock" hearing before the "Board of Directors", students will research the historical conditions and people who were a part of this controversial episode and play out the scenario. The end result may be different from what actually happened, as the Board of Directors will vote on who made the most convincing argument.

#### Grade Level

9-12

Please Note: The video program contains several scenes featuring black and white archival photographs of nude male and female models, including some photographs of Eakins himself.

#### Subject Areas

Social Studies

History

Art History

Language Arts

#### Objectives

- Students will use research methods to learn about Eakins' teaching methods within the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Victorian Era attitudes in America at the time and biographies of selected participants
- Students will incorporate research to prepare and present a verbal argument
- Students will understand and be able to articulate a perspective that may not be their own
- Students will develop their own opinion and write about present day society "norms"

#### Estimated Time

7 sessions (within a 45 minute period)

#### Materials Needed

- DVD-*Thomas Eakins: Scenes From Modern Life*
- DVD Player and TV Monitor

- Video camera (if available)
- Prints of Eakins Winslow Homer, James M. Whistler, John Singer Sargent, William Merritt Chase
- Access to the Internet
- Access to Recommended Resources (for research)
- Index cards for students
- Index cards with these names on them (Thomas Eakins, Charles Bregler, Edward H. Coates, Parent of Female Student, Anthony Comstock)
- Student Journals
- Student Handout-Grading Criteria

## **Procedure**

### **Session 1-Setting the Scene- (45 minutes)**

1. Introduce the project to the class by presenting these key points:
  - The project will occur over a period of 7 of classes
  - Work will be done in class and outside of class
  - Students will work in research teams
  - The project will involve role playing real historical people and events
2. Hand out journals
  - The journals will be used exclusively for this project and used in grading/assessment
  - They will be given grading criteria for assessment
3. Hand out Criteria for Grading/Assessment

### **Suggested Criteria for Grading/Assessment**

#### **Student Journal**

- Complete notes from Session 1 discussion of documentary
- Complete research questions
- Complete research results of team

#### **Participation**

- Class discussions
- Completed research tasks and reported to team

4. Review the Criteria for Grading/Assessment with students and answer any questions

5. Prepare for viewing by telling students to pay close attention to the video because this will be part of their research. (The total running time for selected chapters on the DVD is about **20 minutes**)

6. Play the DVD and use the remote to select these chapters. The time indicates the start time of the scene.

OPEN	A big artist keeps a sharp eye on nature. . .	00:00:10
<b>SCENE 1</b>	<b>Leaving Home</b>	<b>01:02:34</b>
	Introduction to Eakins' experiences in Paris	
SCENE 2	A City of Palaces	01:04:03
	The impact of the city on the young Philadelphian	
SCENE 5	For beginning, Paris is the best place	01:10:51
	His studies at the École des Beaux Arts	
SCENE 11	A Teacher Emerges	01:29:30
	His career at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts begins	
SCENE 15	Wanted: Female Models	01:36:48
	Painting from the nude model	
SCENE 16	Under the Skin	01:38:02
	Dissection as part of an artist's education	
SCENE 17	I tender you my resignation	01:40:06
	Eakins resigns from the Academy amidst scandal	

### **Session 1-Discussion for Understanding- (10 minutes)**

It is important that students reflect on what they saw in the documentary in order to retain key points for future reference. With this in mind, you will facilitate a discussion and write down key points. Students will take notes in their journals.

1. Tell students that they will now review what they saw in the documentary and encourage them to take notes on key points
2. Facilitate the discussion with the following questions and answers

### **Discussion Questions**

**How did Thomas Eakins feel when he first arrived in Paris?**

(Answers: Fear, trepidation, homesick, travel sick, brave, courageous, excited.)

**What was the first place he visited in Paris and what were his impressions?**

(Answers: The Louvre. The statues were made of real marble not plaster imitations, they were cold, they were naked.)

**What was different about art and artists in Paris versus Philadelphia?**

(Answers: Art was in the public eye in Paris and not so much in Philadelphia. Nude statuary was common in Paris. There were thousands of artists working in Paris at the time.)

**What did artists study in Life class and why?**

(Answers: The human form. The theory was that if you could paint the human form well you could paint anything.)

**The Academy was lacking nude models for the Life Classes. How did Eakins solve the problem?**

(Answer: Created a help wanted ad. Used his own students as models)

**What was Eakins' attitude toward nudity?**

(Answers: He viewed the body with scientific objectivity. He was not bothered by appearing nude before his students. He felt only serious students would be willing to model nude for the sake of high art.)

**What circumstances led to Eakins dismissal?**

(Answers: The removal of a loincloth on a male model in front of female students. Victorian social mentality. Students own ideas)

**Session 1-Eakins and Other Artists of His Time- (10 minutes)**

To help students understand what Eakins was trying to change by his teaching methods show students the work of Eakins and four other prominent Philadelphia painters of the period. Compare how Eakin's contemporaries depicted people and in what contexts the average 19<sup>th</sup> Century Philadelphian would have encountered images of the human form.

- Thomas Eakins
- Winslow Homer
- James M. Whistler
- John Singer Sargent
- William Merritt Chase

**Session 1-Parting Thoughts**

Conclude the session by giving students a sense of what lies in store for them with the project.

Tell students:

- There is more to the story of Eakins' dismissal than meets the eye
- The class is going to revisit this event in Eakins' life and find out what really may have happened

- Expect to play an active role in exploring this controversy

### **Session 2-Quick Background Info (5 minutes)**

In order to understand the context of the Eakins controversy at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, begin this session by highlighting the key points of this background information.

- The reputation of the curriculum at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts drew a large numbers of students, including women who had fought for their right to attend
- The academy initially did not charge a fee for classes, but was forced to when the school became large
- When parents started paying for classes they felt they had more of a say in what when on at the school
- Women and men's art classes at the Academy were separate
- To save money Eakins had students model nude for one another
- The school directors were cautious of public opinion and required male models to wear a loin cloth
- Eakins students were posing and being photographed nude
- People recognized the nude students in his paintings
- Eakins removed the loin cloth from a male model in a women's Life Drawing class

### **Session 2- The Project Begins (40 minutes)**

Remind students of your "Parting Thoughts" from Session 1

1. Explain the project and highlight these key points:

- The class will conduct a "mock" hearing and examine the case of Eakins' resignation/dismissal from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
- The entire class will participate in the hearing as either Board members of the school or one of the five people involved in the case
- All students will conduct research and prepare for the hearing

- The class will be divided into research teams and assigned one of the five people involved in the case
- The research team will be responsible for learning as much as they can about their assigned person and presenting that person's perspective at the hearing
- One member from each research team will actually play the role of that person, but it is the team's responsibility to make sure their representative is prepared
- You will be graded/assessed on the criteria in the handout

2. Divide the class into five research teams

3. Hand out **index cards** with the names written on them (Thomas Eakins, Charles Bregler, Edward H. Coates, Parent of Female Student, Anthony Comstock)

4. Prepare questions for research as a class by facilitating a brainstorming session

Note: Students should write down all questions in their journals.

### **Sample Questions Students Need to Answer in Their Research**

Who is this person?

What is their point of view about nudity?

What is their point of view about Thomas Eakins?

What is their point of view about the school?

What is their point of view about art instruction?

Why do they have these perspectives?

What would this person say at a hearing before the Board of Directors regarding Eakins' dismissal?

### 5. Identify Research Sources

As a class, identify sources for research. These may include:

- Books
- Internet
- Magazines
- Philadelphia Newspapers
- The DVD documentary bonus materials\*

\*Please note the DVD contains a mini-documentary on the Bregler Collection and would be beneficial for the Charles Bregler research team.

### 6. Assign Team Tasks

Research teams must now work together and delegate tasks. Each person on the team should take on one or more questions that they will be responsible for answering. Within \_\_\_# days they will report their findings back to the group in class.

Before students leave make sure each person in the class has a task to complete.

### **Session 3- Share the Results- (45 minutes)**

In this session, research teams will share the results of their research with their team and identify gaps in their research. Students should take notes in their journals so that all members of the team have the same information. As the teacher/facilitator your role will be to circulate among the teams to check on their progress. If teams get stuck on finding resources, you may want to share the Recommended Resources in this lesson plan. Research teams will have \_\_\_# of days to complete their research.

### **Session 4- Planning for the Hearing- (45 minutes)**

In this session, research teams will share the final results of their research with their team and present a brief biography on the person they are researching to the class. The presentations will help other teams get a sense of what to expect in the hearing and help them prepare to address issues.

1. Hand out index cards to teams for their short biographies
2. Tell the class:
  - Research teams will share their latest research results with their team
  - Research teams will create a short biography of their person to present to the class in this session
  - Research teams should take notes on what they hear from other teams and identify issues that may arise in the hearing and how the team will address them
3. Research teams meet to share latest results and prepare a short biography to present to the class - (20 minutes)
4. One member of each research team presents a short biography to the class- (25 minutes-5 minutes each team)

### **Session 4- Parting Thoughts**

Tell students there will be one more session before the hearing.

### **Session 5- Preparing for the Hearing- (45 minutes)**

In this session, research teams will prepare for their presentation at the hearing. They will be building their case. The objective is to convince the Board of Directors to either ask Eakins to resign or keep him on as a teacher.

1. Tell students the agenda for this session

- Research teams will work together to create a 5-minute presentation to the Board of Director stating their reason for keeping Eakins as a teacher or asking him to resign
- The presentation should incorporate facts and opinions based on historical research
- You may include visual aids in your presentation
- Teams will choose one person from each team to speak for their designated person
- Prepare index cards for your presenter with key points your team wants to make

2. Team Preparation

- Research teams will spend the rest of the time preparing their statements. Your role as teacher/facilitator will be to circulate among the teams and advise as necessary.

### **Session 5- Parting Thoughts**

Tell the students that the hearing will occur in \_\_\_# days.

### **Session 6- The Hearing- (45 minutes)**

In this last session, the class will conduct a hearing to decide whether Thomas Eakins should remain on staff at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. At the conclusion of the hearing, members of the Board of Directors will decide the final result based on how persuasive the presentations were.

1. Tell the class the agenda for the hearing

- The order of presentations will be:
  - Edward H. Coates
  - Parent of Female Student
  - Charles Bregler
  - Anthony Comstock
  - Thomas Eakins
- Each presentation will last no more than 5 minutes
- After all the presentations have been made each person will have 2 minutes for rebuttal or a final statement
- The Board of Directors will meet and make a final decision

2. Select the Board of Directors by either choosing particular students, asking for volunteers or including all the students who are not presenters. You, the teacher, are the Chair of the board and will guide the members.
3. Hear Edward H. Coates presentation (5 minutes)
4. Hear Parent of Female Student presentation (5 minutes)
5. Hear Charles Bregler presentation (5 minutes)
6. Hear Anthony Comstock presentation (5 minutes)
7. Hear Thomas Eakins presentation (5 minutes)
8. Hear Edward H. Coates final remarks (2 minutes)
9. Hear Parent of Female Student final remarks (2 minutes)
10. Hear Charles Bregler final remarks (2 minutes)
11. Hear Anthony Comstock final remarks (2 minutes)
12. Hear Thomas Eakins final remarks (2 minutes)
13. The Board of Directors discusses the hearing during the time remaining

Please note: If you run out of time for the Board of Directors to have a discussion, it can be part of the last session. The last session should occur the next day so students can remember what happened. You may want to consider video taping the hearing if you have the equipment.

### **Session 7- After the Hearing and Final Assignment- (45 minutes)**

In this last session, students will review and discuss the Boards decision. This is meant to be a very interactive discussion where all voices are heard. Towards the end of the session you can assign the Extension project if you choose to include this assignment in your curriculum.

1. Facilitate a discussion of the hearing.

### **Questions for Discussion**

- Who had the most convincing argument?

- Why? What about their presentation convinced you?
- Were there any presenters whose perspective you agreed with? Why?
- Were there any presenters whose perspective you disagreed with? Why?
- What conclusions can you draw about American society during the time of this event?
- What would a person/artist have to do today in order for them to be perceived as controversial?
- What is academic freedom? Why is it important?
- Is the Eakins case an issue of academic freedom?
- Why is nudity bad?
- Who decides what is taught- School Boards, teachers, educational consultants, government?
- Are there any principles that can guide us for the future?

## 2. Epilogue

Tell the students what happened after Eakins resigned.

- Eakins spent the next two years defending his position and countering rumors
- A group of loyal students formed a new school, The Art Students' League of Philadelphia and carried on Eakins method of art instruction
- Eakins lectured on anatomy and perspective at schools in New York and Washington, D.C.
- Eakins kept ties with the academic community
- The Art Students' League of Philadelphia closed 7 years after it started
- An infatuated female student was hospitalized after claiming to be Eakins wife
- The suicide of his niece, Ella, was blamed on Eakins' corrupting influence in Life classes, which she participated in
- His sister's family banished him forever
- Eakins withdrew from teaching entirely
- Eakins went on to paint for the rest of his life and died in 1916 at the age of 72

At this point you can conclude the project and have students turn in their journals for grading/assessment or you can extend the project with the final assignment.

## 3. Optional Extension Assignment

- Keep a journal for a week or so making observations about how people show acceptance or rejection of behaviors. What is taboo today? Why?
- Create a collage or other artistic expression symbolically representing the conflict between convention and innovation.

## **Assessment Recommendations**

The Grading/Assessment Criteria handout that is part of the materials you will need for this project can be created by you and/or you can use these recommendations.

### **Student Journal**

- Complete notes from Session 1 discussion of documentary
- Complete research questions
- Complete research results of team

### **Participation**

- Class discussions
- Completed research tasks and reported to team

## **Recommended Resources**

### **Resources for Anthony Comstock**

*Weeder in the Garden of the Lord*

By Anna Louise Bates

Publisher: University Press of America; ISBN: 076180076X; (December 12, 1995)

*Traps for the Young*

By Anthony Comstock, Robert H. Bremner (Editor)

Publisher: iUniverse.com; ISBN: 1583484337; (September 1999)

Photo and short bio

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/ABOUT/PHOTOALB/COMSTOCK.HTM>

Colorado University student review on Imperiled Innocents: Anthony Comstock and Family Reproduction in Victorian America

<http://csf.colorado.edu/soc/m-fem/2000/msg01407.html>

"COMSTOCKERY IN AMERICA"

By Margaret Sanger from the International Socialist Review, 1915, pp. 46-49

<http://www.nyu.edu/projects/sanger/comstock.htm>

Victims of Morality

By Emma Goldman

First published in March 1913, in Goldman's Mother Earth journal.

<http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/goldmanmor.htm>

**Resources for Edward H. Coates**

*Thomas Eakins and the Swimming Picture*

By Doreen Bolger (Author/Editor), Sarah Cash (Editor)

Amon Carter Museum; ISBN: 0883600854; (February 1996)

The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts has a very comprehensive archive from which students can request copies. This web page lists texts, periodicals and other sources for information on the history of the academy and its' presidents.

<http://www.pafa.org/info/archives/index.shtml>

**Resources for Parent of Female Student in Eakins class in 1880's**

*Thomas Eakins*

By Darrel Sewell, Thomas Eakins, Kathleen A. Foster

Kathleen A. Foster essay pp. 102-104

Philadelphia Museum of Art; ISBN: 0876331428; (September 2001)

*The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870.*

By Walter Edwards, Houghton

Yale Univ Pr; ISBN: 0300001223; (December 1963)

*The Light of the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America*

By Harvey Green, Mary E. Perry, Margaret Strong (Illustrator)

Random House; ISBN: 039471329X (September 1984)

*Essential Handbook of Victorian Etiquette*

By Thomas E. Hill, William P. Yenne (Editor)

Bluewood Books; ISBN: 0912517123; (November 1994)

*American Victorian Woman: The Myth and the Reality*

By Mabel Donnelly

Greenwood Publishing Group; ISBN: 0313256969; (September 1986)

The Gentleman's Guide: A Practical Guide for the 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Man

<http://www.lahacal.org/gentleman/>

The Victorian Web: Political and social history, gender matters, philosophy, religion, science, technology, visual arts, theatre, entertainment and more.

<http://65.107.211.206/victov.html>

### **Resources for Charles Bregler**

DVD-*Thomas Eakins: Scenes From Modern Life*-Bonus material-The Bregler Collection

*Thomas Eakins as a Teacher*

By Charles Bregler

*The Arts*, Vol.17, no.6 (March 1931), p.383

*Writing About Eakins: The Manuscripts in Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection*

By Kathleen A. Foster, Cheryl Leibold (Editor)

University of Pennsylvania Press; ISBN: 0812281071; (March 1990)

*Thomas Eakins Rediscovered : Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts*

By Kathleen A. Foster, Mark Bockrath, Mark Bockrat

Yale Univ Pr; ISBN: 0300061749; (January 1998)

*An Important Eakins Collection.*

By Kathleen A. Foster

*Antiques* 130, no. 6 (Dec. 1986), pp. 1228-37.

### **Resources for Thomas Eakins**

DVD-*Thomas Eakins: Scenes From Modern Life*

*Thomas Eakins*

By Darrel Sewell, Thomas Eakins, Kathleen A. Foster

Philadelphia Museum of Art; ISBN: 0876331428; (September 2001)

*Thomas Eakins: His Life and Art*

By William Innes Homer

Abbeville Press, Inc.; ISBN: 0789207745; 2nd edition (May 2002)

*Thomas Eakins: Artist of Philadelphia*

By Darrel Sewell

Philadelphia Museum of Art; ISBN: 0876330472; (May 1982)

*Guide to the Thomas Eakins Research Collection with a Lifetime Exhibition Record*

By Elizabeth Milroy, Douglass Paschall

Philadelphia Museum of Art; ISBN: 0876330944; (December 1, 1996)

Thomas Eakins: Scenes From Modern Life-Web Site

**PUT URL HERE**

Thomas Eakins: American Realist-Philadelphia Museum of Art

Gallery tour and timeline of life events

<http://www.philamuseum.org/exhibitions/exhibits/eakins/index.shtml>

## **Related National Standards**

### **Social Studies**

- **Culture**

Learners should be able to engage independently in in-depth analysis of any cultural group or subgroup and in-depth comparison of any two or more cultural groups or subgroups.

High school teachers can introduce new concepts such as the function and interactions of language, literature, and the arts in terms of traditions, beliefs, and values; and the transmitting of culture in the face of environmental, technical, and social change.

- **Time Continuity and Change**

High school teachers can engage learners in a sophisticated analysis and reconstruction of the past, helping them to examine the relationship of the past to the present and extrapolating into the future. Teachers can facilitate learners' integration of individual stories about people, events, and situations so that they might form a holistic conception, in which continuity and change are linked in

time and across cultures. Teachers can help learners to draw on their knowledge of history to make informed choices and decisions in the present.

- **Individual Development and Identity**

High school teachers can provide learners with opportunities to comprehend and apply specific discipline-based concepts, theories, and principles of human memory, thinking, learning, development, and behavior to analyzing, interpreting, and explaining their own self and identities as well as their own behavior and the behavior of others. They can help learners analyze, interpret, and assess personality and individual differences and commonalities, and to consider possible influences of biological, social, cultural, economic, peer, and family conditions on personality, thinking, and behavior.

Source:

National Standards for Social Studies Teachers • Volume I

Developed by a task force of National Council for the Social Studies and approved by the NCSS Board of Directors in April 1997.

<http://www.ncss.org/standards/teachers/vol1/culture.shtml>

## **History**

- The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation
- The student considers multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears
- The student draws comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues as well as large-scale or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries
- The student hypothesizes the influence of the past, including both the limitations and the opportunities made possible by past decisions
- The student conducts historical research
- The student obtains historical data from a variety of sources, including: library and museum collections, historic sites, historical photos, journals, diaries, eyewitness accounts, newspapers, and the like; documentary films, oral testimony from living witnesses, censuses, tax records, city directories, statistical compilations, and economic indicators
- The student identifies the gaps in the available records and marshals contextual knowledge and perspectives of the time and place in order to elaborate

imaginatively upon the evidence, fill in the gaps deductively, and construct a sound historical interpretation

Source:

The development of the History Standards was administered by the National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California, Los Angeles under the guidance of the National Council for History Standards.

<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs/standards/thinking5-12-3.html>

## **Art History**

Content Standard #4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

- Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art
- Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places
- Students analyze relationships of works of art to one another in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture, justifying conclusions made in the analysis and using such conclusions to inform their own art making

Source:

National Art Education Association and the National Committee For Standards in the Arts

[http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/professional\\_resources/standards/natstandards/standards\\_912.html](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/professional_resources/standards/natstandards/standards_912.html)

## **Language Arts**

- Uses a variety of print and electronic sources to gather information for research topics
- Synthesizes information from multiple research studies to draw conclusions that go beyond those found in any of the individual studies
- Uses systematic strategies (e.g., anecdotal scripting, annotated bibliographies, graphics, conceptual maps, learning logs, notes, outlines) to organize and record information
- Adjusts message wording and delivery to particular audiences and for particular purposes (e.g., to defend a position, to entertain, to inform, to persuade)
- Makes formal presentations to the class (e.g., includes definitions for clarity; supports main ideas using anecdotes, examples, statistics, analogies, and other evidence; uses visual aids or technology, such as transparencies, slides, electronic media; cites information sources)
- Responds to questions and feedback about own presentations (e.g., clarifies and defends ideas, expands on a topic, uses logical arguments, modifies organization, evaluates effectiveness, sets goals for future presentations)
- Understands influences on language use (e.g., political beliefs, positions of social power, culture)

Source:

McREL, research and evaluation of policy and practice in standards, curriculum, and instruction.

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Standard.asp?SubjectID=7>