RALPH FASANELLA

A Teacher's Guide for Grades 9-12

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
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AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This Teacher Guide was developed in conjunction with the presentation of *Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget* at the American Folk Art Museum, September 5–December 1, 2014. While all of the artworks in this Guide are from the museum's collection, *Blind Newsdealer* is not represented in the exhibition. Texts about the artworks in this Guide are an amalgam of information developed by the Smithsonian American Art Museum for the exhibition and by the education department at the American Folk Art Museum.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION
RALPH FASANELLA: LEST WE FORGET

Ralph Fasanella (1914–1997) celebrated the common man and tackled complex issues of postwar America in colorful, socially minded paintings. Fasanella was born in the Bronx and grew up in the working-class neighborhoods of New York. He became a tireless advocate for laborers' rights, first as a union organizer and later as a painter.

Fasanella's parents were among three million Italians who immigrated to America in the early twentieth century in search of a better life. They taught Ralph about the costs and rewards of hard work. The most lasting lessons they imparted were that family and community come before personal gain, that younger generations stand on the shoulders of those who came before them, and that all Americans can—and should—always fight for their rights.

Fasanella worked as a garment worker, truck driver, ice delivery man, union organizer, and gas station operator before committing himself to painting in 1945. Untrained as an artist, Fasanella developed an astute and accessible style meant to foster social empowerment. His large paintings were conceived as memorial tributes, didactic tools, and rallying cries that made the possibility of a better society palpable to his community.

Fasanella is often remembered for his iconic admonition "Lest We Forget"—an impassioned plea to honor the sacrifices of our forebears. *Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget* unites the artist's most powerful works in a celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of his birth.

Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget is organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum with generous support from Tania and Tom Evans, Herbert Waide Hemphill, Jr. American Folk Art Fund, and Paula and Peter Lunder. The C.F. Foundation in Atlanta supports the museum's traveling exhibition program, *Treasures to Go.* The presentation at the American Folk Art Museum is supported in part by Joyce Berger Cowin, the David Davies and Jack Weeden Fund for Exhibitions, the Estate of Ralph Fasanella, public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Featuring five paintings by artist Ralph Fasanella from the American Folk Art Museum that reflect American history and culture, this Teacher's Guide is designed for high school–level educators. Although classroom teachers across the city, state, and nation often cover similar content, each educator has a distinct approach to engaging their learners in the material. In response, the museum's education team has created a guide to borrow from and build on to meet the needs of your specific classroom environment and teaching style.

There are multiple objectives for using this guide. One goal is to empower educators working with students in high school and with varying abilities to teach from the collection images presented here, and to encourage the teaching of American history through an exploration of folk and self-taught art. Another is to encourage students to ask critical questions when investigating visual art as a primary source. We hope that this material will support dynamic learning in your classroom and help your students draw parallels with subjects they are already studying.

For each work of art in this guide, you will find an accompanying color reproduction, background information on the object and its creator, and a list of resources that help illuminate the work. In addition, each lesson plan contains questions to spark discussion as well as suggestions for related activities and projects for students meant to extend their learning even further. The questions section is separated into three categories: **Questions for Careful Looking** ask students to observe each object in great detail and then work together to decode what they see, **Questions for Further Discussion** tie in threads of background information on the objects to further the looking process, and **Questions for Context** help students identify and understand the cultural climate in which the object was created—unlike the Questions for Careful Looking, they encourage students to consider their responses independent of the artwork. Depending on the contextual information your students already have about the originating time and place of the object, you might want to ask these questions before or after students discuss what they see in the image. Please note that several of the following lessons also include images of simulated projects contained in the **Suggested Activities** heading—some are completed project demonstrations, while others offer detail or process shots of the activities you may want to try in your classroom.

Whether you are in the museum or your own classroom, we are certain that you will discover new and inspiring ways to integrate folk and self-taught art into your teaching to make American history and culture come alive for your students!

TEACHING FROM IMAGES AND OBJECTS

Object-based learning, particularly from museum collections, activates students' powers of observation, interpretation, and analysis. At the American Folk Art Museum, our teaching methodology is inquiry-based and discussion-driven. Through facilitated conversation about objects, students construct their own interpretations of the works, thus establishing ownership of their ideas and cultivating confidence and pride in learning. As students link their observations and interpretations to those of their peers and bring their prior knowledge into the conversation, the class develops a collective body of knowledge, while individuals hone their critical thinking skills.

We recommend a few techniques that will help you guide students through the meaning-making process as you facilitate discussions about works of art:

Invite students to look carefully.

Start by asking students to take a minute to look silently at the work of art. At first, this process might be uncomfortable for students who are not accustomed to silent looking, but it will become easier with each new image. This invitation to look is essential; we are rarely encouraged to *slow down* to make observations. By spending a few moments together examining the image, students will start the lesson with a shared experience.

Use repetition in your Questions for Careful Looking.

Repeat questions you have posed to your students with different objects so they can anticipate the questions and feel comfortable responding. Repetition will help students better understand questions they might not have understood the first time, and it will provide them with a series of useful starting-point questions for when they approach an image on their own.

Engage students through open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions create space for multiple viewpoints and more than one "right" answer. In addition, these types of questions encourage discussion as opposed to single-word answers. When asked to respond to an open-ended question, students are invited to participate and share their ideas without fear of giving the "wrong" answer.

Paraphrase all students' comments.

As students offer their ideas and interpretations, paraphrase their comments to ensure that the whole group has heard each student's ideas. In addition, by voicing a student's comment in different words, you validate that comment and let the student know that you have heard the idea and understood it. Be sure to paraphrase all comments in a way that does not suggest that one comment is more valuable than another.

Introduce new vocabulary in authentic ways.

As you paraphrase students' comments, attempt to balance the vocabulary that students already have with new words. Vocabulary is best acquired when presented in context, and a discussion about a work of art in which everyone is focused on a shared stationary image provides a perfect opportunity for this experience.

Ask students to support all observations and interpretations.

Ask students to back up their inferences and ideas with evidence from the work of art to legitimize their interpretations. Ask for visual evidence even when an interpretation seems obvious.

Point to elements of the image to which students refer.

If you have the opportunity to project an image of a work of art, point to areas of the picture that students address in their comments. This helps ground each comment and ensures that all students can see the element being discussed.

Weave background information into the discussion in appropriate and authentic ways.

As students develop their interpretations of the work of art, you may want to share threads of background information with the group. Information about the object should further the looking process, contextualize the artwork for students, or appropriately challenge the group to push the limits of their thinking.

At the beginning of each lesson, you will find Questions for Careful Looking. At times these questions relate specifically to details in the work of art, while in other instances they have a more general scope, and they may appear in multiple lessons in this Curriculum Guide. Both types of questions are equally important in the discussion, but the latter—the more general question—is critical in order for all possible observations to be heard. However, if a general discussion seems to have tapered off, simply asking for further detailed observations can revitalize conversation and allow students who haven't yet shared ideas to find new layers and meaning in the object and lead the group in new directions.

By beginning your discussion of an artwork with concrete observations, you ensure that all students have the same starting point. As the discussion progresses, students will naturally apply a historical context to the work; with markedly increasing ease, they will piece together what they see with what they know. At the same time, they will gain confidence in asking questions about what they see and seeking the information to answer them. As a result, students will use what they have taken from the conversation and apply it to the ensuing project. In the process, students will also gain experience scrutinizing primary sources and works of art in general, while at the same time cultivating their visual literacy and critical-thinking skills.

NEW YORK STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

The lessons in this Curriculum Guide address a variety of New York State Learning Standards, all strands of the New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts, and Common Core Standards **(www.corestandards.org)**. Because lesson plans are designed to be adapted and tailored by educators, they are not accompanied by individual lists of standards addressed. The standards listed below reflect those inherent in many of the lessons and programs in the museum.

The Arts: New York State Learning Standards

Standard 1: Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts and participate in various roles in the arts.

Standard 2: Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in arts in various roles.

Standard 3: Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.

Standard 4: Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

Social Studies: New York State Learning Standards

Standard 1: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

Standard 2: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

Standard 3: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth's surface.

Standard 4: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources; how major decision-making units function in the United States and other national economies; and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.

Standard 5: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the United States and other nations; the U.S. Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

English Language Arts: New York State Learning Standards

Standard 1: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.
Standard 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.
Standard 3: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation.
Standard 4: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for social interaction.

Mathematics, Science, and Technology: New York State Learning Standards

Standard 1: Students will use mathematical analysis, scientific inquiry, and engineering design, as appropriate, to pose questions, seek answers, and develop solutions.
Standard 3: Students will understand mathematics and become mathematically confident by communicating and reasoning mathematically; by applying mathematics in real-world settings; and by solving problems through the integrated study of number systems, geometry, algebra, data analysis, probability, and trigonometry.

New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts

Strand 1: Artmaking
Strand 2: Literacy in the Arts
Strand 3: Making Social, Cultural, and Historical Connections
Strand 4: Community and Cultural Resources
Strand 5: Careers and Life-Long Learning in Visual Arts

Farewell, Comrade—The End of the Cold War

Ralph Fasanella (1914–1999) and unidentified artist
New York City; 1992–1997 (Ralph Fasanella); c. 1998–1999 (unidentitfied artist)
Oil on canvas; 59 3/4 x 88 1/2"
American Folk Art Museum, gift of Eva Fasanella and her children, Gina Mostrando and Marc Fasanella
2005.5.3

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Fasanella's final painting captures the artist's internal conflicts following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, which signaled the end of the Russian experiment with socialism. Fasanella was a staunch socialist and anti-fascist. As a youth he was a member of the Young Communist League, and in the 1930s he volunteered for the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to fight against fascism during the Spanish Civil War. A laborer and union organizer, Fasanella feared a society in which the drive for profit trumped the welfare of its people.

In this complex image, intended as the central panel of a triptych, the artist employs American news sources and sports idioms to chart an intricate history. Lenin lies in state in a packed stadium; stacks of books symbolize the intellectual pillars that supported the socialist enterprise with titles that identify those who heroically battled for economic and social justice. Oversized covers of the *New York Times* and *New York Post* succinctly call the game's outcome: "Gorbachev . . . Fumbles the Ball" and "Yanks Win Big."

Fasanella passed away before the work had been fully realized. Shortly after his death, his wife, Eva, hired a painter (who has yet to be identitfied) to put the finishing touches on this piece.

RESOURCES

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Farewell, Comrade—The End of the Cold War

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is going on in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Where does your eye go first? Why do you think that is?
- How is the painting organized?
- What color predominates in this painting? What can you say about the artist's use of color?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Read all of the text in the painting, starting with the headlines at the top, and then the rest from left to right. Group the words and phrases together by writing them on a board—make a column for people, for places, for facts, and for opinions. What are the major concerns in this painting?
- This painting is titled *Farewell, Comrade—The End of the Cold War.* How does that add to your understanding of the text? What was the Cold War?
- Who is lying in the coffin in the center of the composition? How can you tell?
- Notice the stacks of books surrounding Vladimir Lenin's coffin. Can you read the names of the authors on their covers? What place does literature have in this work of art?
- Where do you see groups of people? They are depicted in the subway, at a bar, and at a political rally. What do these places have in common? How are they different?
- In the bottom right corner of the painting, people are playing pool and are labeled "World Powers." Why might Fasanella depict world leaders in this way?
- How would you describe the tone or mood of this work?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- This painting concerns different economic systems: socialism, communism, and capitalism. What do you know about each?
- Vladimir Lenin was the former premier of the USSR. Under his rule, the Russian Empire became the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a single-party, socialist state in which the government controlled most of the property and resources. Lenin died in 1924, but the events depicted in this painting—the fall of the USSR—took place in 1991. Using clues from the painting, describe how and why Fasanella used Lenin's death as a metaphor for current events.
- Who is the man in the white garments in the bottom left of the painting? Pope John Paul II is often thought to have contributed to the USSR's downfall. Practicing religion was outlawed in the USSR; the Pope rallied against that law and other principles of socialism. Does Fasanella depict him in a positive or negative way here? What makes you say that?
- Fasanella had a personal connection to the events depicted in this painting. He was a member of the Young Communist League and believed strongly in socialism. Socialism can be viewed as the distribution of wealth throughout a community, as opposed to capitalism, in which wealth can be accumulated by just a few. Why might socialism have been appealing to Fasanella, a laborer and union worker?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Newspapers feature prominently in this painting. Ask students to research articles on the 1991 collapse of the USSR using a computer or the library. Make a list of actual headlines in several newspapers—the *New York Times* and your local paper, for example—and compare them to the headlines in Fasanella's painting.
- Ask students to keep track of what people in their communities (classmates, families, riders on the subway, and anyone else they encounter) are reading, over the course of a week. Have students note book titles, newspaper headlines, magazines, etc., and create a class collage to see what patterns, if any, emerge. What can they tell about their current historical moment, based on the materials that people around them are reading?
- Stage a debate: Can socialism work? Ask half the class to take the stance that it can, and the other half that it cannot. Have them research and argue their positions.

McCarthy Press

Ralph Fasanella (1914–1997)
New York City; 1958
Oil on canvas; 40 x 70"
American Folk Art Museum, gift of Eva Fasanella and her children, Gina Mostrando and Marc Fasanella, 2005.5.6

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Fasanella sounds a rallying cry in *McCarthy Press.* His goal was not to make martyrs out of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, the American couple convicted and executed for treason related to passing information about the atomic bomb to the USSR, but rather to illuminate the injustice of their death. Laden with symbolism and dark imagery, the painting is dominated by a large, central letter *A,* crowned with a devilish totem to symbolize both the atomic bomb and the intense paranoia that dominated the era.

McCarthy Press is a dark composition, set after the Rosenberg's execution. Their images appear in the newspaper at the center of the painting. A crane lowers their coffins into the ground while icons of democracy loom against a bloodred sky. The canvas is peppered with symbols of the powerful United States government: the Capitol Building with a view of a secret military meeting; the Lincoln Memorial; the Supreme Court; and the Washington Monument, with the Sing Sing prison unit where the Rosenbergs were held replacing the reflecting pool. Signboards across the skyline bear the pleading message, SAVE. Fond of employing signage to comment on American consumerism, Fasanella imbues it here with a more somber message: "We can save anything in America—but we couldn't save two people."

RESOURCES

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Miller, Arthur. *The Crucible.* New York: Penguin Classics, 2003.

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McCarthy Press

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- Make a list of all of the different elements you see in this painting. Once you think you've noted everything, add three more items.
- What colors do you see? Where?
- Talk about scale in this painting. Is it realistic? What makes you say that?
- What is the mood or tone of this painting?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- This painting is organized around a gigantic letter *A,* which stands for the atomic bomb. How did Fasanella use the letter to structure the painting?
- What buildings do you recognize in this painting? What does the inclusion of symbols of the United States capital tell you about Fasanella and his artwork?
- Read some of the newspaper headlines and signs in the center of the painting. How do they relate to the rest of the imagery?
- Talk about the crane at the lower center of the painting. What is it doing?
- To the left of the crane, there is a wall with two yellow eyes peering out. What might the artist be suggesting by giving eyes to a wall?
- What do you make of the large red image at the upper center of the painting?
- There are many different scenes happening at the same time in this artwork. How would your viewing experience be different if each scene were its own painting? What would be gained? What would be lost?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- This painting is called *McCarthy Press.* Take that phrase apart—what does "press" refer to in this work? What do you know about Senator Joseph McCarthy? During the Cold War, a period of tension chiefly between the United States and the USSR from the 1940s through the 1990s, McCarthy crusaded against communism. As a member of the Young Communist League, how might Fasanella have felt about McCarthy? What evidence can you find in this painting to support your ideas?
- The painting also concerns the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for treason. The Rosenbergs were convicted of passing secrets regarding the atomic bomb to the USSR. Where do you see them in this painting? Why might Fasenella have chosen to portray them dead rather than alive?
- In this painting, Fasanella implicates the government in the Rosenbergs's execution. Where and how does Fasanella depict the government? How are the people involved portrayed?
- Many people believed that the charges against the Rosenbergs were unfair and that the USSR did not benefit greatly from the intelligence they passed on. It is also widely thought that Ethel was charged in an attempt to pressure Julius into confessing to treason, not because she was directly involved. How do you see these beliefs playing out in the painting?
- There was a campaign to save the Rosenbergs from execution. How is this campaign documented in the painting? Do you think Fasanella was for or against the Rosenbergs' execution? Why?
- Just under the lower left corner of the central *A,* there is a billboard that reads "GO SEE ARTHUR MILLER CRUCIBLE." *The Crucible* is a 1953 play that concerns the Salem Witch Trials. How does that detail relate to the themes of the artwork?
- Communism is associated with the color red. Senator McCarthy's hunt for American communists was called the Red Scare. How did Fasanella use both the color red and the word *red* in this painting?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to sketch a small portion of the painting without telling anyone which section they've chosen. After they've sketched for ten minutes, ask them to switch papers with a classmate and to find the detail that the other person sketched in the larger composition. Use the activity to fuel a conversation about the complicated, multilayered, and active nature of Fasanella's artwork.
- Fasanella organized *McCarthy Press* around the letter *A,* for the atomic bomb. Ask students to create their own drawing based around a letter that relates to current events.
- Pair a study of this painting and McCarthyism with a study of Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* and the Salem Witch Trials. Ask students to write about or discuss the parallels between the "witch hunts" in both eras.

BLIND NEWSDEALER

Ralph Fasanella (1914–1997)
New York City; 1947
Oil on canvas; 39 x 39"
Gift of Eva Fasanella and her children, Gina Mostrando and Marc Fasanella, 2004.27.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ralph Fasanella was born in New York City and was the son of Italian immigrants. Early in his life, Fasanella developed an intense feeling for the struggles of working people. In 1938, at the age of 24, he took a job as a union organizer, and as early as the 1940s he experienced an urge to draw. By the 1950s he was painting every evening. His subjects reflected his strong ideological commitment to organized labor and to those who he believed were economically exploited. Besides providing a forum for his social and political views, painting opened up an outlet for Fasanella's creativity. *Blind Newsdealer* is a subject that Fasanella painted several times, and the scene is a typical Manhattan cityscape. The newsdealer is depicted in the center of the painting wearing dark glasses, surrounded by newspapers organized in neat, sorted stacks—the *Times,* the *Herald Tribune,* the *Sun,* and the *News.*

RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website. "Online Adjunct to *Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget.*" www.folkartmuseum.org/fasanellacollection

Community Learning Network. "Advertising in the Media Theme Page." www.cln.org/themes/media_advert.html.

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BLIND NEWSDEALER

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is happening in this painting?
- What can we say about the place depicted in the painting?
- How does the composition lead your eye through the work?
- What more can you find?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Look closely at the words on the newspapers in the painting. How do the headlines compare with ones you see today?
- Fasanella tells us in the title that the newsdealer in the painting is blind. To what do you think the newsdealer is blind? What do you see that he does not? How does Fasanella use the metaphor of blindness?
- The newsstand in Fasanella's painting is covered with images of women. How are the women depicted? What messages about gender does the artist communicate?
- The words *beauty* and *love* are featured prominently in the newsstand. What roles do these two concepts play in the painting?
- Do you think the newsstand acts as a confining element for the newsdealer, or a sanctuary? What visual clues lead you to this conclusion?
- Fasanella is known for his sympathetic treatment of labor issues and as a champion of working people. How does this painting relate to these themes? What commentary, if any, does the artist inject into the image?
- Do you think the themes in this painting are still relevant today?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- What were some of the major stories one might have been able to read about at this newsstand in 1947, when the painting was made?
- How has the recent emergence of online news sources affected the print media you might find at a newsstand today?
- Do you think there is there a kind of "blindness" in today's news media? If so, how?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Have students collect headlines from various news publications in their communities and develop a written response to what they discover. What are some critical modern-day social issues, and how are headlines indications of these issues?
- Have an in-class journalism competition. Ask students to research underreported issues relevant to their community. What important stories are not being told? Ask students to submit their activist articles to their school or local community newspaper.
- Have students investigate the depiction of both men and women in the media. How do these portrayals compare with each other?
- Ask students to visit local newsstands and to survey the available publications. Interview the vendor to learn about how publications are selected for sale, and which are most popular with buyers.

Iceman Crucified #3

Ralph Fasanella (1914–1997)
New York City; 1956
Oil on canvas; 48 3/4 x 37 3/4"
Gift of Patricia L. and Maurice C. Thompson Jr., 1991.11.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Iceman Crucified* series encapsulates some of Ralph Fasanella's most powerful and poignant artistic themes. The series was a turning point for Fasanella; his artistic vision broke free from the confines of realism and his imagery became deeply personal. In *Iceman Crucified #3,* his father—Joe the Iceman—is cast as the crucified Christ to explore ideas of suffering and sacrifice, memory and personal growth. Fasanella "began to see his father as the Christ; the cursing and bitterness were not, in the end, demeaning—they were the sweat and the protest of the stations of the cross. And the blind, inescapable, unrelieved, mind clouding daily agony with the ice was the Calvary" (Watson, 140).

As a child, Fasanella worked alongside his father on an ice delivery route, putting in long, hard days on tough streets. As a result of this upbringing, Fasanella developed an enduring and passionate commitment to the struggles of working people. The subject of the painting may be the artist's father, but the painting is no less a reflection of Fasanella's social conscience than are his mural-size depictions of striking workers.

RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website. "Online Adjunct to *Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget.*" www.folkartmuseum.org/fasanellacollection

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Iceman Crucified #3

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What is happening in this painting?
- What can you say about the setting?
- What clues are there to indicate when this scene took place?
- What symbolism can you find?
- What are the effects of incorporating text into the images?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What commentary does this painting give on commerce in the twentieth century? What changes have there been since this painting was created? Have those changes improved our quality of life?
- What was Fasanella's viewpoint of New York City, as communicated through this work of art? What elements of that viewpoint do you identify with?
- Does this image portray your idea of the "American Dream"? What do you notice in this image that informs your opinion?
- Fasanella's I*ceman Crucified #3* is teeming with many different people. How does his depiction of peoples' roles in economic systems relate to the attitude toward industry in the time this was painted?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- What is an iceman? When did the profession become obsolete?
- What is martyrdom? In the American social strata, what kinds of people are most often martyred? How so?
- The U.S. national minimum hourly wage was established in 1938. Though the iceman depicted here was likely self-employed and therefore not a recipient of an hourly wage, the plight of the blue-collar worker was the impetus for changing labor laws during the time this painting was created. Chart the progression of the minimum wage on both state and federal levels from 1938 to the present. What is the federal minimum wage today? What is the minimum wage in your state? And what were they in 1956, when *Iceman Crucified #3* was created?
- What is globalization? What effects has it had here in the United States and abroad?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- This painting depicts part of the process of distribution through manual labor. Ask students to track the pathways that various products take as they are transported around the globe, and then have them develop a written piece in the voice of one of the products. For example, what journey does a banana take from its place of origin to our kitchen table?
- Research various "living wage" campaigns being staged locally and nationally. Does the minimum federal wage, as it currently stands, meet people's needs? Does the state minimum wage meet people's needs, where you live? Ask students to simulate being the head of their household and then translate sample hourly wages into weekly and monthly totals. Based on real-life research, have students create a monthly budget for a family of four. Have students share their discoveries as a class.
- Ask students to examine archival photographs of their community, and then photograph that same community as it is today—at the same locations pictured in the archival photos, when possible. What has changed? What remains the same?

American Heritage

Ralph Fasanella (1914–1997)
New York City; 1974
Oil on canvas; 50 x 80"
Gift of Eva Fasanella and her children, Gina Mostrando and Marc Fasanella, 2005.5.1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Fasanella became increasingly dissatisfied with American politics in the wake of the civil rights movement. *American Heritage* appears at first to be a patriotic scene at the White House; a closer look reveals instead a mass funeral for the many lost souls of the era, from President John F. Kennedy to the slain civil rights workers of Mississippi. Flanked by their own coffins, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg loom as ghostly martyrs. An oversize peace dove appears mockingly above politicians who seem unable to grasp the basics of human dignity and equality.

RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website. "Online Adjunct to *Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget.*" www.folkartmuseum.org/fasanellacollection

D'Ambrosio, Paul S. *Ralph Fasanella's America.* Cooperstown, NY: Fenimore Art Museum, 2001.

Hollander, Stacy C., and Brooke Davis Anderson. *American Anthem: Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum.* New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2001.

Kaufman, Stuart B. "Labor's Heritage." *Quarterly of The George Meany Memorial Archives* 1, no. 4 (1989).

Watson, Patrick. *Fasanella's City: The Paintings of Ralph Fasanella with the Story of His Life and Art.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.

American Heritage

QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What story or stories can you find in this image?
- What strikes you about these figures?
- What would you title this painting?
- If you could cut the scene into different pieces, where would the divisions be?
- What can you say about the overall mood?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- The title of this painting is *American Heritage.* How does the title affect your interpretation of the painting? Does this image correspond to your idea of American heritage?
- Ralph Fasanella is known for the socially conscious and political messages in his paintings. How do you interpret the artist's sentiments about the 1960s? Do you think this is a patriotic image?
- Are the ideas in this painting applicable to today's political climate? Which elements are still relevant? How would you update this painting for a modern-day audience?
- Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the only Americans found guilty of and executed for treason during the Cold War, appear prominently in the center of the composition. Why would the artist have placed the couple centrally in the painting?
- Fasanella was accused of being unpatriotic during the McCarthy era for his leftist associations. How might a McCarthy supporter interpret this image?
- The artist condensed several important Washington, D.C., landmarks into his composition. How does this device impact the narrative?

QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Who are the people whose names appear at the bottom of the painting? How did they contribute to the cultural climate of the 1960s?
- Which Washington, D.C., landmarks appear in this painting? What is the function of each of these buildings, or whom do they memorialize?
- How did the intense anti-communist feeling of McCarthyism impact American culture in the middle of the twentieth century? Are the effects still felt today?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Have students create a class painting reflecting the style of Ralph Fasanella. Rather than addressing the 1960s, consider another decade in American history. What will they include? What will they exclude?
- Have students write an obituary for each of the individuals whose names appear at the bottom of the painting. Alternatively, ask students to write newspaper articles chronicling the work of these individuals.
- Ask students to research the life and work of Fasanella. What patterns can be found in his paintings? How does knowledge of his biography affect the interpretations of his work?

GLOSSARY

capitalism
An economic system in which people, rather than the government, own goods, wealth, and property.

Cold War
A period of tension, of struggle for power, and of conflict in beliefs (particularly communism vs. capitalism) which existed primarily between the USSR and the United States and lasted roughly from the 1940s–1991. The fear that either of these two superpowers might use the atomic bomb predominated during the Cold War.

communism
An economic system in which the government, rather than people, own goods, wealth, and property.

comrade
A member of the Communist Party.

Lenin, Vladimir (1870–1924)
The Communist leader who led a revolution to establish the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

McCarthy, Senator Joseph (1908–1957)
A Republican senator from Wisconsin who, during the 1950s Cold War–era, insisted that there were communist and socialist spies in the United States that needed to be identified and prosecuted. He also attempted to remove politicians from office whom he accused of homosexuality. His claims were unsubstantiated and his methods were characterized by a failure to follow due process.

McCarthyism
The term for Senator Joseph McCarthy's practices and the broader anti-communist crusade. It is now used for other similar mass-persecutions and unsubstantiated accusations.

Red Scare
A term for extreme anti-communism during the Cold War. It is named after the red color of the USSR's flag.

Rosenberg, Ethel (1915–1953) and Julius Rosenberg (1918–1953)
An American married couple convicted of conspiring to commit espionage by passing secrets about the atomic bomb to the USSR. They were executed by electric chair in 1953.

socialism
An economic system in which goods, wealth, and property are distributed equally by the government to its people.

Stalin, Joseph (1878–1953)
The leader of the USSR, after Lenin's death in 1924, until his death in 1953. He transformed the USSR from an agrarian nation into an industrial superpower, using brutal tactics, including forced labor camps and executions of those who opposed him.

USSR
The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, governed as a single socialist state, from 1922–1991.

PRINT AND ONLINE RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website. "Online Adjunct to *Ralph Fasanella: Lest We Forget.*"
www.folkartmuseum.org/fasanellacollection

Applebaum, Anne. "How the Pope 'Defeated' Communism." Washington Post, April 6, 2005.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A28398-2005Apr5.html.

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Community Learning Network. "Advertising in the Media Theme Page."
www.cln.org/themes/media_advert.html.

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http://historylearningsite.co.uk.

Hollander, Stacy C., and Brooke Davis Anderson. *American Anthem: Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum.* New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2001.

Kaufman, Stuart B. "Labor's Heritage." *Quarterly of The George Meany Memorial Archives* 1, no. 4 (1989).

Lugovskaya, Nina. *I Want to Live: The Diary of a Young Girl in Stalin's Russia.* New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.
http://merriam-webster.com.

Miller, Arthur. *The Crucible.* New York: Penguin Classics, 2003.

Ross, Stewart. *The Collapse of Communism (Witness to History).* Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2004.

Schrecker, Ellen W. *Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents.* New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001.

Taylor, David. *The Cold War (20th Century Perspectives).* Chicago: Reed Educational & Professional, 2001.

Tucker, Robert C., ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader,* 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978.

Watson, Patrick. *Fasanella's City: The Paintings of Ralph Fasanella with the Story of His Life and Art.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973.

Zinn, Howard and Rebecca Stefoff. *A Young People's History of the United States: Columbus to the War on Terror.* New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007.

VISITING THE AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

STUDENT AND EDUCATOR PROGRAMS

The American Folk Art Museum offers a range of discussion-based gallery and artmaking programs for students, including single visits and multisession museum–school partnerships. For more information on current programs for students or additional educator programs, please call 212. 265. 1040, ext. 381, or e-mail **grouptours@folkartmuseum.org**. Information about all programs can also be found on the museum's website, **www.folkartmuseum.org**.

TOURS, PRE-K TO GRADE 12

Offered September–June, Monday–Friday, 10:30 AM–4:30 PM
All programs are discussion-based and interactive and are led by experienced educators. Students will further develop their critical-thinking skills through dynamic conversations and activities centered on works of art. Programs relate to the New York State Learning Standards and the New York City Curriculum Blueprint. The program you choose will be customized for your students' age group and abilities, and the museum welcomes inclusion classes and students with disabilities or special needs. The museum can accommodate up to thirty students at time.

The museum offers a series of themed tours—including Introduction to Folk Art, People and Places, and Artists' Materials & Process—that can be tailored for any age group. All groups have the option to sketch as part of the gallery experience and access the museum's Touch Collection. For the complete list of tour themes, descriptions, and fee structure, visit **www.folkartmuseum.org**.

MUSEUM-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Multisession collaborations between the museum's education department and schools combine exhibition-based programs with specialized classroom visits by an experienced museum educator. These multiple-visit school partnerships provide students with a unique opportunity to hone their critical-thinking skills and powers of observation. Customized to meet each school's objectives, school partnerships can also include artmaking workshops, professional development for school staff, and programs for families. School partnerships are appropriate for all age levels. A listing of sample partnership programs can be found at **www.folkartmuseum.org**.

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

You are invited to create a workshop specifically for your staff at the grade, school, or regional level. Museum educators will work with you to develop a program that meets the needs of your specific group. The museum also offers additional free curriculum guides that integrate folk art into classroom learning: **Self-Taught Genius** (grades K–12) presents information about selected artists and artworks from the traveling exhibition *Self-Taught Genius: Treasures from the American Folk Art Museum* and offers topics for classroom discussion, writing activities, and art projects that introduce the key ideas of the exhibition; **Folk Art Revealed** (pre-K–grade 5 and grades 6–12) is a guide to teaching American history and culture through folk art; and **In the Realms of Henry Darger** (grades 9–12) explores important themes in the work of the twentieth-century self-taught artist known for his vivid panoramic watercolors and includes selections from the artist's writings. Each guide includes color images of works in the museum's collection, lesson plans, a glossary, and bibliographic resources. Curriculum guides can be downloaded at **www.folkartmuseum.org**.

PLANNING YOUR VISIT

- Programs are offered at the museum during the school year Monday through Friday, anytime between 10:30 AM and 4:30 PM.
- The museum does not allow self-guided groups. All groups must have a reservation with a museum guide.
- Groups must have one adult chaperone per every ten students; chaperones and teachers are responsible for supervising groups.
- Tours in select languages, including American Sign Language and visual descriptions, are available. Additional lead time may be necessary to schedule such a tour.
- Reservations must be made at least two weeks in advance. The museum accepts payment through purchase order; the museum's vendor number is MUS005000.
- Buses may drop off school groups in front of the museum; there is no parking lot.
- There is no lunch area onsite, but there are several public outdoor seating areas steps away; please inquire when you book your visit.
- To make your reservation, please e-mail **grouptours@folkartmuseum.org** or call 212. 265. 1040, ext. 381.

ACCESSIBILITY

The museum is fully accessible and welcomes groups with special needs. Copies of labels and wall texts are available in large print. American Sign Language interpretation tours, verbal imaging tours, and tours of touch objects from the museum's Touch Collection are available by request with one-month advance notice. For more information, please contact the education department at 212. 265. 1040, ext. 381.

MUSEUM LOCATION

2 Lincoln Square (Columbus Avenue between 65th and 66th Streets), New York City

MUSEUM HOURS

Tuesday–Thursday 11:30 AM–7 PM
Friday 12–7:30 pm
Saturday 11:30 AM–7 PM
Sunday 12–6 PM
Closed Monday
School programs are offered Monday–Friday, 10:30 AM–4:30 PM, September–June

ADMISSION

Free
Fees apply for school programs; please inquire when you book your visit.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Subway: 1 to 66 St/Lincoln Center
Bus: M5, M7, M11, M20, M66, M104

GENERAL INFORMATION

www.folkartmuseum.org
212. 595. 9533