

The Mennello Museum of American Art

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Before You Begin

The Earl Cunningham trunk contains a teacher's guide, an arts activity, and additional resources, all of which meet the requirements of the Florida Sunshine State Standards and the National Standards for Visual Arts.

The teacher's guide is divided into sections based on topic, such as "The Early Years." Each section contains Background Information. Within each Background Information section a word appears in **bold type**. These words are defined in the vocabulary section towards the end of the guide. Each section also contains discussion questions, suggested activities, and a list of additional resources.

The sections in this guide are not sequential. As the user, you may pick and choose sections that best fit your curriculum.

We recommend scheduling a class presentation or a museum tour after your lesson, as a helpful supplement for the course materials. Tours and class presentation are available at no extra charge to your school.

Also, we request that you fill out the short survey at the end of the guide. The information and data collected from these assessments helps our museum receive additional funding for future educational outreach programming.

The Early Years

In 1906, Earl Cunningham left home. He was only 13 years old. To make a living, he sold objects, such as **darning eggs**, pans and sewing needles from door to door. In addition to selling various objects, Cunningham sold paintings he created on scrap pieces of wood.

Discussion Questions

- What profession do you want to pursue when you get older? Why?
- If you had to go to work today, what type of job would you have?
- If you had to sell objects from door to door, what would they be? Why?
- Why do you think he used scrap pieces of wood, instead of canvas to create his paintings?

Activities

Create a budget. Record professions and salaries on slips of paper and have each student select a salary. Next tell each student to deduct certain costs, such as electric, etc.

OR

Research a profession. Discover the salary, amount of schooling/training, etc.

OR

Locate scraps of wood. Create a painting using acrylic or tempera paint. Display paintings around the classroom and have students purchase each other's pieces.

Resources

Earl Cunningham: Dreams Realized, The Mennello Museum of American Folk Art
Earl Cunningham: Painting an American Eden, Robert Hobbs, Harry N Abrams, Inc, Publishers

LOVE OF THE WATER

Background Information

When he was 21 years old, Earl Cunningham met Captain Foster. Captain Foster introduced Cunningham to **yachting**. Soon after, Cunningham received his license as a pilot of harbors and rivers. Captain Foster lent Cunningham money to purchase a 35-foot sailboat. Cunningham named her the “Hokona.”

Cunningham loved the water. All of his paintings contain bodies of water. He did not always paint the water blue; sometimes it is pink, yellow, brown, or lavender.

Discussion Questions

- When was the last time you were on a boat?
- What type of boat was it? Was it a sailboat? Motorboat? Paddleboat?
- What was the name of the boat?
- Where did you go on the boat? On a lake? The ocean? The Bahamas?
- What did you do on the boat? Fishing? Diving? Skiing?
- What wildlife did you see? Birds? Fish? Turtles? Alligators?

Activities

Research some of the places that Cunningham portrays in his paintings. Discover interesting facts, such as population, main export and import, climate, etc.

OR

Paint an image of the water. Have students think about the body of water that they would like to paint, such as the ocean, lake, stream, or pond. Have students think about the details that they would add, such as reflections, wildlife, plants and trees, time of day, and weather.

OR

Have students visit a body of water at different times of the day. Record the color of the water. Create a class graph with the information.

Resources

Tall Ships of the 21st Century Calendar

NICKNAMES

Background Information

Earl Cunningham was known as “The Crusty Old Dragon of St. George Street” because he was rude to customers that visited his antique store. Cunningham’s store was located on St. George Street in St. Augustine, Florida.

A person acquires a nickname by something he or she does or did, or because of a special physical or personality trait. For example, Elvis Presley was known as “The King” because of his music.

Discussion Questions

- Do you have a nickname? If so, what is it?
- How did you get the nickname?
- Did you ever give anyone a nickname? If so, why and what is it?

Activities

Many people have nicknames, such as Tracy McGrady is called “Tmac” and Jennifer Lopez is called “J.Lo.” Have each student create a list and then compare the list with a fellow classmate.

OR

Create a class list of famous nicknames.

OR

Create a list of nicknames and ask a classmate to provide the person’s real name.

OR

Locate St. George Street in St. Augustine. Discover if Cunningham’s store still exists.

Resources

MOTORING

Background Information

Earl Cunningham and his wife, Maggie enjoyed **motoring**. They traveled up and down the United State's east coast. Many of Cunningham's paintings were inspired by his extensive travels. Road trips offer the chance to view parts of the country that might be missed if you travel by airplane or train.

Discussion Questions

- Did you ever go on a road trip? If so, where did you go? Was it in the United States or another country?
- What type of vehicles did you use for travel? Car? RV? Camper?
- How long was your trip? A couple of days? Week? Month?
- Who was with you?
- Where did you eat?
- What type of food did you eat?
- What time of year was it? Summer? Spring? Fall? Winter?
- What did you do once you reach your destination?
- Did you make the trip more than once? If so, how many times have you made the trip?
- Did you play games on our trip? If so, what did you play?

Activities

Photographs are wonderful **mementoes** of a road trip. Have students bring in photographs from their road trips.

OR

Have students create a collage that describes their road trip using magazines. Have students share their collages and based on the visual clues have the class guess where the student went on his/her trip.

OR

Play a game or sing a song that is popular on road trips. A favorite game is "I Spy." A favorite one is "Bingo."

OR

Take out the map of the United States. Use a dry erase marker to trace the path of one of the student's road trips.

OR

Look through the Cunningham catalogue. Locate the where these places are on the map.

Resources

Map of the United States of America

Map of Florida

Dry Erase Markers

A Taste of the Outdoors

FOLKTALES

Background Information

Earl Cunningham used Norwegian-style ships in some of his paintings. It is believed that these ships were inspired by the popular New England folktale about Leif Eriksson and his crew, who explored the New England area.

Discussion Questions

- Name some folktales.
- What is their country of origin?
- Are these folktales based on fact or fiction? What makes you say that?
- Who told you the folktales?

Activities

Share a folktale with the class.

OR

Create a class book of folktales. Have each student record a folktale and illustrate it.

OR

Research local folktales.

OR

Create a work of art based on a folktale. Have the students create it in the style of Earl Cunningham.

OR

Read folktales from *Legends of the Seminoles* or *Crackers in the Glade*

OR

Watch *The Corn Lady Seminole Indian Legends*, Betty Mae Jumper

OR

Listen to *Seminole Fire: Legends and Stories*, Chief Jim Billie

Resources

Crackers in the Glade, Rob Storer

Legends of the Seminoles, Betty Mae Jumper

Seminole Fire: Legends and Stories Chief Jim Billie

PRESIDENTAL GIFTS

Background Information

In **1961**, Earl Cunningham presented the painting “The Everglades” to Jacqueline Kennedy. Cunningham **boasted** that the painting was displayed in the Oval Office behind President Kennedy’s desk. Cunningham received a thank you note from the First Lady’s personal secretary (see page 16 in “Earl Cunningham: Dreams Realized.”)

(NEED TO ADD THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE MENNELLOS MEETING PRESIDENT BUSH.)

Discussion Questions

- If you could present a gift to the president, what would it be and why?
- Why do you think Jacqueline Kennedy had her secretary write the letter to Earl Cunningham?
- Cunningham claims that his painting was displayed in the Oval Office, but there is no evidence that it was. Why do you think Cunningham said this?

Activities

Create a work of art and send it to the President

OR

Research other artists that have works in the White House.

OR

Write a descriptive short story about how Cunningham decided to send “The Everglades” to the First Lady.

Resources

NATIVE AMERICANS

Background Information

Earl Cunningham said he spent time with the Seminoles in the Everglades. Cunningham incorporated Native Americans in many of his paintings (see “Seminole Village, Deep in the Everglades.”) Page 116, *Painting an American Eden*, by Robert Hobbs

In the 1950’s, Cunningham was commissioned by the Michigan Historical Society to paint 20 Native American **portraits**. The paintings are now lost.

Discussion Questions

- Based on Cunningham’s style, describe what the portraits might look like?
- Have you visited the Everglades? If so, describe what you saw, the sounds you heard, and other interesting facts.

Activities

Create your own version of how Cunningham’s Native American portraits might have appeared.

OR

Research the Seminoles. Discover their origin, the name of their buildings, the food they ate, and other interesting facts.

OR

Research the Everglades. Discover what types of vegetation grow there, the types of animals that live there, and other interesting facts.

Or

Create an original **landscape** of the everglades.

Resources

The Complete Book of Seminole Patchwork, Beverly Rush

The Everglades: An Environmental History, David McCally

National Audubon Society Field Guide to Florida, Peter Alden

Everglades: Paintings by Wendell Minor Written by Jean Craighead George

Simply Seminole: Techniques and Design in Quilt Making, Doroty Hanisko

The Corn Lady: Seminole Indian Legends, VHS

Seminole Fire: Legends and Stories, Chief Jim Billie, CD

Map of State of Florida

Florida Panther games

BIRDS

Background Information

Earl Cunningham painted birds in almost all of his paintings. Cunningham painted many types of birds, such as flamingoes, ducks, and great white herons.

Discussion Questions

- Look at Cunningham's birds. Why do you think he painted his birds so big?
- Why do you think Cunningham included birds in his paintings?

Activities

Look at "Sanctuary." Make a list of all the types of birds in the painting.

OR

Research other artists whose main subject is birds, such as John James Audubon. Use a Venn Diagram to compare and contrast the two artists.

OR

Visit a local lake. Draw birds from life. Include the bird's environment.

Resources

National Audubon Society Field Guide to Florida, Peter Alden

John James Audubon: Dr. Colin Brown

Audubon Bird postcards

Vocabulary Words

darning egg n, An egg-shaped object used to hold the shape of the material being mended by weaving thread or yarn across a gap or hole

yachting v, to race, sail or cruise in a sailing or powered vessel called a yacht

memento n, an object kept as a reminder of the past, a keepsake, souvenir, or relic

boast v. to speak with excessive pride about one's own accomplishments, talents or possessions

portrait n, A painting, photograph, or other visual likeness, usually of a person; especially one showing the face

landscape n, A wide view or vista of natural scenery. A painting, photograph, or other pictorial representation depicting such scenery

Definitions from Webster's Illustrated Encyclopedic Dictionary 1990 edition