

Rock Towers of the Río Virgen

By Thomas Moran 1839-1926



This inquiry book has been completed by : _____

Objective: What do you see in the picture?

Directions: Take a good look at the picture and think about the questions. Discuss your ideas with your partner and explain your thoughts. Then answer the questions.

1. When you first looked at the painting, where did your eye go? What did you see first?

2. Why do you think your eye went there first? (think of color, object, and light)

3. Where do you think the viewer (the person looking at the scene) is standing? Explain your answer with support?

4. Moran did a wonderful job with the use of light, you can't see the sun but where do you think it is? Explain your answer.

4. What colors do you see in the painting?

Objective: Finding background information

Directions: Use outside resources (books and internet) to find background information on the Rock Towers of the Río Virgin.

What We know: Rock Towers of the Río Virgin was painted in 1908 from sketches Moran made in Utah in 1873. The painting shows the north fork of the Río Virgin in the region now known Zion National Park.

What is the Zion National Park? (Describe its features) _____

What we know: During this time, many artists including Moran depicted (showed) American nature as being big and dramatic. The Great Depression of 1873 temporarily halted construction of its main Northern Pacific rail line, which was the first western railroad to promote vacation travel to the national park.

Why do you think that Moran took his time to paint this scene?

Do you feel it was important?

Objective: Who was Thomas Moran?

Directions: Use outside resources (books and internet) to fill in background information on Thomas Moran. This will help to best understand who the painter was and why he chose to paint the way he did.

Cool Facts

- ♣ Moran's work became so strongly associated with the American West that he often was referred to a "T. Yellowstone Moran".
- ♣ He began signing his name with a monogram that incorporated "Y" into his initials in 1873 and then he added on a thumbprint!

Biography

Born: _____ Place of Birth: _____ Early Works: _____

Best known for: _____

On his many travels to the West, what role did he play in helping to convince Congress the importance of the National Park System? _____

Moran's Famous Quote

“ I have always held that the grandest, most beautiful, or wonderful in nature, would, in capable hands, make the grandest, most beautiful or wonderful pictures, and that the business of a great painter, should be the representation of great scenes in nature. If I fail to prove this, I fail to prove myself worthy of the name painter”

What do you think he means by this?

Objective: Those who know art, know the vocabulary!

Directions: Define each word and see how Thomas Moran used the techniques and elements in the Rock Towers at the Rio Virgin.

1. **Foreground:** _____

What is in the foreground? _____

2. **Middle ground:** _____

What is in the middle ground? _____

3. **Background:** _____

What is in the background? _____

4. **Color (hues):** _____

Why did he use so many colors? _____

5. **Line:** _____

How did he use line to move your eye around the painting? _____

6. **Space:** _____

Did he create a small or large space? Explain _____

7. **Perspective:** _____

What perspective was he trying to get the viewer to see? _____

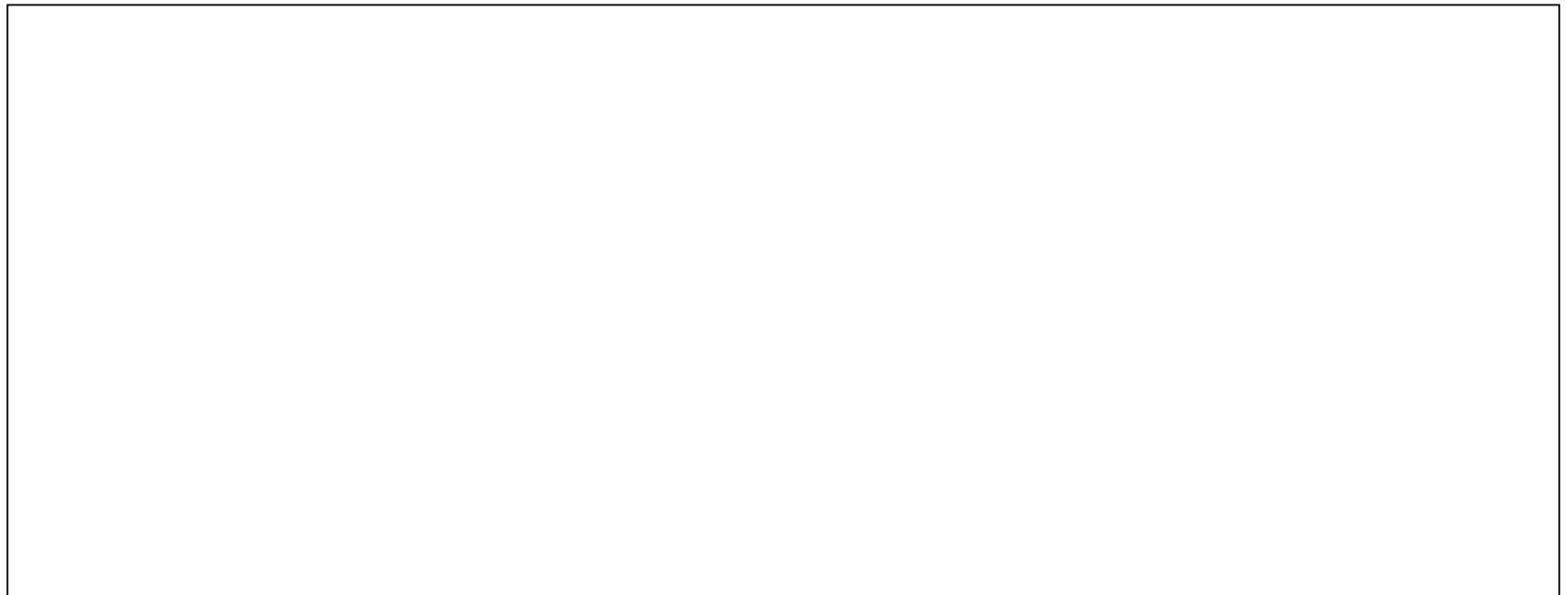
8. **Texture:** _____

How did he use texture in his work? _____

9. What descriptive words would you use to describe Thomas Moran's Rock Towers at the Río Virgen?

Objective: Now it is my turn! This will help me understand depth and detail.

Directions: With only a pencil, do your best to draw the Rock Towers at the Río Virgen. Your goal is to address every detail of the painting. You may shade with your pencil to show light and dark but no color. You want to include the river, every bush, mountain and every thing else you see. Take your time and study the painting first.



Objective: Create a travel brochure for the Río Virgen everyone would want to visit!

Directions: Thomas Moran was motivated to paint the Rock Towers at the Río Virgen to inspire others about nature and the importance of protecting such natural treasures. It was not meant to be a literal (factual) record of what he saw but a personal and spiritual vision. Your goal is to pick up where he left off. Create a travel brochure that is creative and informational to get people to want to visit. Use color and “catchy” language to attract the readers attention. *You are persuading the reader to visit!*

Cover



Inside pamphlet Information



Objective: Personal Response

1. Do you like the painting? Why or Why not? _____

2. Would you ever want to visit the Rock Towers at the Río Virgen in the Zion National Park? _____

3. If you and your family went on vacation there, what might you do there? Where would you like to explore? _____

4. Why do you think this painting is important to American history?

5. What questions do you have about the painting you would like answered?

Objective: Use your imagination

Directions: Imagine that you woke up in the painting. Write a story on what you did there and how you got out?

Title: _____

3. Did you learn any new information about the painting from the Docents (the people giving you the tour)?

4. Would you put the painting in your bedroom? Why or Why not?

5. If you could say one thing to Thomas Moran, what would it be?

Objective: Teacher Reflection

1. What did you feel your students gained from their experience working with Thomas Moran's painting, Rock Tower of the Río Virgen?

2. What are your feelings on incorporating this Inquiry Journal into your student's Huntington experience?

3. What comment or suggestions do you have to improve upon your and your students experience?
