

# Seascapes in Art

By Sharon Jeffus Copyright 2014

Seascapes are an important part of art history. A seascape is primarily a picture of the land and the ocean or sea; it is a marine art picture. From the earliest art to the art of the Renaissance, to Impressionist and modern day art, we see beautiful and varied interpretations of the beauty of the oceans of the world. Winslow Homer is perhaps one of the most famous seascape artists in early America. Below is his picture "Summer Squall."



Notice how colors and details are clear in the foreground, and the further in the distance you look, the more blurry things become. This is **atmospheric perspective**. Notice that the rock in the center is the **center of interest**. If you look closely, you can see a little of the color red in the brown to draw the eye.

Jan Porcellis, painter in the Renaissance time period did “Vessels in a Strong Wind” below. In art, diagonal lines show movement. Do you see **diagonal lines** in the painting of the boat in Homer’s picture above as well as the one below? In both of these pictures you can see movement.



In the eighteenth century seascape below, there is a lack of movement. Notice the strong vertical and horizontal lines in the picture. It is called “Weighing the Anchor” by George Aikman. The artist creates a sense of quiet and stillness by his use of line and color. Do you think the artist has created a mood or feeling?



Albert Bierdstadt did the next painting of a sunset by the ocean called “The Golden Gate.” He uses **warm colors**. He is a realistic painter and a Romanticist.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism>



Where is the sun in the picture below? What color does the artist use for the light of the sun?



Let's look at the seascape below by Renoir the master Impressionist called "Sunset at Sea." Do you see any differences between his picture and the picture by Bierstadt above? Do you see any similarities? Which style do you like? Why?



The picture below is another Impressionist picture of the water. This one is by Monet. Do you see the difference in style? In Impressionism things are like a blur. The further back you go, the more realistic the picture looks. The closer you get to the picture, the more abstract it looks.

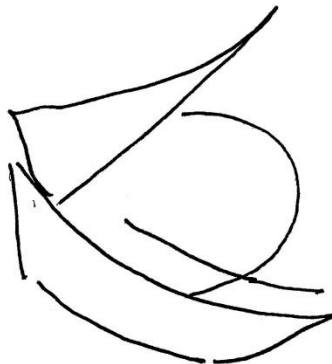
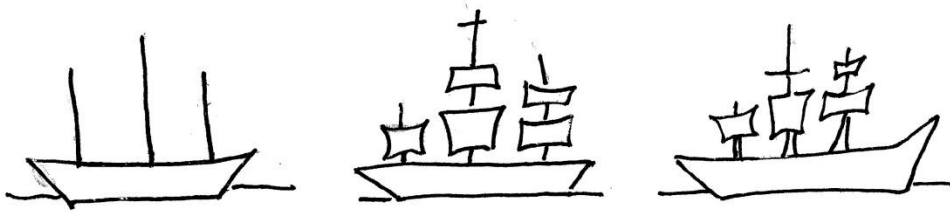


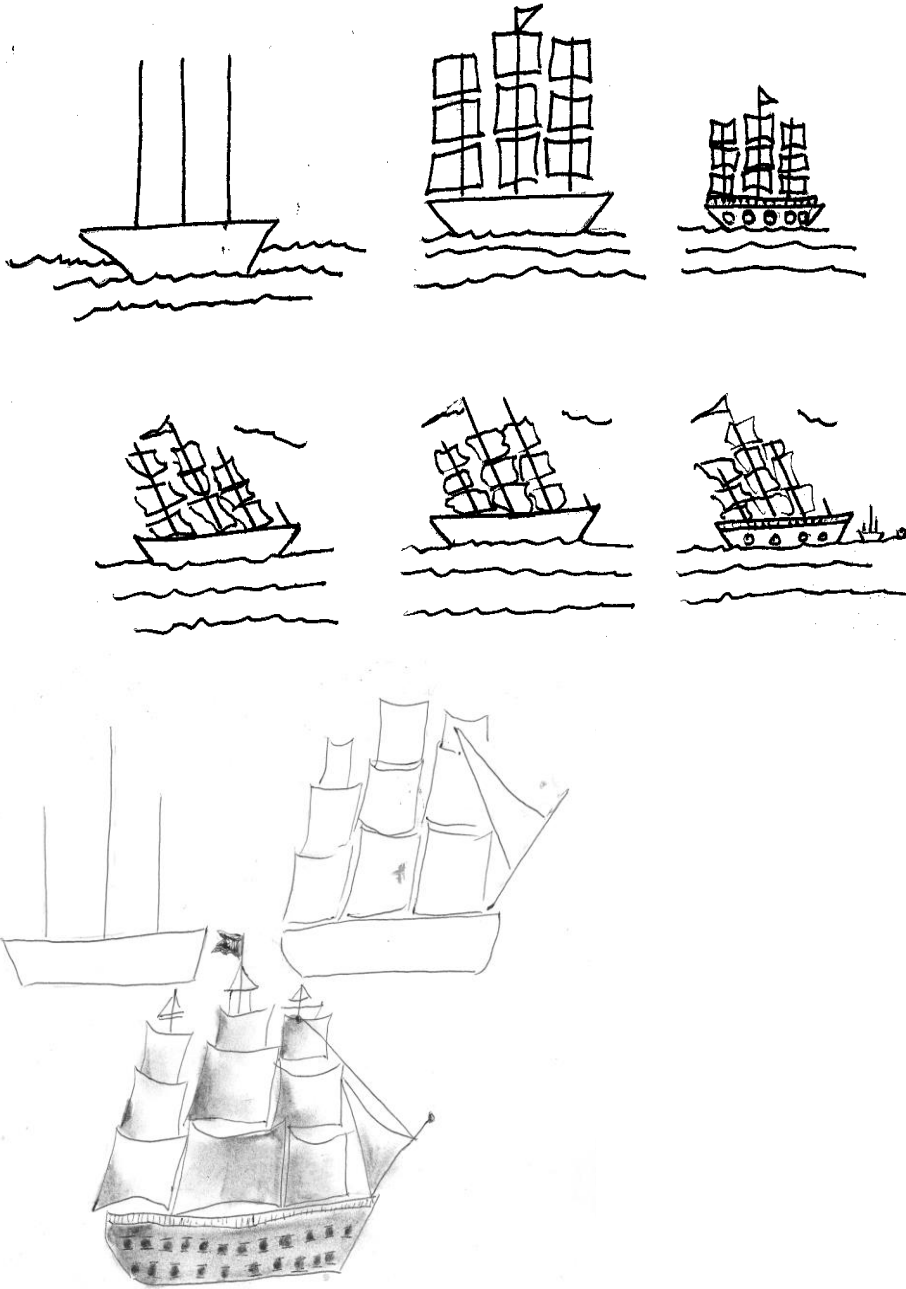
Albert Pinkham Ryder was considered the first Modern Expressionist. He did the picture above.

In Expressionism, it is all about emotion and feeling. Things can be any color. What feeling do you get from the picture above?

Students can choose one of these master seascapes and try to replicate it. You can learn a lot by copying a master. I suggest using tempera paints in blue and white and black for your background, and then draw and color your ship in colored pencil or charcoal when the paint dries. This is called **mixed media**. Make your background first and then put your ships on the picture. What do you want people to look at first? That is your center of interest. Remember that things in the foreground are clearer and usually darker in color and things get lighter and more blurred in the distance. Also notice that there are very few solid colors, but instead colors with both dark and light values. The water under the boat is generally darker because of

shadows. Use the simple drawings below to help you draw your ship. Remember line defines shape.





One of my favorite poems in English literature is "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Samuel Taylor Coleridge uses personification and repetition to create different moods in the poem. It is a lyrical ballad. You can go to this web site and read it in its original form: [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Rime\\_of\\_the\\_Ancient\\_Mariner\\_\(1798\)](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Rime_of_the_Ancient_Mariner_(1798))

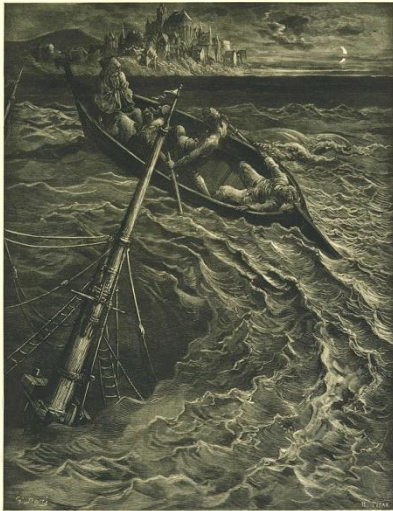
The following well known lines in literature are found in the poem. I would suggest high school students read and study the poem. A good idea for a research paper might be the significance of the albatross in the poem. The phrase "albatross around one's neck" has become an English language idiom meaning "A heavy burden of guilt that becomes an obstacle to success".



*Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.  
Water, water, every where,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, every where,  
Nor any drop to drink.*

*He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.*

Gustave Dore illustrated the poem. Here is one of his powerful illustrations. Notice the diagonal lines.



To see the illustrations for the poem, go to:

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:The\\_Rime\\_of\\_the\\_Ancient\\_Mariner\\_by\\_Gustave\\_Dor%C3%A9](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:The_Rime_of_the_Ancient_Mariner_by_Gustave_Dor%C3%A9)

Another Romanticist artist and poet was Washington Allston. You can go to this website to read one of his poems: [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/To\\_Rembrandt](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/To_Rembrandt)  
“Storm Rising at Sea” is one of his very famous seascapes.



Do a seascape to illustrate one of these works of literature and choose which style you prefer. You can do it realistically, do it in Impressionism or Expressionism.

If you like this lesson, you can order my Teaching Literature through Art book through Rainbow Resources or you can go to [vmmclasses.com](http://vmmclasses.com) for more information. Sharon Jeffus has been serving the homeschool and art community for over 25 years. She is a graduate of John Brown University and has studied art in several other different venues. You can also email her at [visualmanna@gmail.com](mailto:visualmanna@gmail.com).