

# Barge haulers on the volga

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## Barge Haulers on the Volga

### Information

The Barge Haulers on the Volga is an oil on canvas painting which was done by a Russian painter, Ilya Repin. He used oil to paint on canvas medium. Apart from being a painter he was also a famous realist and sculptor. This painting was done between 1870 and 1873. The artwork has a dimension of 131.5 cm by length and 281cm by width(National Museum, 2014). The painting is now put for exhibition at the State Russian Museum at St Petersburg.

### Description

The painting shows eleven labouring strong men pulling a barge on the Volga River. The painting depicts the men to be fully exhausted as they seem to almost collapse forward. This is because they are hauling the large boat upstream against the water currents and the sun is over head. The figures of the men is positioned at the centre of the painting. At the back ground of the painting there are clouds seen from a distance and on the ground there is water seen at the back ground where the men have pulled the boat from. There landscape is also showed from a distance. The source of light is on top of the men as this is showed by their short shadows (Bolton, 2010). The shadows of the men is almost beneath them showing that the source of light was on top of them. The landscape at the background helps to prove and show the direction of the river and its currents. It clearly shows that the men are pushing the barge upstream. The tonal range of the painting is medium as there colours used are not so striking. The artwork has a blue tonal range because of the water and there is also some yellow

standing out depicting the source of light.

### Analysis

In the art I see the eleven dressed in rags and they are also bound with leather harnesses. The painting brings out both the appreciation and celebration of men's fortitude and dignity and at the same time it highly condemns the people who sanctioned the inhumane activity. As much as the painting shows them to be accepting the men are defeated. Their faces and posture in the painting show physical discomfort. In the painting I only see one person coming out strongly. It is the youth who is brightly coloured and he seems to fight against the binds of leather and he appears to take a heroic poise (Cohen, 2008). He has raised his head to stare into the distance. This shows he has hope that there is redemption coming. The inverted Russian flag clearly shows that whatever is happening is not right or allowed. There is movement in the art work and this is showed by the currents of water. The men also seem to be in motion hauling the boat. The artist has made the two dimensional work to look as if in the third dimension by use of shades of colour. The artist was standing in front of the figures he was painting.

### Interpretation

The picture makes me to feel merciful and angry as the men seem to be overworked. If I imagine myself in the picture I would be sad. I would hear the sound of flowing water and the men panting struggling to move the boat upstream. The Artist chose this subject to paint because he wanted to discourage slavery. The young person mostly interested the artist as he has

made him more distinct and bright from the other men.

References