

Biography of winslow homer



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Introduction

Winslow Homer was born on February 24th, 1836 and passed away on September 29th, 1910 (Giese, 1986). He was well known for his landscape paintings in the history of America. In his painting, he produced scenes of sea, coastlines, and boats. He was a distinguished American artist during the 1800s when he produced various sceneries along the coast. He is one of the prominent figures in American art and one of the leading painters of the 19th century. In his career of painting, he did not acquire formal art knowledge, but was self-taught. He began his art career as a marketable illustrator, who subsequently painted using oil as his best medium for his works. Homer was tutored by his mother and later became a renowned artist, works of whom still inspire many artists and art students. This research is based on the biography of Winslow Homer (painter).

Winslow Homer's Early Life

Winslow Homer was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1836. He was the second born child of Charles Savage Homer and Henrietta Benson Homer in a family of three sons. The parents were both from New England, and his mother acted as his first tutor since she was an exceptional recreational artist. Winston and his mother were very close all their lives. Winslow, thus, resembled his mother in many characteristics such as friendliness, sociability, terseness, determination, sense of humor. He also took on Henrietta's artistic talent (Giese, 1986). Homer led a joyful life as he grew up in their rural home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In his early years in school,

he performed well at school and his art aptitude became known to many people.

Homer's father, on the other hand, was a capricious and restless entrepreneur. When Homer attained the age of thirteen, his father abandoned his occupation that fed his family to seek affluence in California. He believed that his new venture could make him rich so quickly. His father was always nervous, and when his mission for gold rush failed, he left his children and wife and set for another get-rich-quick idea in Europe, which did not materialize as well. Following Homer's graduation from high school, his father helped him to become an apprentice. This apprenticeship to H. Bufford, a Boston business lithographer, at the age of nineteen was a decisive and essential expertise. In the year 1857, his career was nurturing when he declined an opportunity of joining Harper's Weekly. Homer later affirmed that he was not interested in continuing with his education, and he said that although he did not have a master degree and was not likely to get one, he vowed to continue with his talent as an artist.

He later worked twenty years as an illustrator. He greatly contributed to different magazines such as Hamper's Weekly and Ballou's Pictorial. This was a changing period: the market for illustrations grew quickly and taste and preferences in fashion sector changed in haste. Homer's early works included engravings that he sold to earn cash. These engravings depicted municipal and countryside common scenes. He composed pictures of simplified forms, accompanied by dramatic twist of radiance and dim and vivaious figure groupings. These are some of the qualities that were significant throughout his painting career. He also had a great passion for <https://assignbuster.com/biography-of-winslow-homer/>

graphic design, which was instrumental to his fame and quick success. Dissimilar to other artists, who specialized only on a single art medium, Winslow was well-known for numerous art media. Some of his art media that he imaginatively produced include: *The Bridle Path*, 1898, oil painting; *Gloucester Harbor*, 1873, oil on canvas; *The War for the Union*, 1862, wood engraving; *A Rainy Day in Camp*, 1871, oil on canvas; *Perils of the Sea*, 1881, watercolor; *Improve the Present Hour*, c. 1889, etching, - among many other paintings found in his gallery (Giese, 1986).

Homer opened a studio in 1859 (in the Tenth Street Studio Building in New York City). During this period, New York City was a huge art center in the U. S. Later in 1863, he went to National Academy of Design, where he found Frederick Rondel, an inspirational figure and his tutor. Rondel trained him the fundamentals of painting. After training for not more than a year, Homer produced exceptional oil paintings. His mother made numerous efforts for him to further his studies in Europe but instead, Harper's sponsored him to the frontier of the American Civil War (1861 to 1865). During this period of four years, he sketched scenes of battle, camp life, famous officers, and commanders. Since drawing or sketching got little interest, he moved from an illustrator to a painter (Cikovsky & Kelly, 1995). In his studio he went ahead to strengthen his peculiar artistic vision.

Cikovsky and Kelly (1995) affirmed that Homer continued with his ambition in art and sold his illustrations to periodicals such as *Our Young Folks* and *Frank Leslie's Chimney Corner*. Following the end of the American Civil War, Homer focused on his painting career and moved to paint scenes of youthful men and women in the community. For example, his *Crossing the Pasture*

(1871-1872) depicting two young men romanticizes brotherhood with inspirations of a united future following the end of the war. Homer began his artistic career when he was twenty seven years old, but he demonstrated that he was mature enough by his mastery of technique and depth of his works. Undoubtedly, his studio helped him to nurture his ambition in painting.

Early Works

Once Homer revealed some of his works at the National Academy of Design, he fled to Paris in 1867, where he stayed for one year. His early painting known as Prisoners from the Front was exhibited at the Exposition Universelle in Paris during this period. As he still worked for Harper's, he continued to practice landscape painting; and during his stay in Paris, he painted dozens of small paintings because it was a time to launch emerging artworks in France. Homer led a private life and did not engage anyone in his undertakings; hence, when he was in Paris, he denied his first interviewer an opportunity to interview him. Throughout 1870s, he continued to paint rural scenes, young men and women courting, and children playing, for example, such paintings as The Morning Bell and Country School, painted in 1872 and 1871 respectively (Cikovsky & Kelly, 1995). By 1875, Homer felt that it was time to produce his own artworks rather than being used by other commercial partners. Despite his enthusiasm and outstanding decisive reputation, he led a precarious life. In 1876, Homer visited Petersburg, Virginia, which inspired him to paint rural life of African-Americans. In 1877, he exhibited his own oil painting An Afternoon Sun at the Boston Art Club for the first time. Between 1877 and 1909, he often exhibited his works at the <https://assignbuster.com/biography-of-winslow-homer/>

Boston Art Club. He later became a member of The Tile Club after starting to paint with watercolor officially.

Homer in England

Homer also spent two years (1881-1882) painting in England. He lived in the British coastal village of Cullercoats. While in England, Homer continued to exploit his heroism in painting through solidarity and sobriety, which was new in his art. Between 1860s and 1870s, Homer found new style that he eloquently incorporated in his painting to become constrained and sober (Cikovsky & Kelly, 1995).

Adulthood in Maine

Back in the United States, Homer showed his English watercolors in New York (1882). He later moved to Prout Neck, Maine and stayed at his family estate in the modernized carriage home. In this place, he painted his massive ocean scenes. For example, the Undertow (1886), this was a symbol of a spectacular mission to rescue two women through combined effort of two men. After attaining the age of fifty, he became a prominent painter who was appreciated for his wonderful works. Homer moved from place to place when he was in the US, and such little tours gave him inspiration (Hendricks, 1979). Later, he moved from Florida to Minerva.

United States' Commemorative Stamp

Following encouragements that many people including art students received from the works of Homer, the U. S. Post Office released a remembrance stamp in honor of Winslow Homer in 1962. Although he died, his famous oil <https://assignbuster.com/biography-of-winslow-homer/>

painting *Breezing Up* still hangs in the National Gallery in Washington DC. Another memorial stamp was issued on August 12, 2010, featuring Homer's *Boys in a Pasture*, launched at the APS Stamp Show in Richmond, Virginia.

Conclusion

It is apparent that Homer's achievements as an illustrator, artist, watercolorist, and painter are incomparable because of his peculiar vision and his unique manner of painting. Homer created a collection of artworks that can never be matched. Although he was from a poor family, his fortitude was driven by his mother's efforts that saw him open a studio and quit commercial work. His works are tremendously influential to succeeding generations of American painters for their direct and energetic interpretation of man's relationship with the natural world and social events. He also advised artists never to look at pictures in order to compose their own, but they should look at the nature and try to work independently, and this will help them solve their own problems. This is very inspirational to future artists, and I believe it adds to his austere individualism. Homer remains recognized today as one of the best world's watercolorists.