

# Teaching with *Miss Alice Robertson* by Mike Wimmer



This document is designed to help teachers present, discuss, and teach about Oklahoma history and art literacy through the use of this work of art. The information and exercises here will aid in understanding and learning from this artwork.

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# First Analysis and Criticism

The steps below may be used for group discussion or individual written work.

Before beginning the steps, take two minutes to study the artwork. Look at all the details and subject matter. After studying the artwork in silence, follow these steps:

## **Describe:**

Be specific and descriptive. List only the facts about the objects in the painting or sculpture.

- What things are in the artwork?
- What is happening?
- List what you see (people, animals, clothing, environment, objects, etc.).

## **Analyze:**

- How are the elements of art – line, shape, form, texture, space, and value used?
- How are the principles of design – unity, pattern, rhythm, variety, balance, emphasis, and proportion used?

## **Interpretation:**

Make initial, reasonable inferences.

- What do you think is happening in the artwork?
- Who is doing what?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say to the viewer?

## **Evaluate:**

Express your opinion.

- What do you think about the artwork?
- Is it important?
- How does it help you understand the past?
- Do you like it? Why or why not?

# Overview of the Artwork

In 1920, Alice Mary Robertson became the second woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives when she defeated the three-term incumbent William W. Hastings, in Oklahoma's Second Congressional District. At the age of 67, Robertson already had a diverse career behind her.

She was born January 2, 1854, at the Tullahassee Mission of the Creek Nation in Indian Territory. Taught by her missionary parents, she went on to attend Elmira College in New York. From 1873 to 1879, she worked as the first woman clerk in the Office of Indian Affairs in Washington and also taught at the Indian school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. She later founded Minerva Home, a school for Creek girls, which later became Henry Kendall College (now the University of Tulsa).

Miss Alice's helpfulness to troops passing through Muskogee station came to the attention of Col. Theodore Roosevelt and after he became President, named Miss Alice to serve as the first woman Postmaster in a first class post office in Muskogee. Later she operated a dairy farm which provided milk and butter and other produce which was used by the cafeteria she operated in Muskogee.

As a candidate for Congress in the first election following ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, Robertson disassociated herself from suffragists and other women's rights advocates. Robertson's opposition to what she saw as a bureaucratic intrusion on personal rights provoked condemnation from women's political groups and such organizations as the Daughters of the American Revolution. And despite her support of servicemen in the First World War, she voted against the Soldiers' Bonus Bill.

On June 20, 1921, during a roll call vote on funding for a United States delegation to the centennial celebrations of Peru's independence, Robertson became the first woman to preside over a session of the House of Representatives.

Her first term in Congress, however, was also to be the last for the outspoken Robertson. In a rematch with William W. Hastings in 1922, Robertson lost her seat. Failing to receive an appointment in Indian Affairs in the Harding administration, Robertson returned to Oklahoma where she worked in the Veterans' Hospital in Muskogee, and for the

## About the Artist

Mike Wimmer Born and raised in Muskogee, Oklahoma, Mike Wimmer began his career as an artist during the seventh grade. He earned his B.F.A. from the University of Oklahoma, where he met Don Ivan Puchatz. Wimmer later moved to Arlington, Texas to be Puchatz's apprentice at Puchatz's famous Sketch Pad Studio. Wimmer learned valuable knowledge regarding the business aspect of illustrating as well as various painting techniques and the working methods of the local Dallas illustrators.

After his two and a half year apprenticeship, he moved back to Norman, Oklahoma and set up his own studio using all that he had learned in Texas. Since then Wimmer has become very successful illustrating children's books such as "Flight: The Journey of Charles Lindbergh" by Robert Burleigh which was the winner of the Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children in 1990. He also illustrated "All the Places to Love" by Patricia MacLachlan which was published in 1994 and won the Oklahoma Book Award for Best Illustrated Children's Book 1995. Wimmer's latest book, "Will Rogers" by Former Governor Frank Keating, was published in 2002 and has won the 2003 Spur Award from the Western Writers Association of America. Even though Wimmer has worked for some of the largest corporations in the world including Disney and Procter and Gamble, Wimmer finds the greatest artistic pleasure within his creation of fine art.

# Details



Miss Alice Robinson was a unique woman. These interesting facts about her make her memorable:

- Although she let soldiers eat for free in her cafeteria, she was against pensions and bonuses for them. She said they volunteered for their job and should not be financially compensated for their donation of service.
- The issues she was against were:
  - Slavery
  - Women's suffrage (right to vote)
  - Veterans' bonuses and pensions
  - Alcohol
- A lifelong dedicated public servant, Miss Alice graciously gave of her time, money, and efforts to improve the quality of life for others.
- She held several jobs throughout her life, including:
  - Teacher
  - Restaurant Owner
  - Cafeteria Worker
  - U.S. Congresswoman
  - Director/Owner of an orphanage for Creek Indian girls
- She was fluent in the languages of the Five Civilized Tribes.

## Details



- She was unable to complete her Ph.D. because of poverty. She stopped school with one year left.
- She established a school which later evolved into the University of Tulsa.
- She was the first woman from Oklahoma to be elected to the U.S. Congress. The second was Mary Fallin in 2005.
- She said of herself, “I am a Christian. I am an American. I am a Republican.”
- She only served in Congress for one term.

# Suggested Reading

**Oklahoma Adventure**, Centennial Edition 2006 by Oklahoma History Press

Chapter 18: The Roaring Twenties, **pages 171-172**

Oklahoma Stories: Oklahoma Women with the Pioneer Spirit, **page 391**

**Oklahoma: Land of Contrasts** by Clairmont Press

Chapter 15: The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression, **page 384**

**The Story of Oklahoma**, Second Edition by Baird and Goble

Chapter 18: Politics through the 1920s, **page 294**

## Further Resources

The Kennedy Center's ARTSEdge resources offer a helpful unit on gender issues here:

**Tolerance: Gender Issues**

Breaking Professional Barriers

[http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-6-8/Tolerance\\_Gender\\_Issues.aspx](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-6-8/Tolerance_Gender_Issues.aspx)

The **Feminist Art Project** offers a comprehensive reading list about feminism and the advances of women here:

<http://feministartproject.rutgers.edu/resources/book-lists/>

# Final Analysis

After completing the readings and activities, go back and look at the artwork again. Now that the students are more familiar with the subject matter, ask them to write a few paragraphs about their interpretation of the artwork. In their own words, the writing should address the following:

- Description of the artwork and who/what is in it
- How the elements of art and principles of design are used within the artwork
- What feelings, emotions, or information the artwork depicts
- Their opinion of the artwork



# Pass Objectives

## Grade 4- Social Studies

**Standard 5. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the unique features which contributed to the settlement of the state of Oklahoma.**

1. Identify major historical individuals, entrepreneurs, and groups, and describe their major contributions (e.g., Sequoyah, the Boomers and the Sooners, and Frank Phillips).
4. Identify state and local governing bodies (e.g., the state legislature and city councils) and officials (e.g., governor and mayors) that make laws and carry out laws, with an emphasis on civic participation (e.g., the importance of studying the issues and voting).

## High School- Oklahoma History

**Standard 1. The student will demonstrate process skills in social studies.**

1. Identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources (e.g., artifacts, diaries, letters, art, music, literature, photographs, documents, newspapers, and contemporary media).

**Standard 8. The student will examine factors that contributed to the political, economic, and social history of Oklahoma during the twentieth century.**

1. Identify significant individuals and their contributions (e.g., Jerome Tiger, Frank Phillips, Kate Barnard, Angie Debo, Ada Lois Sipuel, Clara Luper, George Lynn Cross, Ralph Ellison, Robert S. Kerr, Henry Bellmon, and Reba McEntire).

## Grade 4- The Arts

**Standard 2: Visual Art History and Culture - The student will recognize the development of visual art from an historical and cultural perspective.**

1. Describe and place a variety of specific significant art objects by artist, style and historical and cultural context.
2. Identify themes and purposes of works of art and artifacts in history and culture.
3. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of several fields of art such as painting, sculpture, drawing, computer graphics, printmaking, architecture, and fiber arts.
4. Identify how visual art is used in today's world including the popular media of advertising, television, and film.

## High School- The Arts

**Standard 1: Language of Visual Art - The student will identify visual art terms (e.g., content, engraving, foreshortening, mosaic, perspective)**

3. Describe exhibitions of original works of art seen in the school or community.
4. Differentiate between art criticism and art reviews, recognizing that criticism is positive as well as negative in its evaluation of a work of art.

**Standard 2: Visual Art History and Culture - The student will recognize the development of visual art from an historical and cultural perspective.**

5. PROFICIENT: Identify major regional, national, and international collections of art.

**Standard 4: Visual Art Appreciation - The student will appreciate visual art as a vehicle of human expression.**

2. Demonstrate respect for their work and the work of others.