

Teaching with *We Belong to the Land* by Jeff Dodd



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.

Contents:

- First Analysis and Criticism
- Overview of the Artwork
- About the Artist
- History Details
- Painting Details
- Suggested Reading
- Final Analysis
- PASS Objectives

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 1996, Jeff Dodd was commissioned to create a mural for the Oklahoma State Capitol in celebration of the oil and gas industry. In 1998, he was commissioned to create a mural to highlight the agricultural industry in Oklahoma. It has been said that these commissions brought Dodd back to Oklahoma; the second brought him back to his small-town roots. In these works, the artist returned to the people and landscapes of his childhood and pays tribute to the impact agriculture and the oil and gas industry have had on our state. Today, the works hang over the Senate and House of Representatives chambers.

We Belong to the Land features the contribution agriculture has made to the history of Oklahoma. Dedicated on March 16, 1999, the large-scale mural was commissioned by numerous agricultural foundations. Towards the back of the piece the great seal of Oklahoma shines behind a dusty cowboy rustling cattle. A weary pioneer woman wipes the sweat from her brow as a farmer on the opposite side of the mural plows the rich Oklahoma earth. The mural depicts the evolution of agriculture in Oklahoma from early settler days through history where technological advancements have increased agricultural productivity and contributed to overall economic growth.

About the Artist

Anative of rural Western Oklahoma, artist Jeff Dodd has been painting realistic portraits and landscapes for nearly 30 years. Drawing since he was a child, Dodd received his formal education from Southwestern Oklahoma State University where he graduated with a degree in commercial art. After a brief stint as a student at Wichita State University, Dodd relocated to New York City to study drawing at the Art Students League under noted teacher Tony Ryder. However, it was only after he had moved to Santa Fe in 1991 that Dodd first began painting, stating that his influences came from the art of Rembrandt, Monet and Francis Bacon.

Details



Mural Details

1. This mural celebrates the contributions of agriculture to the history and future of Oklahoma.
2. The mural is comprised of several different scenes in one composition, including:
 - a. Cattle with blazing eyes and glistening muscles
 - b. A pioneer woman wiping the sweat from her brow
 - c. A tractor and plow breaking ground
3. The artist, Jeff Dodd, was already familiar with the subject matter since he was raised in rural Oklahoma.
4. This mural was the first official project of the Oklahoma Centennial Commission to celebrate Oklahoma's first century as a state.
5. This mural, combined with *Oklahoma Black Gold*, also by Jeff Dodd, provide eye-catching color to the fourth-floor rotunda at the Oklahoma State Capitol.
6. The mural measures 22 feet at its base and is eleven feet high.

Details



Agriculture in Oklahoma

1. The soils in Oklahoma are among the world's most fertile. Rich soils, combined with adequate rain and a long growing season combine to make agriculture one of the state's most important economic activities.
2. A typical Oklahoma growing season (the time from the last freeze in the spring to the first freeze in the fall) ranges from 180 days in the northwest to 220 days in the south.
3. Field crops, horse breeding, and cattle raising are all farm jobs which are important to Oklahoma's economy.
4. The 101 Ranch, a 135,000 acre cattle ranch located in what is now Ponca City, was the first and largest agribusiness in the world during the 1920s.
5. The agriculture industry in Oklahoma was booming during World War I. However, after the soldiers returned home, the demand for exporting produce fell and threw the state into an agricultural depression.
6. The agriculture industry in Oklahoma has experienced many ups and downs, but it remains one of the major contributors to the state economy.
7. Cattle and wheat remain among the top agricultural products on Oklahoma's farms today.
8. The raising of chickens is a major cash industry for farmers in Oklahoma, particularly in the eastern part of the state.

Suggested Reading

Oklahoma Adventure, Centennial Edition 2006 by Oklahoma History Press

Chapter 19: Dirty Thirties, **page 185**

Chapter 25: The New Century, **pages 250-252**

Chapter 24: Highlights of the 1970s and 1980s, **page 238**

Oklahoma: Land of Contrasts by Clairmont Press

Chapter 2: Where in the World is Oklahoma?, **pages 45-47**

Chapter 13: Creating the 46th State, **pages 324-325**

Chapter 15: The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression, **page 379**

Chapter 17: Politics, Protests, and Social Change, **pages 444-445**

Chapter 18: Oklahoma Roundup, **pages 472-473**

The Story of Oklahoma, Second Edition by Baird and Goble

Chapter 1: Oklahoma's Diverse Land, **page 10**

Chapter 19: The Economy, **pages 304-308**

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.

3. Analyze the use of Oklahoma's natural resources (e.g., salt, bison, oil, coal, timber and sod) by early visitors and settlers.

Grade 4- Visual Art

Standard 1: Language of Visual Art - The student will identify visual art terms (e.g., architecture, contour, medium, mixed media, perspective, symbol).

4. Discuss observations of visual and expressive features seen in the environment (such as colors, textures, shapes).

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.

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

2. Demonstrate respect for personal artwork and the artwork of others.

High School- Oklahoma History

Standard 6. The student will investigate the geography and economic assets of Oklahoma and trace their effects on the history of the state.

1. Locate the significant physical and human features of the state on a map (e.g., major waterways, cities, natural resources, military installations, major highways, and major landform regions).

2. Examine how economic cycles (e.g., the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl, and the oil boom and bust) have affected and continue to affect major sectors of state employment (e.g., fossil fuels, timber, mining, tourism, the military, and agriculture).

High School- The Arts

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

1. Identify and apply knowledge of the principles of design: rhythm, balance (symmetrical, asymmetrical, radial) contrast, movement, variety, center of interest (emphasis), and repetition in personal artwork, and the artwork of others.
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.