

Partners in Art Presentation

Grant Wood – “American Gothic”

2nd grade

Prezi-

[Link to Prezi](#)

login ID: hillcrestpartnersinart@gmail.com

password: mariabrummel

PREZI SLIDE 1 (Wood Overview/Title Slide)

<Introductions>

Today, we're going to talk about an artist that was inspired by where he grew up and the area where he lived.

We will be talking about an artist named Grant Wood. Mr. Wood was born in 1891, which is over 100 years ago. He was born in Anamosa, Iowa, which was a small farming community.

Does anyone know where Iowa is?

PREZI SLIDE 2 (Map of the Midwest)

Iowa is very close to Illinois, as you can see on the map.

Mr. Wood lived on a small farm in Anamosa for the first 10 years of his life. Then, in 1901, his family moved from their farm to Cedar Rapids, a larger town but still in Iowa.

Mr. Wood's love for art developed early. He drew everything he saw around him. He drew farm animals, houses, trees and his favorite – chickens. His family didn't have a lot of money and couldn't afford fancy art supplies. In fact, he mostly used cardboard from cracker boxes and charred black sticks from the cooking stove! But, he would use whatever he could find to create his art.

When Mr. Wood was in 8th grade, he entered one of his drawings in a nationwide art contest. We won third place, with a drawing of oak leaves and he won a prize of \$5, which was a good prize way back then! He later said that winning that prize made him want to become an artist.

Mr. Wood began selling his paintings during high school. He sold them in order to buy art supplies like watercolor paints and ink. After he graduated from high school, he went to Minneapolis to go to art school and he even studied a bit at the Art Institute of Chicago!

As you can see on the map, Minneapolis and Chicago are both in the Midwest, very close to Iowa. So, for much of Mr. Wood's life, he was inspired by the people and places he saw in the Midwest and this led to his focus in his art.

PREZI SLIDE 3 (Young Corn, 1931)

Here is an example of Mr. Wood's work. It is called "Young Corn" and it was painted in 1931.

What do you think this painting shows? (a farm, corn beginning to grow in the fields, farmers working in the background)

Is this something Mr. Wood probably saw a lot when he was growing up in Iowa?

When he was in art school, Mr. Wood's style of painting really began to take form. He liked to paint carefully, using crisp lines and solid shapes. He didn't like the styles that were popular at the time such as Impressionism or abstract art, where artists painted things that didn't look like 'real life'. Mr. Wood liked to paint what he saw and what he was familiar with.

PREZI SLIDE 4 (Stone City, Iowa, 1930)

Here is another example of his work. This painting is called "Stone City, Iowa" and as you can probably guess, it shows a view of this city in Iowa in 1930.

What are some things that you see in this painting?

Do you notice the crisp lines and familiar shapes? (circles for trees, rectangles and triangles for the houses, etc.)

PREZI SLIDE 5 (Spring in Town, 1941)

This is another example of Mr. Wood's work. This one is called "Spring in Town" and you can see trees beginning to bloom, members of the neighborhood beginning to plant their gardens, people in the background working on their houses. All things that we start to do when spring arrives and we can work and play outside again.

Mr. Wood's style of painting became known as **Regionalism**. This style was popular in the 1920's and 1930's. **Regionalism** got its name from the artists who painted the natural landscape and the people of the Midwest, especially Iowa. Other **Regionalist** artists wrote stories and poems set in or about the Midwest. **Regionalism** is sometimes called the first uniquely American style of art.

Regionalism was unique in its time because it showed familiar subjects in realistic ways. The other popular styles at that time were more abstract, painting familiar subjects like trees, in strange forms and colors.

Mr. Wood's art was based on the people, places and events he saw around him as a young boy on his family's farm. His paintings featured family members, friends, and places from his childhood.

PREZI SLIDE 6 (Appraisal, 1931)

Just like this painting – a painting that looks like an image Mr. Wood might have seen growing up on the farm in Iowa.

Another interesting thing is that Mr. Wood's paintings resemble photographs, but something is different. The paintings are detailed and realistic, but they often have qualities of a young boy's memories. The trees are more rounded and puffier than a photograph....

PREZI SLIDE 7 (The Birthplace of Herbert Hoover, 1931)

...like in this painting. Do you notice how the trees don't look exactly like they would in a photograph? But, you can still tell they are trees, right? Many people think Mr. Wood painted in this way because it was how he remembered things from his childhood.

PREZI SLIDE 8 (Spring Turning, 1936)

Here's another example of a painting that might look more like a memory.

What do you think is happening in this picture? (farmers preparing to plant crops)

What do you notice most in this painting? (bright green color indicating fertile land, rolling hills, wide open spaces – all memories of growing up on a farm)

PREZI SLIDE 9 (Murals at Iowa State University, 1934)

In addition to his paintings, Mr. Wood also created large murals. Does anyone know what a mural is? (A very large picture or painting that is attached to or painted directly on to a wall)

Here are a few murals that Mr. Wood painted in a library building at Iowa State University. These murals show life on the farm for many of the early settlers in Iowa and the Midwest.

PREZI SLIDE 10 (American Gothic, 1930)

Mr. Wood's most famous painting is titled, *American Gothic*. This painting was done in 1930 and is meant to show a farmer and his daughter in front of a small farmhouse. The window in the background is where the name of the painting came from. The window looks like windows on large churches built in a style known as 'Gothic'.

PREZI SLIDE 11 (Examples of Gothic architecture)

The Gothic style of building was very popular in Europe a long time ago. It started around the year 1100, which is over 900 years ago! Many churches in Europe were built in this style. One of

the key features of this style is pointed arches and windows. On the top here, you can see some examples of the window styles that would appear in Gothic buildings. Also here, you can see some examples of a church built in this style from the outside and from the inside. Many of these churches had large, stained glass windows that had these pointed arches on the top. This window style is very similar to the style of the window that Grant Wood painted on his farmhouse...

PREZI SLIDE 12 (back to American Gothic)

...which you can see back here. By including a Gothic-style window on an American farmhouse, Grant Wood created his own version of this type of building design and that is why this painting is called *American Gothic*.

Let's take a closer look at this painting. Do you notice some of the same features that appear in other Grant Wood paintings? (crisp, straight lines, use of geometric shapes, rounded/puffy trees in the background)

Who do you think these people are? (people often think they are a husband and wife. Wood wanted people to think they were father and daughter. In fact, they were based on Wood's sister and his dentist!)

Do the people look happy? Sad? Serious?

What colors do you see? What colors are missing? (yellow, red, bright blue)

Do you see how the colors create a sad, serious mood for this painting?

People sometimes think he is making fun of the people he painted or he wanted the audience to feel bad for them. But, that was not what he wanted. He always said he wanted to show his humble hometown characters and values – he wanted to show that the people of the Midwest worked very hard and were very good people.

American Gothic was the first painting by Mr. Wood to receive attention outside of Iowa. Up until 1930, his work was well-known within his community and had received awards at Iowa state fairs, but few people outside of Iowa knew of his art. This all changed when *American Gothic* was shown at a Chicago art exhibition in 1930. The painting won an award and was purchased by the Art Institute of Chicago where it is still today!

American Gothic has become a well-known image of Americans and Midwesterners, especially Iowans.

In fact, the painting has become so famous, that it has been used in many places - on cards, magnets, on ties, on t-shirts, and in magazines.

Many people (and animals) have replaced the original pair: presidents and their wives, Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy, movie stars, and cartoons!

This is called a parody. A parody is a copy of a picture, song, or story, that's meant to poke fun at something.

PREZI SLIDE 13 (Examples of American Gothic Parodies)

Here are a few examples of the many parodies that have been created from American Gothic!

Now that we've seen some examples of Mr. Wood's work, would you like to make an art project?