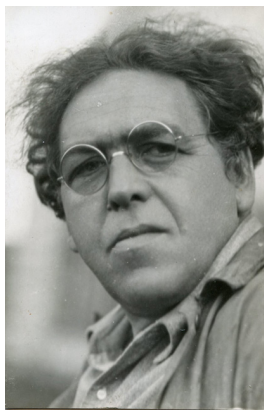


N.C. Wyeth



N.C. Wyeth, 1926, gelatin silver print. Photograph by E.O. Hoppé

Wyeth moved to Wilmington, Delaware, in 1902 to attend the Howard Pyle School of Art. Considered one of the nation's best illustrators, Howard Pyle (1853–1911) ran a school for illustration where he admitted and taught only twelve students at a time. Pyle was an inspiring teacher, who emphasized the need to work from experience and the use of dramatic effects in art, lessons Wyeth would keep with him for the rest of his career. The young illustrator excelled under Pyle's tutelage. In February of 1903, less than five months after Wyeth began studying with Pyle, one of his illustrations graced the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*.

After completing his training with Pyle, Wyeth set out on his first of three trips to the American West between 1904 and 1906. Inspired by artists such as George Catlin (1796–1872), Frederic Remington (1861–1909), and Charles Russell (1864–1926), Wyeth intended to paint the spirit and adventure of the West from his own travels. He spent much of these trips absorbing the landscape, cultures, and experiences. He started his Western adventures in Denver, Colorado, participating in cattle drives and then continued down to Arizona and New Mexico to live with the Utes and Navajos. His explorations in the West would serve as lifelong inspiration for his artworks and illustrations.

Upon returning from his voyages west in 1906, Wyeth settled once more in Wilmington. Over the next few years he became an acclaimed illustrator, and his work appeared in many notable publications of the time, including *Scribner's*, *Harper's Monthly*, *McClure's*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*. In 1908, he moved with his wife, Carolyn Brenneman Bockius, to Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, where the couple resided for many years and raised their family. In 1911, the publishing house Charles Scribner's Sons commissioned Wyeth to illustrate Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. For this project he completed seventeen paintings that artfully captured the text's characters and narrative. Wyeth went on to illustrate many stories for Scribner's and other publishers over the years.



N.C. Wyeth, *Rural Delivery (Where the Mail Goes, Cream of Wheat Goes)*, 1906, oil on canvas, 56 x 42 3/4 in., Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the National Biscuit Company, 70.63

In addition to his book illustrations, Wyeth created other forms of commissioned work. Throughout his career, he produced calendar images and magazine advertisements for companies such as Coca-Cola, General Electric, Cream of Wheat, and the American Tobacco Company. In the 1920s and 1930s, he painted a string of murals, including commissions for the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., the Federal Reserve Bank in Boston, and the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City.

Despite his commercial success, Wyeth longed to be known as a fine artist. The title of illustrator carried a pejorative connotation, and while his commercial work was financially lucrative, he wanted to be recognized for his personal paintings as well. In them Wyeth explored a wide range of subject matters and styles, drawing inspiration from American Realists such as George Bellows (1882–1925) as well as the American Impressionists and their use of light and color. Unfortunately, he never received the artistic success he craved.

On October 19, 1945, at the age of 63, Wyeth died at a railroad crossing in Chadds Ford when his car was hit by a train. Despite this tragic death, Wyeth had lived long enough to see his five children grow up and excel in their various fields.

a biography

A Family Affair

In addition to being a renowned illustrator in his own right, N.C. Wyeth is the patriarch in a family of artists. Three of his five children, Henriette Wyeth Hurd (1907–1997), Carolyn Wyeth (1909–1994), and Andrew Wyeth (1917–2009), all went on to become artists themselves. Though all three siblings attained some level of success, Andrew emerged as an important figure in 20th century American art. His iconic paintings of everyday scenes have been met with both adulation and derision, making him one of the more controversial artists of the postwar era.

Andrew's younger son, Jamie Wyeth (born 1946), is also an artist. Known for portraits and depictions of animals, his paintings are full of energy. All three generations of Wyeth artists have worked in realistic veins, creating representational works that frequently depict scenes from the American Northeast, where the family has lived since settling down in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, in 1908. Despite some similarities in their subject matter and style, each artist has their own distinctive approach and technique.

Born on July 12, 1917, Andrew was the youngest of N.C.'s children. Raised in Chadds Ford, Andrew was a sickly child. Because of this, he spent much of his childhood at home where his father taught him to paint and draw—his only artistic training. As an artist during the mid-20th century, many of his contemporaries, such as Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) and Mark Rothko (1903–1970), worked in abstraction, but Andrew adhered to a realist style. His works are recognizable by their precision and controlled detail.

Because his paintings were representational rather than abstract, he often faced scorn from art critics who viewed his works as anachronistic and nostalgic. Nevertheless, Andrew was wildly popular among the general public.



IMAGES (TOP TO BOTTOM): Andrew Wyeth in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, in 1963. Photograph by Kirk C. Wilkinson for *The New York Times*; Andrew Wyeth (American, 1917–2009), *Half Bushel*, 1959, watercolor on paper, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Purchased from M. Knoedler and Co., Inc., 1960.271

Like his grandfather, Jamie was drawn to painting with oil, although he also works in watercolor and experiments with combining media. His portraits remarkably capture aspects of his sitters' personalities, and he has painted famous figures such as President John F. Kennedy and artist Andy Warhol. Jamie is also known for his depictions of farm animals, such as the 1980 oil painting *Portrait of 75, 86, 91, 93, 84*. In this farm scene, four black and white spotted cows, each with numbered tags in their ears, fill the majority of the canvas as they look out towards the viewer. Two other cows stand further back. A close up and intimate scene painted in vibrant color, Jamie's varied brushstrokes bring out the rich textures of the cows' fur and the grassy landscape.

For three generations, artists in the Wyeth family have captured aspects of the American spirit through their work. Each with their own techniques and signature subject matters, N.C., Andrew, and Jamie have all contributed to the rich Wyeth family legacy of artmaking.

IMAGES (TOP TO BOTTOM): Jamie Wyeth with Den Den, Chadds Ford, ca. 1970. Photographer unknown; Jamie Wyeth (American, born 1946), *Portrait of 75, 86, 91, 93, 84*, 1980, oil on canvas, Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska, Gift of Michael and Gail Yanney, 1991.18



N.C. Wyeth in his studio as he paints *Rounding Up*, with Allen Tupper True on the saddle posing for the painting. Photographer unknown, ca. 1905. Allen Tupper Tru Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Unlike his father who worked primarily in oil, Andrew preferred watercolor and egg tempera. His paintings frequently feature stark scenes portrayed in a limited color palette, whereas his father's images are full of drama, color, and embellishments. In his work, Andrew sought to accurately capture the rural Northeastern environment in which he grew up, evoking the often harsh and bleak nature of the land. One example of his work is *Half Bushel* from 1959, which depicts a bushel basket at the base of an apple tree. Painted in a rich range of browns and tans, the scene is at once precisely detailed and abstracted, with certain aspects of the image clearly delineated and others fading into shadow.

While Andrew's work is muted and reserved, his son Jamie creates varied and energized paintings. Born in Chadds Ford in 1946, Jamie was surrounded by artists from a young age, and at the age of twelve he left public school to receive formal art training from his aunt Carolyn. He studied with her for about two years, before continuing to paint on his own, seeking guidance when necessary from Carolyn and his father. By the time Jamie was eighteen he had works in private collections as well as museums in Delaware and Maine. At twenty he had his first solo exhibition in New York City.



Timeline

1880



N.C. Wyeth in his Western "rig," 1904. Unknown photographer. Wyeth Family Archives

1882 Newell Convers Wyeth is born on October 22 in Needham, Massachusetts

1890

1897 Begins studying at the Mechanic Arts High School in Boston

1900

1902 Moves to Wilmington, Delaware, to study at the Howard Pyle School of Art

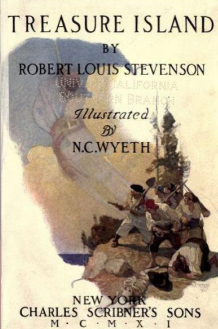
1903 Wyeth's illustration *Bronco Buster* graces the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*

1904 Travels to Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico

1907 "The Indian in His Solitude" is featured in *Outing Magazine*

1910

1911 Illustrates the new edition of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* for Charles Scribner's Sons



1917 Wyeth's youngest son, Andrew, is born on July 12

1920

1919 Illustrates the Scribner's Illustrated Classic edition of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*

1927 Completes a series of five murals for the National Geographic Society's first formal library, Hubbard Memorial Hall

1930

1930 The Wyeth family spends the first of many summers in Port Clyde, Maine

N.C. Wyeth, *The Saturday Evening Post*, cover, 1903, oil on canvas on hardboard, 27 1/2 x 19 1/2 in., Museum of the American West collection, Autry National Center, Los Angeles



1940

1939 The MacBeth Gallery in New York City organizes the first solo exhibition of Wyeth's Work



1945 Dies on October 19 in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania



1946 His grandson, Jamie Wyeth is born on July 6

1950

IMAGES (TOP TO BOTTOM AND BACKGROUND): N.C. Wyeth, *Arundel*, cover illustration 1929, oil on canvas, 22 x 32 1/4 in., Private Collection; N.C. Wyeth, *The Artist's Studio, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania*, ca. 1910, oil on canvas, 25 x 30 in., Private Collection; N.C. Wyeth, Detail, *Bronco Buster*, 1906, oil on canvas, 51 1/8 x 38 in., Minneapolis Institute of Art, Gift of the National Biscuit Company, 70.62



N.C. Wyeth American, 1882–1945

Illustration for Fisk Cord Tires 1919

oil on canvas mounted to Masonite, 32 x 71 1/2 in.
Museum purchase with funds from Collectors' Choice VI, 1995,
and the Major Art Purchase Fund, 1995.2

Discussion Questions

How do you interpret the idea of progress in N.C. Wyeth's *Illustration for Fisk Cord Tires*?

○

Why do you think Wyeth did not give his illustrations titles?

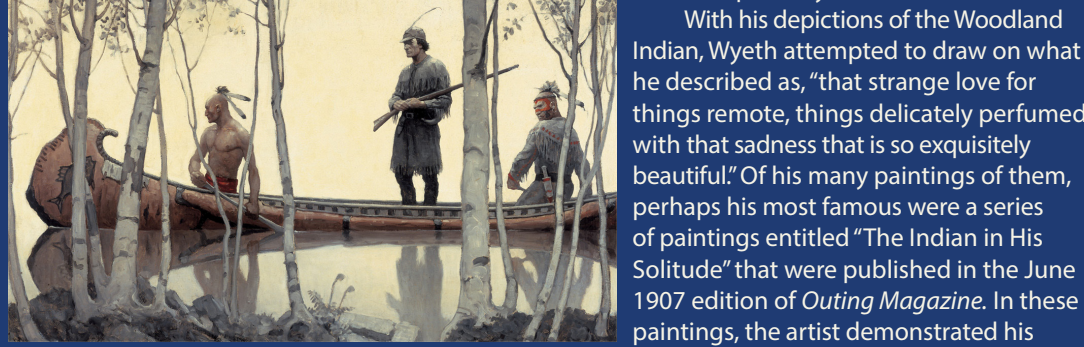
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Is an illustrator an artist? Why or why not?

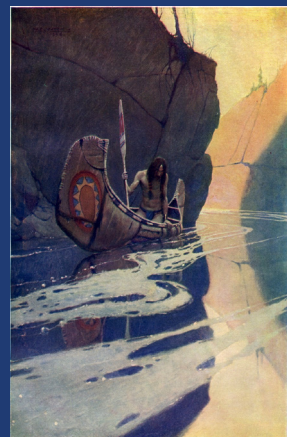
Teachers: go to www.joslyn.org/education for this poster's related academic standards and lesson plans.

N.C. Wyeth and the Woodland Indian

He was especially interested, however, in painting the Eastern Woodland Indian, who represented the people whom the first European settlers would have encountered in North America. Through his paintings, Wyeth portrays these Indians as peaceful, solitary, and honorable people—they symbolize a deep connection to nature and a simpler way of life.



IMAGES (LEFT TO RIGHT): N.C. Wyeth, *In the Crystal Depths*, 1906, oil on canvas, 38 x 26 in., illustration for "The Indian in His Solitude," *The Outing Magazine*, June 1907, Brandywine River Museum of Art; N.C. Wyeth, *The Last of the Mohicans*, endpaper illustration, 1919, oil on canvas, 30 x 43 in., Brandywine River Museum of Art, Given in Memory of Raymond Platt Dorland by his children, 1973; N.C. Wyeth, *The Silent Burial*, 1906, oil on canvas, 38 x 24 in., illustration for "The Indian in His Solitude," *The Outing Magazine*, June 1907, Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection



Conceptions of the American Indian are central to the popular imagination and understanding of the history of the United States and the West. Especially in N.C. Wyeth's time, the idea of the American Indian conjured up idealized images of warrior horsemen on the Plains and Southwestern desert dwellers. These depictions of American Indians play a role in the story of Western expansion, and they factor into the myth of "the vanishing Indian": the idea that they were noble and brave people whose way of life has been sacrificed for the expansion of American civilization. They are relegated to the past, their traditions and lifestyles imagined as historic and unchanging. In reality however, despite being oppressed and marginalized, repeatedly displaced from their lands, and subject to cultural genocide, Native people have continued to survive and are still a part of the contemporary American landscape. Wyeth frequently painted American Indians, in both his commercial and personal work. The time he spent living with different Native populations in the Southwest allowed him to gain an appreciation for their cultures.

This poster is part of Joslyn's Schools, Teachers, and Technology programming and is supported by the following: Equitable Bank, Dr. C.C. and Mabel L. Criss Memorial Foundation, H. Lee and Carol Gendler Charitable Fund, Peter Kiewit Foundation, Lincoln Financial, Mammel Family Foundation, The James C. Mangimeli Grant for Art Education, Midlands Community Foundation, Pacific Life Foundation, Fred and Eve Simon Charitable Foundation, Wells Fargo, and Whitmore Charitable Trust.

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N.C. WYETH
American, 1882–1945

ILLUSTRATION FOR FISK CORD TIRES
1919, oil on canvas mounted to Masonite, 32 x 71 1/2 in.

JOSLYN ART MUSEUM® OMAHA, NEBRASKA
Museum purchase with funds from Collectors' Choice VI, 1995, and the Major Art Purchase Fund, 1995.2