

The John and Mable  
**RINGLING**  
Museum of Art  
**Animals in Art Teaching Poster**



***Ploughing in Nivernais***

(Labourages Nivernais), 1850

Rose Bonheur

French, 1822-1899, active in Paris and Fontainebleau

Oil on canvas, 52 ½ x 102 inches

Bequest of John Ringling, 1936, SN 433

**\*Sunshine State Standards**

**Visual Arts:**

The student understands and applies media, techniques and processes. (VA.A.1.2)

The student creates and communicates a wide range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas using knowledge of structures and functions of visual arts. (VA.B.1.2)

**Language Arts:**

The student uses writing processes effectively. (LA.A.1.2)

The student writes to communicate ideas and information effectively. (LA.B.2.2)

**Social Studies:**

The student understands the world in spatial terms. (SS.B.1.2)

**Science:**

The student understands the competitive, interdependent, cyclic nature of living things in the environment. (SC.G.1.2)

\*Standards as of 2005 and subject to change.



## Animals in Art Teaching Poster

### Introduction

#### Objectives

Students will:

- Recognize animals in works of art.
- Discuss the role of a variety of animals in our lives.
- Learn what an animalier is, and why Rosa Bonheur was known as one of the best.
- Understand the story of *Ploughing in Nivernais*.
- Create an original work of art with an animal(s) as the primary subject matter.
- Write a narrative museum label for their work of art.

The Animals in Art teaching poster is designed as a resource for classroom teachers to prepare students for a visit to The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. Using this poster with the accompanying information and suggested activities will help students understand that artists have created works of art including animals for a variety of reasons throughout history.

Students will analyze *Ploughing in Nivernais* and consider why Rosa Bonheur was considered one of the best painters of animals during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Students will create a work of art using an animal(s) as the primary subject matter and write a narrative museum label to accompany their piece.

#### About the Artist

Rosa Bonheur was a French artist who specialized in painting animals. The fact that she acquired a government license to wear trousers while out in public sketching animals, and that she rode horse astride like a man (very unladylike at the time!), gives a glimpse into the personality of a woman who liked to think and behave independently of public opinion and convention.

Rosa received her early training from her father, a painter and teacher. Her brothers and sister also became artists, and they often collaborated to complete commissions. Rosa began to study and paint animals in 1837. French sculptors working in 19<sup>th</sup> century France with a focus on animal subjects were known as animalier artists. It was Rosa's great dream to become an animalier. Rosa's father supported his daughter's interests and allowed her to bring animals into the family studio and for her to visit slaughterhouses to study animal anatomy like the other animaliers.

Rosa Bonheur's occasional sculptures explored agricultural subjects including sheep and cattle. Rosa's paintings reflected her interest in capturing animals in their natural habitats. She exhibited her first works at the Salon of 1841: an oil painting of rabbits, and a drawing of goats and sheep, which she sold. Her father, two brothers and Rosa all had work on display at the Salon of 1848, the year that Rosa won her first place gold medal. Her most famous painting, *The Horse Fair*, was shown at the Salon of 1851. The wealthy American benefactor Cornelius Vanderbilt bought the painting and later donated it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



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Her work became extensively collected in Europe and America through prints and engravings and her paintings were in great demand. Later, Rosa purchased a farm where she kept and painted her beloved animals. In the 1860's most of her paintings represented deer, horses, and dogs from her estate. By the 1870's Rosa had turned her attention to lions-some of which she raised on her estate and others that she studied in zoological gardens.

A fascination with the American West led her to visit Buffalo Bill's Wild West extravaganza on its European tour through France. Rosa was welcomed and often visited the show that was a combination of circus and historical reenactment. She sketched the horses, cowboys and Native Americans behind the scenes. Her portrait of Buffalo Bill (William Frederick Cody) became very well know.

Rosa Bonheur was not only the first woman artist to be awarded the Legion d'Honneur, which was established by Napoleon I to honor the most accomplished French citizens, but also the most prominent woman artist in Europe and America of her time, an example for women artists of a younger generation.

### **About the Art**

The Pairs Salon was the most famous proving ground for an artist during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. To submit a work and have it accepted was an achievement, to win a first prize medal was almost a guarantee of future financial success as an artist. Bonheur won a first place medal in the Salon of 1848 and received a sizable commission from the French government. She was asked to create a painting of farmers ploughing, an image to glorify work. She had, in her own words, the "idea of paining a scene with three pairs of oxen at work as a kind of celebration of the furrows from which mankind receive the bread which nourishes it."

The setting for the paining, *Ploughing in Nivernais* is the Nivernais region in central France, an agricultural area near the city of Nivers. Bonheur made many sketches of cattle while visiting this area. Upon her return to Pairs she spent months working on the original canvas before submitting it to the Salon of 1849.

The Ringling painting is the artist's second version of the canvas displayed at the Salon. The original version of the very large 52 x 102-inch canvas now hangs in the Musee d'Orsay in Paris. Rosa was commissioned a few years later to create a second version for a M. Marc for 4000 francs, 1000 more than she received for the original! She shared the proceeds of this sale with her brother Auguste who helped paint the background.



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### Looking and Discussing

#### Description: What do you see?

Ask students to spend a few moments looking quietly at the poster. Have them look from one side to another and describe in detail what they see. Record the observation for the class to use as a reference for future activities.

Ask the following questions:

- Does this painting look realistic or imaginary? Why?
- What kind of land has the artist painted?
- What animals do you see? What are they doing?
- What are the people doing?
- What tools are being used?

#### Analysis: How is it organized?

Ask students to look at the placement of the animals and people in the work.

- What did Rosa Bonheur paint in the foreground, middle, and background?
- Which looks more important: the animals or the people? Why?
  - Is the work symmetrically or asymmetrically arranged?
- What large geometric shapes can be seen in the work?
- Which oxen do you look at first? Why?
- Which direction is the action moving in this work of art?

#### Interpretation: What does it mean?

Ask student to recall who asked Rosa to paint this work of art (The French government). -The French people have always had strong ties to agriculture. Today, France is the world's second largest exporter of services and farm products. Why do you think the French Government requested Rosa to paint an image of people plowing? What kind of work is farm work? Is it difficult or easy?

- Does it take a short amount of time or a long time to harvest a crop for food?
- What would a modern farming scene look like today?
- How have machines changed the way that we work?

#### Judgment: What do you think of the work of art?

Rosa Bonheur was given many awards and honors for her works of art featuring animals of all kinds.

- Do you think Rosa Bonheur's works of art would win honors and awards if she were alive and working today? Why or why not?
- Imagine you are an art critic and have seen *Ploughing in Nivernais* for the first time. Write your reaction.



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### **Suggested Classroom Activities :**

#### **Discover Amazing Animal Organizations**

Ask students to work in small groups to research animal organizations. How will they start? What names and categories will they look under? Have groups search through the Yellow Pages, another in the library, and another on the Internet. Sort the results according to a plan everyone agrees upon.

#### **Animaliers in Action!**

Ask students to think carefully about the main animals they have researched. Which animal(s) do they appreciate the most or like the best? Why?

Tell students that they are modern day animaliers! Provide art materials for student to create thumbnail (small) sketches for a work of art featuring their favorite animal(s). After creating several small sketches, ask students to choose their best one for a larger full color version.

Allow adequate time for the work to be completed, and titled, and then help students mount their works for display in the school or local venue.

#### **Make it an Event!**

Invite parents and other classes to view the exhibition of art by the student animaliers. Arrange for another class (or reporter) to write a review of the exhibition, share the reviews with your class.

#### **Partners! People and Animal Helpers**

Ask students to research and create a list of the jobs animals perform that help people and make their lives safer, easier or more enjoyable.

Each student will select one animal helper that interests them and present a short talk to the class about the animal and job it performs. Invite representatives of the organizations to visit the class. (Pet Therapy, Search and Rescue, Police Dogs, Companions Animals, Seizure Alert and Seeing Eye Dogs, Sheriff Possse, etc...)

#### **Museum Goers Want To Know...**

Tell students that most works of art that are displayed for the public usually only have the title of the work, the date, medium, and artist name on the label. People are often curious why an artist created a particular work, and they want to know the story! Tell students that they will write an informative label that tells about their work of art with all the W's; who made it, why it was made, what it is made with, when it was made, and where it was made!



## **Animals in Art Teaching Poster**

### **Time Line 1800-1899**

#### **1800**

The world population is one billion.

#### **1806**

Lewis and Clark explore the western United States.

#### **1812**

The War of 1812 takes place, which confirmed the boundary between the United States and Canada.

#### **1814**

The first photograph is taken by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce; it takes 8 hours for the camera to take the picture.

#### **1815**

Napoleonic Wars end with Napoleon's surrender at Waterloo.

#### **1822**

Rosa Bonheur is born.

#### **1844**

Samuel Morse sends the first telegraph message by using Morse code.

#### **1848**

Gold is discovered in California.

Rosa Bonheur wins a first place medal at the Salon in Paris.

#### **1861**

The United States starts the Pony Express for mail delivery. The American Civil War starts which would eventually lead to the elimination of slavery.

#### **1863**

James Plimpton invents the roller skate.

#### **1870**

The Franco-German war begins.

#### **1876**

Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone.

#### **1886**

Dr. John Pemberton invents Coca Cola.



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### **1887**

Cornelius Vanderbilt buys *The Horse Fair* and donates it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

### **1894**

Rosa Bonheur is named an officer of the French Legion of Honor. She is the first woman so honored.

### **1898**

Christopher Latham Sholes invents the typewriter.

### **1899**

Rosa Bonheur dies.