

Being Grace: Drawing Canyon Lake, Rapid Creek, Hangman's Hill or City Overlook

Imagine Grace French at age 26. For six years she lived part of each year in one of America's most exciting art communities, the sophisticated city of Boston. She walked down elegant Commonwealth Avenue, visited galleries filled with antiques and returned home to hardwood forests and little lakes of her native New Hampshire. She arrived in Rapid City, a cowboy town on the edge of the Black Hills, in September 1885.

Through the colors of her palette and the strokes of pencil and charcoal, Grace French sketched and painted views of the Black Hills that no pioneer photographer could capture. Canyon Lake, Rapid Creek, Hangman's Hill and the growing town site viewed from her 31 Quincy Street home, were some of her favorite scenes.

1. Look at her Rapid City landscapes created before 1910. Compare each scene with what you remember seeing from those viewpoints today. For each scene, make a list comparing colors, plants and trees and general landscape details.
2. Go to at least one actual location that compares with the viewpoint in a French landscape. Make several watercolor or pencil sketches or take several digital photos and mount them beside a thumbnail of Miss French's historic painting.
3. Now that you've visited the location Grace French saw, go back to your original comparison. Write at least a paragraph reacting to one or more these questions: Does the place you sketched or photographed "feel" the same today? How does knowing how your location may have looked 100 years ago affect how you feel about it and see it now? Is having an artist's "memory" of places and the mood they create important for people today? Why?

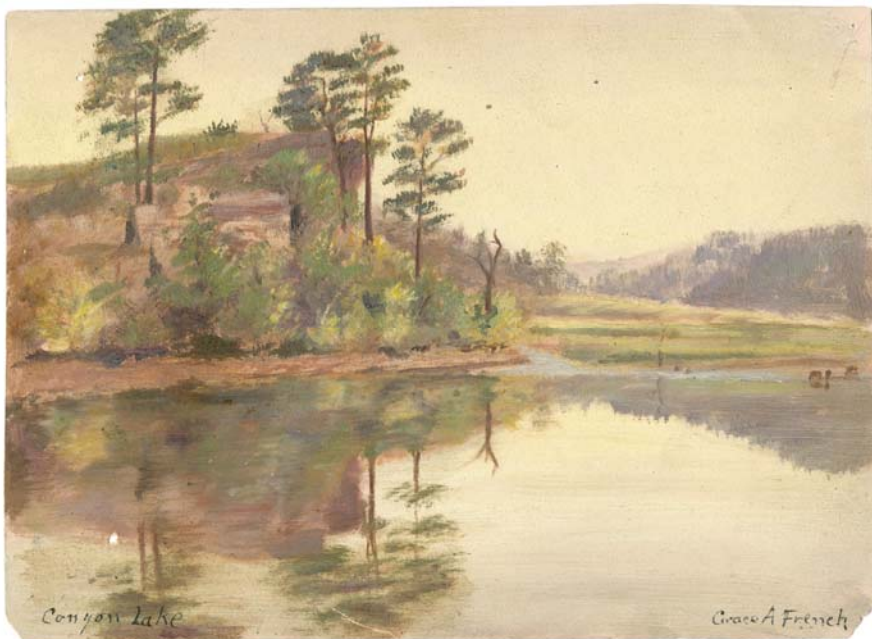
FINE ARTS STANDARD THREE:

Students will understand the relationship between visual arts and history, culture, and society.

5-8 Students will: Investigate how the visual arts record, preserve and highlight history

9-12 Students will: Analyze how the visual arts record, preserve, highlight and symbolize the history of humanity.

Canyon Lake by Grace French



Hangman's Hill-charcoal sketch by Grace French



Rapid Creek-oil by Grace French



Sandstorm-oil of city overlook by Grace French

