

From Log Home to Art Collection: The McMichael Story

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection originated as the private home of Robert and Signe McMichael. The McMichaels lived in



Robert McMichael c.1960
McMichael Canadian Art
Collection Archives

a log home in Kleinburg,

Ontario on ten acres of

land and began collecting artwork by the Group of Seven and

Tom Thomson. Their collection of artworks

grew and Mr. and Mrs. McMichael decided

they wanted to make their collection

accessible to the people of Ontario. In 1965 they donated their

home, art collection, and ten acres of land to the province,

enabling the McMichaels to share their collection with the surrounding

community and art-lovers alike.

Currently, the collection at the McMichael consists of more than just paintings by



Norval Morrisseau (1931-2007), *Shaman and Disciples*, 1979, acrylic on canvas, 180.5 x 211.5cm, Purchase 1979, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, 1979.34.7

the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson. The

McMichaels thought it was important to collect works

from various Aboriginal Canadian cultures.



Photograph by Art2PrintImages.com



Signe McMichael c.1960
McMichael Canadian Art
Collection Archives

Part of the collection contains Northwest Coast First Nations pieces, paintings by Norval Morrisseau, as well as artwork from Inuit artists from the North. Our collection comes from all across Canada!

For further information regarding the Group of Seven or First Nations and Inuit artists please refer to our website, <http://www.mcmichael.com/collection/>.



Encourage Your Students to Get Critically Creative at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection

Before visiting the McMichael introduce your students to the critical thinking process. The questions listed below will help guide your students through the process of analyzing a painting, much like we do at the McMichael, giving them a head start before coming to the gallery. Challenge your students to apply these concepts to other classroom subjects like social studies or language.

The Critical Process; try it out!



Franklin Carmichael (1890-1945), *Lake Wabagishik*, 1928, oil on canvas 101.5x122cm, gift of Shulton of Canada Ltd 1976.11

Initial Reaction: What is your first impression of the painting by Franklin Carmichael (1890-1945), *Lake Wabagishik*? Does this artwork remind you of anything you have experienced? What does it make you feel? What questions would you ask the artist?

Classroom Connection: Are you familiar with the expression, “Don’t judge a book by its cover?” First impressions are not always correct. Have you ever been the new kid at school? Think about how you feel when you first meet someone. Does your opinion change after you get to know them?

Description: What do you see in the painting? What is in the foreground, middleground, and background?



Classroom Connection: Why is it important for an author to describe the characters or setting in a novel? Why is the setting of a play so important?

Analysis: What elements of art do you detect in this Franklin Carmichael painting? What colours do you notice, what kind of texture do you see, what kind of lines are used in the painting?



Classroom Connection: Think about how the elements of art can be applied to everyday activities like eating lunch. How do the texture, colour, and shape of your food affect how much you enjoy your lunch?

Interpretation: What feelings or ideas does *Lake Wabagishik* suggest to you?

Classroom Connection: Here is a sentence from a famous Canadian novel by Louis Hermon titled, *Maria Chapdelaine*: “...a blazing sun warmed field and forest, the lingering patches of snow vanished even in the deep shade of the woods...in the roads the mud was incredibly deep”.¹ How does it make you feel?

Informed Point of View: Do you feel *Lake Wabagishik* by Franklin Carmichael is a successful artwork? Why or why not?






Classroom Connection: What makes a school project, like a science project, successful? Can art be judged the same way? Ask the students to think about how you can approach art and science in different ways, or similar ways.



¹ Hemon, Louis, *Maria Chapdelaine* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1980), 33

Don't Forget Your Building Blocks!

The elements of art are the tools artists like the Group of Seven use to create any work of art. This quick review will help your students identify the elements, or building blocks, when they are at the McMichael. Listed below are questions you can ask your students to get them thinking about the elements:

1. Line: How are lines used in an art work? Are they straight or curvy? Thick or thin? 
2. Shape: What kinds of shapes are used in an art work? Are they geometric shapes you learn about in math class like squares, ovals, or triangles? Or are they organic shapes like you find in nature in a  leaf or a cloud?
3. Colour: What colours are used in the work? Are the colours warm or cool? Bright or dull? 
4. Texture: What would the artwork feel like if you were allowed to touch it? Rough or smooth? If you were inside a painting, what  would the rocks or clouds feel like?
5. Space: Think about how the art work is organized. Is the background  larger than the middleground? If the art work is three-dimensional, where is the positive space and where is the negative space?