

Painting the Land: The Group of Seven

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The Group of Seven began as an informal group of Canadian artists in Ontario who met and worked together in the 1910s. In the beginning, the group included:

Tom Thomson
Franklin Carmichael
A.Y. Jackson
Frank Johnston
Arthur Lismer
J.E.H. Macdonald
F.H. Varley

What was unique about the Group of Seven? They all believed that, before a land could truly be a home for its people, it should have its own art. This art should be inspired by the land, and should express people's experience of the land. All the Group of Seven painters used bold colours and forms to reflect Canada's natural environment, its powerful weather, and the vastness of the North. Most of their paintings reflect Canada's geography and express people's emotional response to the land in which they live.

The Group of Seven was recognized as being among the first non-Aboriginal artists to create and promote a distinctively Canadian style of art. They tried to capture the spirit of Canada in their paintings and, in this way, expressed a Canadian identity.

The Group of Seven was really a movement to create a truly Canadian art, and it came to involve many more than seven artists. Over the years, a number of other artists joined the group or shared ideas with these painters, such as:

A. J. Casson
Edwin Holgate
L. LeMoyne Fitzgerald (from Winnipeg)
Emily Carr
Bertram Brooker
David Milne
Prudence Heward
Yvonne McCague Housser



Keep these ideas in mind as you view works of art by the Group of Seven. Select three or four paintings you feel best represent the land. Using the questions on the next page, write a short response to each image you select.

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Title of the painting:

Artist's name and date it was painted:

Describe what you see (e.g., colour, form, line, size).

Does this painting remind you of a place you have seen in Canada? Where?

What does this painting tell you about the natural environment?

List some adjectives to describe the feelings this painting expresses.

Explain why you selected this painting.

Give this painting a title that says something about how the land affects life in Canada.