Although this scene would not have been painted directly from observation, it does offer insight into life during this period. What kinds of people are present? What are they doing? What do their clothes say about their status?
David: “Oh, that I had wings like a Dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest.” Psalm 55:6, 1865. Frederic Leighton (British, 1830–1896). Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund 1986.74

Artists often use the past as inspiration. Leighton, a 19th-century artist, painted this scene of King David, a ruler believed to have reigned over the Kingdom of Israel in the 10th century BC. Using evidence gained in research along with their imagination, ask students to create an image of a historical subject or time period.

George III, 1783. Benjamin West (American, 1738–1820). Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence S. Robbins 1952.17

Portraits were often meant to communicate something about the sitter. Using this painting, ask students to create a profile of this historical figure using what they see. What kind of person was he? How can they tell? What words could be used to describe him? What kind of impression does the painting leave on its viewers?


Groupings of artworks created around the same time can often reveal details about important events. Compare and contrast this portrait with the previous portrait of George III. Using what they see, ask students to describe what kinds of things may have happened during this time. How are these men alike? How are they different? How would they have felt about each other?


Works of art were often used, not just displayed. Ask students to hypothesize what this object was meant to do. How much does it weigh? How old is it? Are there any signs of use? What does it say about the people who may have used it? How can they tell?

Europe and America, c. 1760. Manufactured by Chelsea Porcelain Factory (British). Bequest of Mary Warden Harkness 1917.601.1

How do cultures view each other? Artwork can allow us to explore viewpoints of certain people at certain points in history. Ask students to examine this 18th-century British work called Europe and America. What does it communicate about peoples’ views at this time?


Artists often document places and regions. While some aspects may have been exaggerated for dramatic effect, Bierstadt also included identifiable characteristics in this scene. Use this painting to discuss location, direction, and distance with younger students. Older students can try to determine location based on what they see.

More on back cover.