

UNIT 4: 'SUGARING OFF'



PREVIEW THE ARTWORK

What is your first impression or emotional response to this artwork? (Consider mood, tone, or feeling before analyzing details)

What questions or ideas come to mind immediately? (About the subject, artist, or technique)

IMPORTANT

In the LMS assignment for this packet, I have attached a digital image you will be able to zoom in on & observe more closely!

LEARN ABOUT THE ARTWORK

SUGARING OFF

Artist: Grandma Moses

Year: 1943

Original Location: Galerie St. Etienne collection

Medium: Oil Paint on Composition Board

Style: Naive art (American Primitive)

At first glance, *Sugaring Off* looks like a cheerful winter scene filled with tiny people going about their day. The longer you look, the more you begin to notice how much is happening. Every part of the painting is busy with movement, texture, and repeated shapes that help tell a story about life in a small rural community.

The artist, Grandma Moses, painted this scene in 1943 when she was in her eighties. Her real name was Anna Mary Robertson Moses. She did not start painting seriously until later in life. Before becoming an artist, she spent most of her years as a farmer's wife in New England. Because of this, many of her paintings come from her own memories of daily life, seasons, and traditions she experienced firsthand.

As you look at the painting, imagine that this scene comes from someone's memory. How do you think painting from memory might change the way details are shown? Do some things feel more important than others?

This painting shows a winter tradition called maple sugaring. During late winter, families would collect sap from maple trees and boil it down to make syrup and sugar. In the center of the painting, a large pot of sap sits over a fire. Nearby, people carry buckets, horses pull sleds, and children gather as warm syrup is poured onto fresh snow to make a sweet treat. Instead of focusing on one main person, Grandma Moses shows many small moments happening all at once.

Look closely at the center of the painting. What actions can you spot? How many different activities do you notice happening at the same time?

One of the most interesting parts of this painting is how pattern is created. People appear again and again across the landscape doing similar actions like walking, carrying, gathering, and working. The bare trees repeat across the hills, their branches stretching upward in similar shapes. Paths, footprints, and sled tracks create repeated lines in the snow that guide your eye through the scene. All of these repeating elements help the painting feel lively and connected.

What patterns do you see in the trees, people, or paths? How do these repeated shapes help move your eye across the painting?

Texture plays a big role in how this painting feels. The snow looks soft and uneven. The trees feel rough and thin. The smoke from the fire looks light and wispy. Even though the paint is flat on the surface, Grandma Moses uses brushstrokes, color changes, and small details to help each part of the scene feel different to the eye.

If you could reach out and touch one part of this painting, what do you think it would feel like? Rough, smooth, soft, or scratchy? What visual clues helped you decide?

Color also helps tell the story. Most of the painting is made up of cool whites and blues, which help us feel the cold of winter. Small areas of warmer colors like red, brown, and yellow appear in clothing, buildings, animals, and fires. These warmer colors draw attention to important moments and add warmth to the scene.

Where do you see the warmest colors in the painting? Why do you think Grandma Moses placed those colors there instead of somewhere else?

The shapes and lines in this painting are simple and easy to recognize. Buildings are blocky and clear. Hills roll gently across the background. People are painted as small figures made from basic shapes. Grandma Moses was not trying to make everything look perfectly realistic. Instead, she arranged each part of the painting so the story would be easy to follow and enjoyable to look at.

Do you think the painting feels more calm or more busy? What choices in shape, line, or placement help create that feeling?

Even though *Sugaring Off* shows an everyday activity, it celebrates something meaningful. It shows people working together, sharing traditions, and enjoying the season. Each small repeated action becomes part of a bigger picture. Much like a mosaic, many small pieces come together to create one complete image.

As you finish observing, ask yourself this. What story do you think Grandma Moses wanted to tell? What details helped you understand that story without using words?

OBSERVE THE ARTWORK

What is the **subject** (the main focus/story)?

A Single Person Group of people Landscape or Nature Still Life
 Scene: Scripture Scene: History Scene: Mythology/Legend Other:

What **message** or **purpose** does this artwork have?

Sacred / Religious Secular / Non-Religious Unknown / Unclear

How **realistic** is this artwork's style?

Very Realistic / Naturalistic Stylized but still recognizable Abstract / Non-Representational

TECHNIQUE & DESIGN

What is the **medium** used in this piece of artwork?

What do you observe about the **surface/technique**?

Smooth and Polished Detailed and Precise Textured or Layered
 Energetic or Expressive Repetitive or Patterned Other:

What do you observe about **texture**?

Smooth Surface Rough or Uneven Surface A Mix of Textures

What do you observe about **line**?

Strong Outlines Around Shapes Subtle/Blended Edges
 Lines Create Movement or Direction Lines Create Rhythm or Pattern

What do you observe about the **proportions**?

Natural / Realistic Idealized (more perfect than real life) Exaggerated or Distorted

LIGHT & SPACE

Can you locate the **light source** in the artwork?

No Yes If yes, from where?

What do you observe about the **light**?

Natural Symbolic/Unrealistic Studio Light Direct Light/Harsh

Is there a sense of **movement**?

Everything appears still & stable A sense of motion (describe what suggests it):

Is there a sense of **depth**?

Illusion of distance flat/lacking depth

How did the artist suggest depth? (*Overlap, scale, perspective, color, etc*)

COLOR & SYMBOLISM

What **hues** do you see? (*Check all that apply*)

Red Red-Orange Orange Yellow-Orange Yellow Yellow-Green
 Green Blue-Green Blue Blue-Violet Violet Red-Violet

Where do these hues appear on the **color wheel**?

Complementary (opposite) Analogous (side-by-side) Warm Cool

What **saturation**s are used?

Bright/Intense Pale Darkened

Are there **symbolic uses** of color? Any meaning/purpose in the colors used? Explain.

INTERPRETATION & MEANING

Use complete sentences!

What do you notice about the gesture/positioning/gaze/placement of the subject(s)?

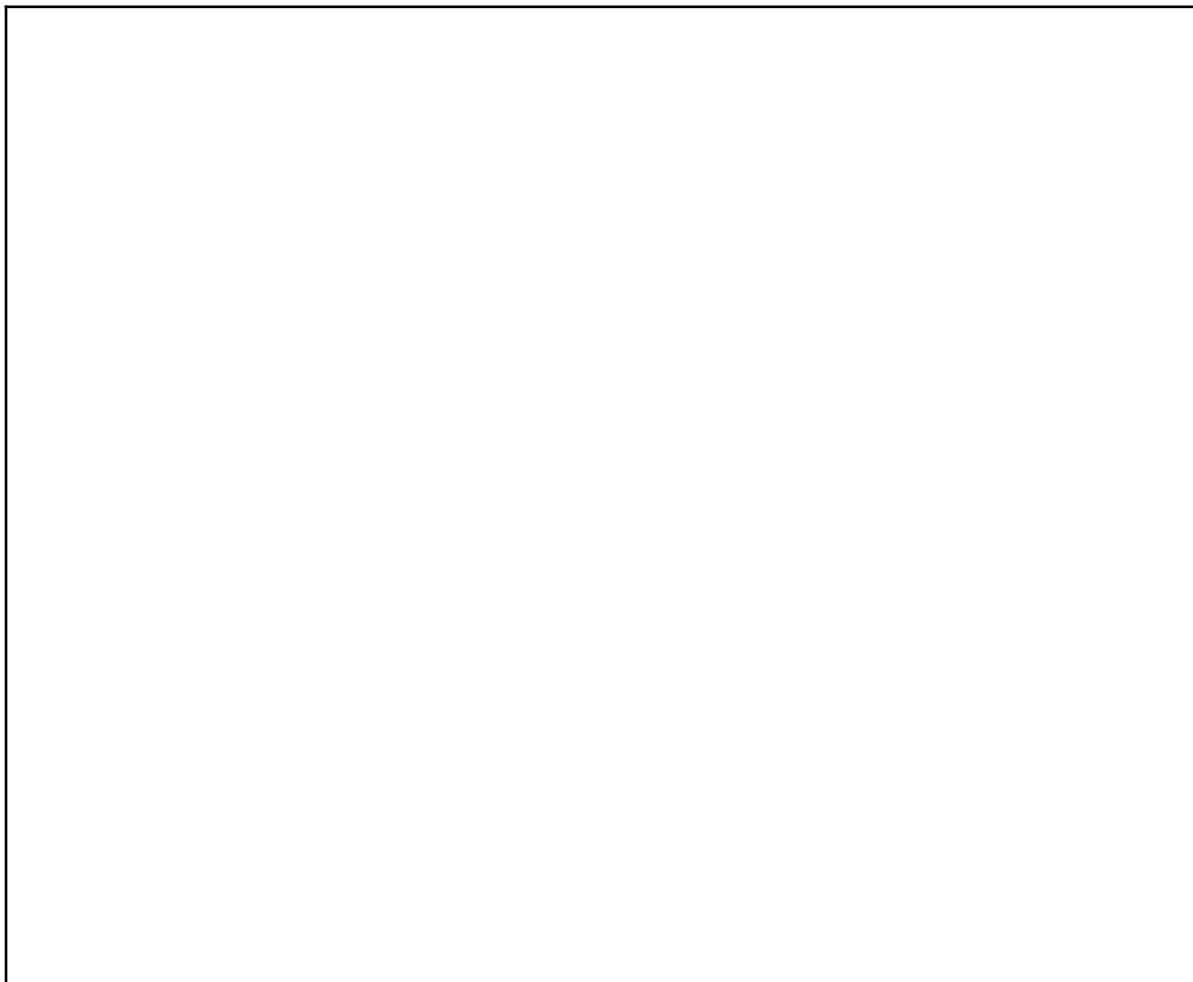
What **story, idea or emotion** might the artist be communicating to you through this artwork? What story are they trying to tell?

How might someone in the original time and place have understood or appreciated this artwork differently than you do today? Would there be a different narrative around it?

Does this artwork **remind you of another** artwork, story, or cultural symbol? Does it look like anything else you have observed in your studies or the world around you?

COMPOSITION SKETCH

Draw (only) the **major shapes** and composition **in simple shape** (square, rectangle, circle, triangle, etc) **form**.



* KEY FACTS FOR MEMORIZATION *

TITLE:

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ARTIST:

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YEAR:

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LOCATION:

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MEDIUM:

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STYLE:

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