



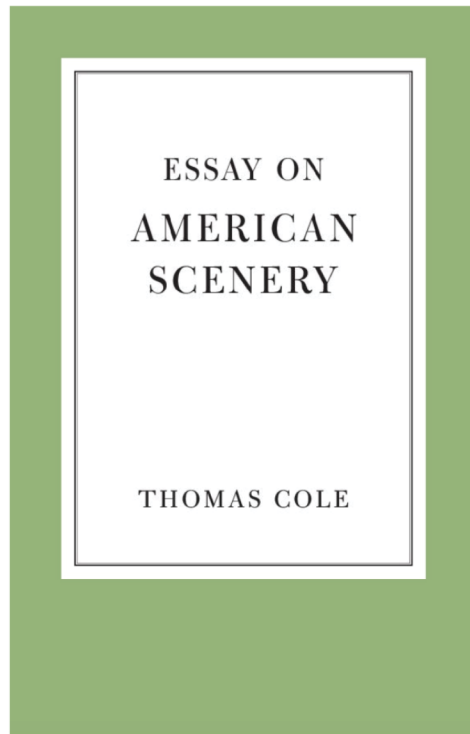
THOMAS COLE

NATIONAL
HISTORIC
SITE

School & Youth Visits HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

Select one of the following Hands-On Activities to accompany your School Tour at the historic site. Explore activity descriptions and curriculum alignments in the following pages.

1. Creating Your *Essay on American Scenery*: What is the American Landscape?
2. Sketch, Remember, Create: Landscape Drawing Exercise
3. Botanical Drawing & the Art of Emily Cole
4. Environmental Writing
5. Color Wheel Study: *Diagram of Contrasts*
6. Create-Your-Own Take Action Card
7. Painting Human Presence in the Landscape
8. Natural Paints: Making Pigments at the Historic Site



Creating Your *Essay on American Scenery*: What is the American Landscape?

Appropriate for: Grades 1-12

Connects well with: art, history, and English curricula

Description: In 1836, Thomas Cole wrote an *Essay on American Scenery* that celebrated American landscapes and expressed his fear that they would be destroyed. In pairs, students will read different paragraphs from the essay (scaled appropriately for grade level) and report back to the group to discuss what they read and its meaning. Students will then break into groups and complete mini "Essays on American Scenery" by creating artwork and writing.

Students will work in our education space, creating poetry, prose, and artwork that responds to the questions: "What is the American landscape?" "What makes up a landscape?" "Is there something you see, do, or experience today that you hope will be around for future generations?" Students will then gather as a group to share their interpretations of these questions.

Pair this with our *Thomas Cole: Artist, Writer, Early Environmentalist or Contemporary Art & the Environment* tours.



Sketch, Remember, & Create

Landscape Drawing Activity

Appropriate for: Grades 1-12

Connects well with: art and technology curricula

Description: A key part of Thomas Cole's creative process involved leaving out certain details in a landscape and remembering, and later, capturing others. Students will sit outdoors in a wide circle, facing away from each other, looking out at the grounds all around them. They will have two minutes to observe what they see, then for three minutes they will turn in to sketch what they saw, without referencing the real-life view.

Students will continue to rotate places in the circle so that they are looking at a different view and will repeat this sequence up to four times. They will then pick from their sketches a favorite view to turn into a painting and spend the remaining time painting their chosen scene.

Pair this with our [Creative Process](#) tour.



Botanical Drawing & the Art of Emily Cole

Appropriate for: K-12

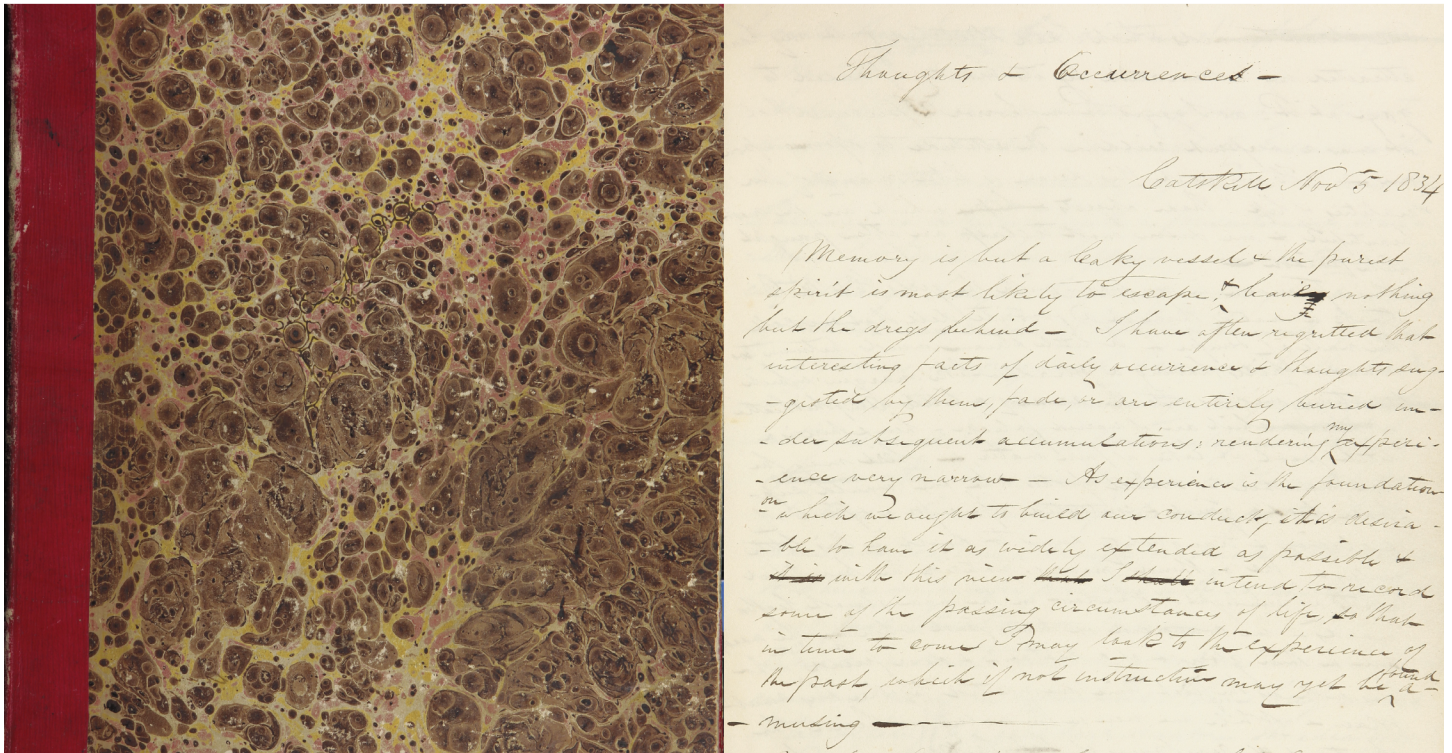
Connects well with: art, design, and science curricula

Description: Emily Cole (1843-1913) was a botanical artist who created over 100 watercolor works on paper and painted porcelain objects decorated with plants and flowers. The daughter of Maria Bartow and Thomas Cole, she lived most of her life in the historic household alongside her family and became regarded as "Catskill's china painter." American flower painting emerged as a distinct genre in the mid-nineteenth century as scientists and artists were influenced by European still life painting traditions and scientific discoveries.

During their visit, students will learn about the life and artwork of Emily Cole. After viewing her art in the galleries, students will explore the flowers and plants that she once painted outside in the gardens. They will choose their own plant to draw outside using a still-life method. They may also reference a botanical by Emily Cole and draw inspiration from it. Students will complete their painting in the Storehouse. Museum educators and teachers can discuss seasonal and weather-dependent options.

Pair this with our **Contemporary Art & the Environment** tour.

Emily Cole: Ceramics, Flora, and Contemporary Responses on view May 3-Nov 2.



Environmental Writing

Appropriate for: K-12

Connects well with: English, art, and environmental science curricula

Description: Thomas Cole often wrote about his feelings on the changing environment through personal journals, essays, and poetry. Today, poets like Joy Harjo, Mary Oliver, Wendell Berry, Allison Adelle Hedge Coke, Amanda Gorman, and more use writing to speak about nature, human relationships to land, and environmental justice.

Students will write poetry about their experiences in and with nature. They will explore the Site's grounds and gardens and gather ideas using a five senses worksheet. They will then compose a final piece of writing. They may enclose their final poems into a colored envelope to take home or exchange with their peers.

This activity may be modified as an ekphrastic poetry lesson by request.

Pair this with our Thomas Cole: Artist, Writer, Early Environmentalist tour.



Color Wheel Study: *Diagram of Contrasts*

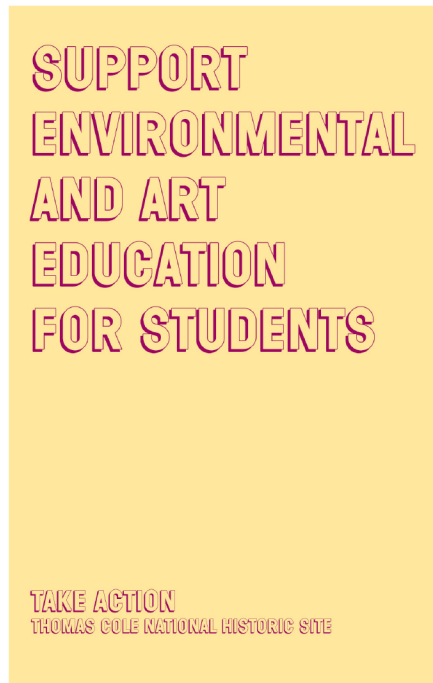
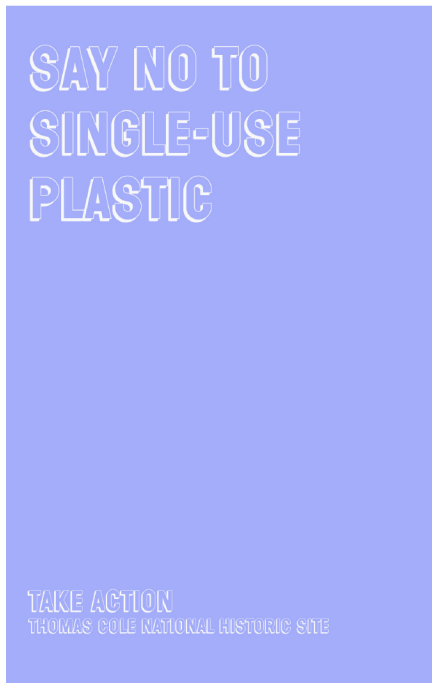
Appropriate for: K-12

Connects well with: art, music, and math curricula

Description: Thomas Cole's 1834 painting *Diagram of Contrasts* may look like a modern work of art, but the artist was fascinated by light, shadow, and color. Students will create their own color study, exploring value and color relationships.

I made a small circular diagram of colours today. It reminded me of an experiment I have long wished to try...It is what may be called the Music of Colours. I believe that colours are as capable of affecting—by combination, degree, and arrangement—as sound. — Thomas Cole, 1834, *Thoughts & Occurrences*

Pair this with our [Creative Process](#) tour.



Create-Your-Own Take Action Card

Appropriate for: K-12

Connects well with: art, English, technology, and science curricula

Description: Thomas Cole mourned the loss of nature in his personal writings, poems, and his 1836, *Essay on American Scenery*. During school visits, students will hear excerpts from Thomas' writings and explore environmental themes in his artworks. As a group, we will discuss ways to protect the natural world today.

Students will each receive a Take Action card from the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and will be prompted to create their own Take Action statement.

Pair this with our **Thomas Cole: Artist, Writer, Early Environmentalist** tour.



Painting Human Presence in the Landscape

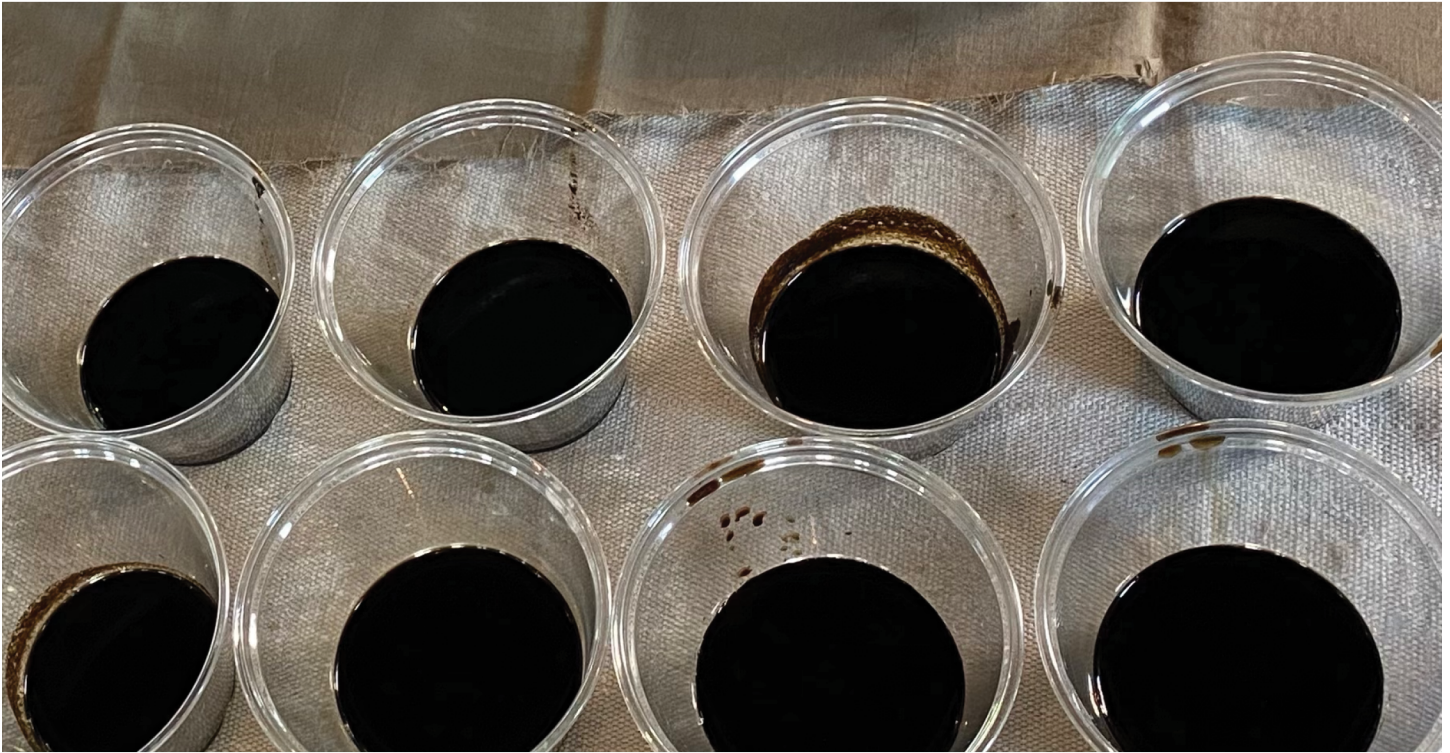
Appropriate for: Grades 3-12

Connects well with: history, science, and art history curricula

Description: In Thomas Cole's paintings representing United States scenery, he emphasized large mountains, expansive land, and massive trees as a response to encroaching industry and clear-cutting that was actively taking place at the time. People, by comparison, are often tiny, solitary figures in an overwhelming landscape.

Humans have long interacted with the land in many ways. Indigenous communities continue to protect over 80% of the world's biodiversity. By painting wild and unpeopled scenes, Thomas Cole contributed to the notion that Indigenous people were quickly disappearing from the landscape. His landscapes are at times absent of the people and communities that were present in these settings. This activity asks students to consider their relationship to the environment and how we might foster meaningful interactions with our natural world.

Pair this with our [Creative Process](#) or [Contemporary Art & the Environment](#) tours.



Natural Paints: Making Pigments at the Historic Site

Appropriate for: Grades K-3

Connects well with: art, science, and technology curricula

Description: Prior to the production of commercially manufactured tubes of paint in the 1840s, artists created their own paints by grinding down colorful rocks and minerals and combining them with linseed and other oils to create pigments. Pigments like madder root, vermilion, chrome yellow, cobalt, and more were staples in Thomas Cole's landscapes, but it was from tree bark that he created some of his first dye tests. Botanical artists like Emily Cole would continue to turn to natural materials for other artistic expressions and as objects of study.

While Emily used glazes and lusters as materials for her china-painting, today plant-pigments can offer a sustainable alternative to plastic-based paints and art materials. Students will gather natural materials from the Site's grounds and gardens and learn how to process natural watercolor paint. Museum educators and teachers will discuss seasonal and available plant-dye options.

Pair this with our **Creative Process** or **Contemporary Art & the Environment** tours. *Emily Cole: Ceramics, Flora, and Contemporary Responses* on view May 3-Nov 2.