A myth is a story about how the world was created or why something is the way that it is. Myths are often exaggerated stories that become important to a culture, whether or not they are based in reality.

*Every culture has its own myths.*

Through their artwork, Winslow Homer and Frederic Remington show us various myths about the United States and also develop stories about themselves. That is why our exhibition is called *Mythmakers.*

Use this guide to help discover these stories (and some exciting animals) throughout the exhibition using close looking, creativity, and conversation.
Like all businesspeople, artists use myths or stories about themselves as a way to sell their work. There are many sides to every person.

**Winslow Homer**

had a reputation as the “Hermit of Prouts Neck.” A hermit is a person who chooses to live apart from other people. Though we don’t think there were any poisonous snakes in Homer’s garden, he put up a sign that said “Snakes, Snakes, Mice” to scare people away.

**Another Side of Homer:**

Winslow Homer was close with his family, who lived next door. Before living in Prouts Neck, he had a fancy studio in New York City in a building with many other artists, and was a snappy dresser. Homer was also a successful real estate developer (someone who buys and sells land and buildings). He and his family helped build Prouts Neck, Maine, into a summer retreat.
Sometimes, we decide to put one part of ourselves forward so others will see us in a certain way.

**Frederic Remington**

was known for his “authentic” depictions of the West, cowboys, and Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are the earliest known inhabitants of an area. The way he painted and sculpted this part of the country and the people who lived there influenced lots of books and movies about the American West.

**Another Side of Remington:**

Frederic Remington grew up on the East Coast and lived in a big house in New Rochelle, New York, which he called “Endion.” Remington never lived out West for long periods of time, except for a short time in Kansas where he tried to be a sheep rancher and saloon owner. When he visited the West, Remington collected objects created and used by cowboys and Indigenous peoples to use as props in his studio.
WHAT IS A STORY THAT YOU LIKE TO TELL ABOUT YOURSELF?
Stories that you like to tell about yourself communicate something about you. What does your story tell others about you?

Find an artwork in the exhibition and place yourself in the scene. Tell a story about yourself interacting with the characters (animals or people) and the setting (the forest or desert for example). It can either be a true story or one that you make up using your imagination.

Artwork:

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Artist:

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EXAMPLE:
“This one time I rode a big horse, the horse got scared and ran. However, I managed to calm the horse down and get back home safely!”
Often animals are characters in myths, and can symbolize (represent) different ideas. These stories are often related to how the animals look or act.

For example, in some cultures, horses are seen as symbols of power and virtue (goodness).

Look at the images on these pages and match them to the objects in the galleries. When you find an animal, make a movement or a sound inspired by the artwork to celebrate! What do you think about when you see this animal?

(Find the corresponding artwork titles on page 17.)
While Winslow Homer and Frederic Remington were alive, the United States changed dramatically. In the 1800s, the size of what was considered the United States more than doubled and new states were created out of territories. Many white settlers believed the myth that the United States had a duty and a right to expand the frontier westward to spread their religious and political values. They felt like the land was not developed and was open for them to take.
However, it was a myth that the land was empty, because Indigenous populations had been living there for thousands of years. Millions of Indigenous people were killed or forced to leave their homes and move to reservations. The rapid push West and South by white settlers also caused a war with Mexico. Today there are over 5 million Indigenous people living in the United States.

QUESTIONS TO GET YOU TALKING: What on the map is new to you? What do you notice about changing borders? How has the United States or the world changed during your lifetime?
Choose an artwork with a person or animal in it. Look closely at the artwork for 3 to 5 minutes and think about what is happening in this scene. Write down 4 words to describe what you see and any moods or emotions this scene brings up.

Artwork:

Artist:

Word List:

**WORD EXAMPLES:** Freedom and joy.
Using your word list, create a story about the animal or person in the artwork. Use your best dramatic voice to narrate the story.

Sentence:
EXAMPLE: As Jonah ran forward, pulling his brother’s arm, he felt the freedom and joy of summer.
We asked our multi-vocal label writers to point out details and stories that they found important to this work.

The soldiers appear to be out-numbered in a very exposed position. What will happen when night falls? - *D Rawlings*

If the landscape does not support the men and their horses, why are they there? - *J Pahdopony*

It is clear that they are surrounded. Lower contrast, softer brush strokes as we back out - *S Appleton*

Very dry, not much water makes me thirsty - *B Holding*

Yellow as a zone of caution - *R Burrows Hodges*

Scent of sun baked leather, horse odor and dusty earth - *R Burrows Hodges*

How desperate are these men? - *D Rawlings*

We the viewer are situation at the edge of the waterhole, drawing us into the action, testing our own composure… - *M Kleberg*
What started as an heroic archetype becomes a sad historic commentary. - *S Appleton*

Natives are so small and washed out this painting is right in line with the Vanishing Red Man theory of 1900s-1930s, where non-native society actively believed Native Americans were dying off and would become extinct - *J Pictou*

Look at how bored the horses are... - *M Kleberg*

What’s the source of this small water hole up high on the plains? - *J Pahdopony*

Interesting landscape, strange crater type location - *B Holding*

Almost a statement of “we already won the west” so the Native threat is diminished to nothing more than background noise. Total myth. - *J Pictou*

Frederic Remington (United States, 1861-1909), *Fight for the Waterhole*, 1903, oil on canvas, 38 1/2 x 51 1/2 x 2 1/8 inches. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The Hogg Brothers Collection, gift of Miss Ima Hogg, 43.25/Bridgeman Images.

Please refer to the key on page 17 for more information about them.

(This exercise and presentation was inspired by the artwork of Wendy Red Starr.)
Now it is your turn to respond to an artwork! Observe and point out any special details that you notice when you look closely at this artwork.
What stories or myths are being told? What do you think was true to reality and what was made up? What do you still have questions about?
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Map sources | pages B/9:


Annotated Painting Contributors | pages 12/13:
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