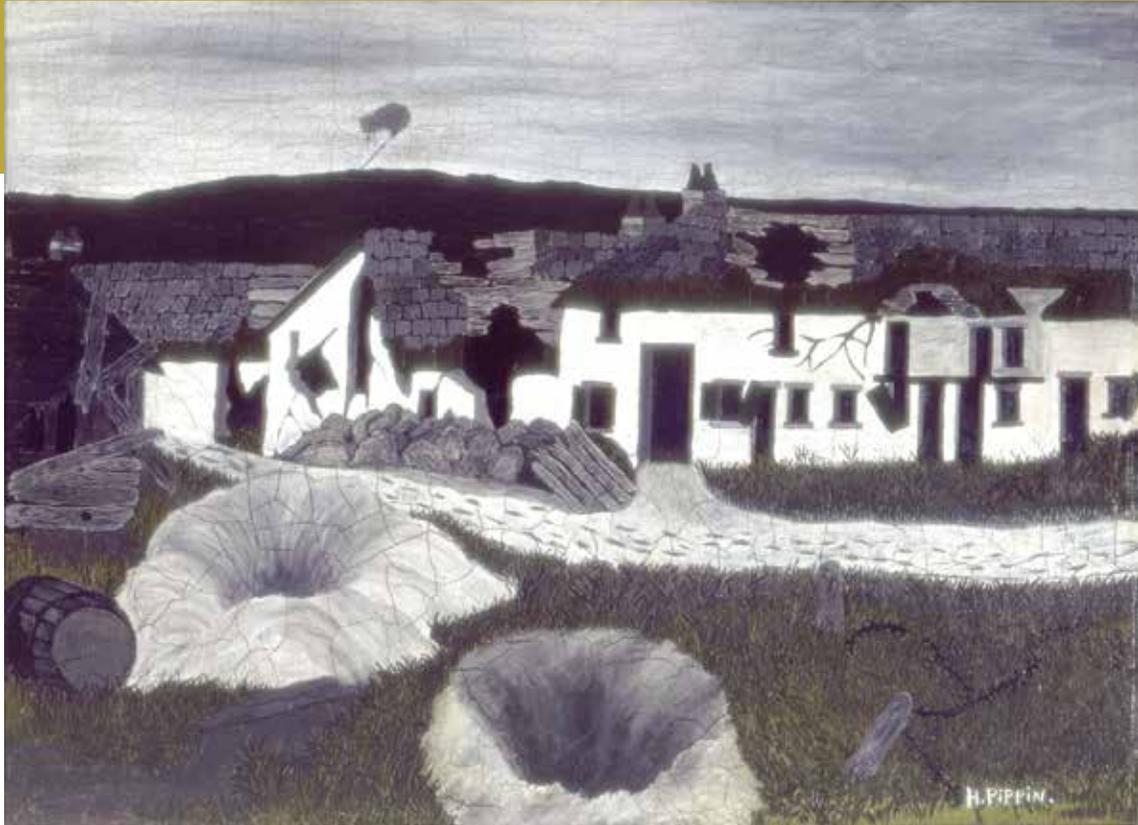


PICTURING MEMORY

KEY TERMS

- African-American History
- Memory
- Painting
- Trauma
- World War I



CLOSE LOOKING

TWELVE YEARS AFTER RETURNING TO THE UNITED STATES from fighting in France during World War I, Horace Pippin began painting his memories of being a soldier. He completed *Shell Holes and Observation Balloon, Champagne Sector*, a painting of an abandoned battle site, in the early 1930s. In it Pippin recreates a war zone in the Champagne region of France, where his regiment fought. The painting is rendered in a palette of black, white, and grey—colors that together emphasize the bleakness of the scene. The land bears scars from shell fire; farmhouses and outbuildings are damaged, barbed wire is severed from fence posts that look like grave markers, and eerie footprints mark the path where soldiers once trod. An observation balloon, tethered by a cable, flies in the background of the painting. Used by both Allied powers and Germany, these fabric balloons filled with hydrogen gas were flown a few miles behind the front lines to spot artillery and gather intelligence.

SHELL HOLES AND OBSERVATION BALLOON, CHAMPAGNE SECTOR c. 1931

Oil on muslin
Horace Pippin
Born: West Chester, Pennsylvania 1888
Died: West Chester, Pennsylvania 1946
Gift of Mrs. John Merryman, Jr., BMA 1967.48
©Artist's estate

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

PIPPIN ATTENDED SEGREGATED SCHOOLS

in Goshen, New York, until he was fifteen, when he went to work to support his ailing mother. He worked at a coal yard and an iron foundry, and as a hotel porter and used-clothing seller, before enlisting at the age of twenty-nine.

As a boy, Pippin had a strong interest in drawing. He won his first set of watercolors and crayons in an advertising campaign sponsored by an art supply company. Later he frequented a harness track in Goshen, where he sketched horses and drivers. Upon his discharge, Pippin returned to art. He said that World War I "brought out all the art in me."⁸ Art aided his process of recovery both from the emotional trauma of war and from injury to his body. He worked with charcoal to decorate discarded cigar boxes and a hot poker to burn images into wood panels.⁹

In 1928, Pippin took up painting and completed his first canvas when he was forty-three years old. To strengthen his right side, Pippin used his left hand to prop up and guide his wounded right arm while he painted. Because his disability made it difficult for him to work in large scale, his paintings rarely exceeded 25 x 30 inches.¹⁰ His subject matter was vast and included war experiences, landscapes, portraits, biblical subjects, and historical events. His paintings of childhood memories and scenes from everyday life greatly influenced fellow artist Haywood Bill Rivers.



Soldiers of the 369th infantry regiment (15th N.Y.) who won the Croix de Guerre for gallantry in action, 1919.

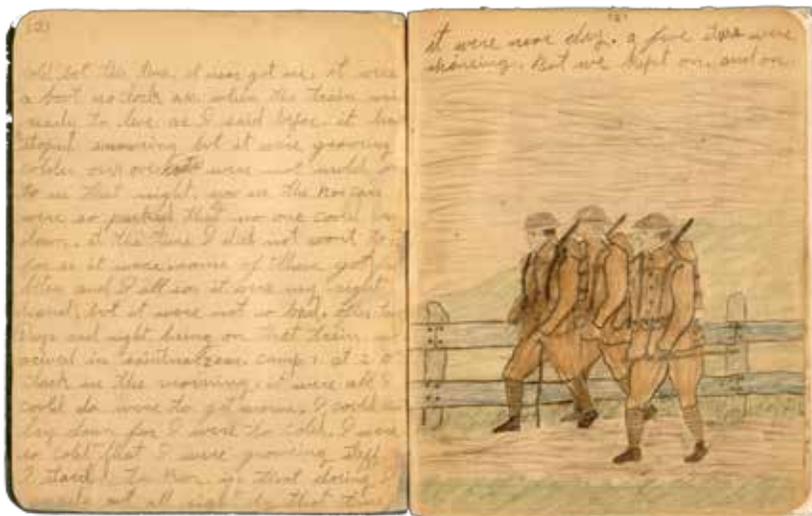
ART IN CONTEXT

IN THE SPRING OF 1917, Horace Pippin enlisted in the 15th Regiment of the New York National Guard, a unit consisting solely of African-American soldiers. The regiment was the first of the US Armed Forces sent to Europe and was soon to be one of the most celebrated combat units of the war. The soldiers of the 15th New York were in a unique position. Over 88% of enlisted men of color at the time were relegated to essential but noncombat roles such as laborers or dock workers. By the end of the war, however, African Americans served in cavalry, infantry, signal, medical, and engineer units and were chaplains, surveyors, truck drivers, chemists, and intelligence officers. In training camps, the US military treated the few regiments consisting of African-American soldiers poorly. White soldiers sometimes refused to salute black officers, and black soldiers were often barred from officers' quarters and clubs.¹ African-American soldiers' tents often lacked stoves and floors, and during the winter of 1917–18, there were reports of numerous deaths by freezing at Camp Alexander in Virginia.²

Prior to the 15th New York being formed, any African-American man who wanted to fight had to enlist in either the French or Canadian armies.³ Many African-American soldiers hoped that joining the armed forces and fighting for the United States would help shift racial realities back home, but that was not the case. Commanders of the US Armed Forces ruled out racially integrated units as a matter of policy.⁴ Soldiers of color had to grapple with contributing to the military defense of a society that continued to devalue and abuse them.

When Pippin and the 15th New York arrived in France two days after Christmas in 1917, they were placed under French command that, unlike British and American command, did not racially segregate soldiers.⁵ They received French rifles, helmets, and other gear, although they continued to wear US uniforms. The unit was renamed the 369th Infantry Regiment, one of four African-American regiments to see combat. From July 15 to August 6, 1918, the regiment fought in the Second Battle of Marne, which was the last major German Offensive on the Western Front. The battle is named for the river Marne in the Champagne region of France, which borders Belgium, and it is that region that Pippin recalls in this painting. While in the trenches, Pippin kept illustrated journals, and he wrote in his war diary, "The trenches of the Champagne Sector, that part of France is all mountains, and a bad place for anyone to be in, for the Germans were always shelling them."⁶

Advances in military technology in World War I caused maiming and killing on a scale beyond what had previously been known or even imagined. Pippin recalled seeing horrific injuries, violent explosions, and



A page from Horace Pippin's memoir of his experiences in World War I, ca. 1921. Horace Pippin notebooks and letters, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

gas shelling that lasted for hours. Nerve and mustard gases, machine guns, tanks, and fighter planes enabled the easy killing and maiming of his fellow soldiers and the destruction of the landscape, recorded in Pippin's painting. Pippin, too, suffered severe injuries. In an October 1918 offensive, a sniper shot caused permanent damage to his right arm and shoulder. An excerpt from Pippin's war diary details the event:

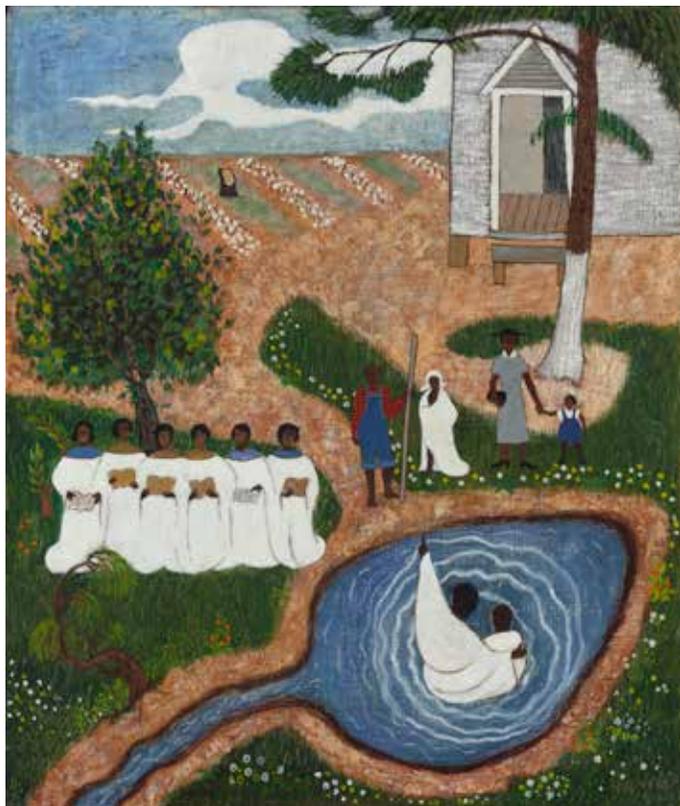
[The German Sniper] clipped my neck and got me through my shoulder and right arm. Yet I had nothing to eat yet and I only had a little water in my canteen... I were laying on my back. I thought I could get up but I could not do so...the German sniper kept after me all day. His bullets would clip the shell hole that held me this was 2 o'clock in the morning. ...I tried to get up again, but I were too weak to do so. Night were coming on, and it began to rain... The rain came more and more until I were in water yet I were growing weaker and weaker all the time...⁷

After spending more than twenty-four hours in the shell hole, Pippin was rescued by French comrades and eventually taken to a hospital in Lyons, France, where a steel plate was used to attach his shattered shoulder to his upper arm. From there, he was sent back to the United States.

RELATED ARTWORK

BAPTISM (next page, above left) depicts a rural scene in which a minister, standing in a blue pond, baptizes a worshipper while a farmer, his wife, and two children bear witness. To the left of the pond, members of a white-robed choir hold hymnals and sing. Crop fields, trees, and the corner of a farmhouse or outbuilding are visible in the background.

Haywood Bill Rivers painted the scene using two perspectives. The choir and onlookers appear flat against the canvas and face the viewer directly. The minister, worshipper, and trees are also flat and rendered straight on. However, areas of landscape are painted from



a bird's eye view. Most dynamic of all, the pond is tilted toward the viewer, revealing white, curving ripples of water that migrate away from the baptism and act as a frame for the action. The juxtaposition of perspectives creates an energetic scene that captures the curved, rhythmic lines of the choir members and highlights the drama of the baptism. Rivers's interest in pattern can be found in this and other paintings. Note the repetition of white dots of paint in the composition. In the foreground, the dots represent tiny flowers. The same dots, echoed in the fields in the background, depict cotton.

A decade before painting *Baptism*, Rivers moved to Baltimore at the age of sixteen from rural Morven, North Carolina. He was promised a scholarship to the art school that is now the Maryland Institute College of Art, only to have it revoked when he arrived to register. The NAACP advocated for him, and Rivers was eventually awarded a two-year scholarship to the Art Students League in New York.¹¹ While there, the artist was introduced to the memory paintings of Horace Pippin, whose depictions of rural scenes greatly influenced Rivers's subject matter. Rivers recalled and recorded scenes from his early years including church going, card games, seamstresses and tailors at work, and quilting. A 1948 grant, awarded to support his travel through the rural areas of the Southeast, also aided Rivers in tapping childhood memories that he later captured in painting.¹² The Baltimore Museum of Art mounted his first solo exhibition in 1948.

BAPTISM 1948

Oil on canvas

Haywood Bill Rivers

Born: Morven, North Carolina 1922

Died: Brooklyn, New York 2001

Gift of the Negro History Committee

BMA 1949.56

©Artist's estate



¹ Jami Bryan, "Fighting for Respect: African-American Soldiers in WWI" <http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwi/articles/fightingforrespect.aspx>

² Jack D. Foner, *Blacks in the Military in American History* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 119.

³ Anthony F. Gero, *Black Soldiers of New York State: A Proud Legacy* (New York: Excelsior Editions, 2009), 44.

⁴ United States Department of Defense, "Black Americans in Defense of Our Nation," 1985 http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/AfrAmer.html

⁵ Gero, *Black Soldiers of New York State: A Proud Legacy*, 52.

⁶ "The trenches of the champagne citur, that pirt of France is all mountens, and a bad place for any one to be in, for the Germen were all ways shellen them." Horace Pippin, "Horace Pippin's Autobiography, First World War," (illustrated) *Archives of American Art*, 14.

⁷ [The German Sniper] clipped my neck and got me thru my shoulder and right arm. Yet I had nothing to eat yet and I only had a little water in my canteen... I were leyeing on my back. I thought I could get up but I could not do so. ... the Germen sniper kepted after me all Day. His bullets would clip the shell hole that hell me this were 2 oclock in the morning... I trided to get up a gan, but I were to week to do so. Night were coming on, and it began to rain... The rain came more and more until I were in water yet I were growing weaker and weaker all the time..." Pippin, "Horace Pippin's Autobiography, First World War," 53-55.

⁸ Undated letter from Horace Pippin, Horace Pippin War Memoirs, Letters, and Photographs, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

⁹ Judith E. Stein, "An American Original," in *I Tell My Heart: The Art of Horace Pippin*, ed. Judith E. Stein (New York: Universal Publishing, 1993), 4.

¹⁰ Stein, "An American Original," 5.

¹¹ Kellie Jones, *Eye Minded: Living and Writing Contemporary Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 384.

¹² Daniel Shulman, "African American Art and the Julius Rosenwald Fund," in *A Force for Change: African American Art and the Julius Rosenwald Fund*, ed. Daniel Schulman (Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies and Northwestern University Press, 2009), 74.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1:

Creating a memory picture

Grades: K–2, 3–5

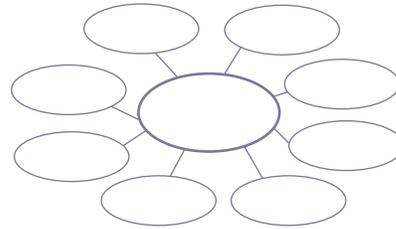
**Subjects: English Language Arts, History/
Social Studies, Visual Arts**

Students will look closely at *Shell Holes and Observation Balloon*, *Champagne Sector* and *Baptism*. Teacher will guide a class discussion using the questions below and recording answers using a Venn Diagram.

- Describe the art elements—line, color, shape, texture, form, space—in each painting.
- What do you think is happening in each of the paintings? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What is the mood of each of the paintings? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Are there any similarities in the paintings? If so, what are they?
- How are the paintings different?

Teacher will share with students information on the paintings and their artists, highlighting the fact that both paintings were done from memory. For elementary school students, sharing information on Horace Pippin can be supported by reading aloud, or having students read, *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin* written by Jen Bryant and illustrated by Melissa Sweet.

Students will then individually create drawings based on their own memories. In groups of four, students will discuss the memories they may use, and how they will create an image of this memory. Once they have selected a memory, students will create a Word Web (illustrated at right, above) with one sentence about their selected memory in the center circle. Next, they will add words that describe the memory using lines connecting the words to the circle. They will then create a drawing of their memory, using their descriptive words as inspiration. All students will share with the class their drawings, their descriptive words, and how the words they used helped them express their memory visually.



ACTIVITY 2:

Keeping an illustrated journal

Grades: K–2, 3–5

**Subjects: English Language Arts, History/
Social Studies, Visual Arts**

Students will examine *Shell Holes and Observation Balloon*, *Champagne Sector*, form teams of four and brainstorm as many words as possible to describe the painting. Each team will then share their words with the class. Teacher will record all words on a black/white board and then invite all students to discuss the painting by picking a word from the board and expanding on it—sharing why they feel it is important in the understanding of the painting. They must support their assertions with evidence from the painting.

They will then look closely at the page from Horace Pippin's journal in this resource and additional pages from Horace Pippin's illustrated journals, which can be found online at the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. *

Students will then keep a visual and writing journal in which they write about and draw scenes of their lives three times a week for several weeks. They will then create a 2- or 3-dimensional work of art inspired by an event described in one of their journal entries. Teacher will lead a discussion of the process, ask students to reflect on the difference between capturing their lives in textual and visual form, and explore the benefits of using both text and image.

* Inventory of Horace Pippin's Journals in the Archives of American Art: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/horace-pippin-notebooks-and-letters-8586/more#inventory>

ACTIVITY 3:**Exploring Horace Pippin's life through art and literature****Grades: K–2, 3–5****Subjects: English Language Arts, History/
Social Studies, Visual Arts**

Students will look closely at *Shell Holes and Observation Balloon, Champagne Sector*. Using the following questions as guidelines, students will discuss the work.

- Describe the art elements—line, color, shape, texture, form, and space—that you see in the painting.
- What do you think is happening in this painting? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What is the mood of the painting? What do you see that makes you say that?

Teacher will share with students that the painting is by artist Horace Pippin and recalls his time in Europe during WWI. Teacher will read aloud, or have students read, *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin* written by Jen Bryant and illustrated by Melissa Sweet and ask students to respond to the following questions during or after the reading. Students will point out where the illustrations support their answers.

- What kinds of things did Horace Pippin like to draw as a child?
- What did Horace Pippin do when he could not make art?
- How did Horace Pippin solve the problem of making art with an injured arm?
- What kinds of things did Horace Pippin paint as an adult?
- Horace Pippin used his mind and his hands when he made art. Share one way he used his mind in the process to make art.

Students will then individually research one artist of their choice using print and/or online resources and create a one-page research report accompanied by pictures (including one example of the artist's work and a student depiction of an important point in the artist's life). Students will then share their research with the class. Teacher may lead a follow up discussion to explore how the artists the students researched were similar to or different from Horace Pippin.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

English Language Arts

Grade 2

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.RI.2.3 Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.RL.2.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.SL.2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.W.2.2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and providing a concluding statement or section.

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.W.2.7. Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

Grade 3

CCSS.ELA—Literacy. RI.3.3. Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.RL.3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g. create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.W.3.7. Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

MARYLAND STATE CURRICULUM

History/Social Studies

Grade 2

5.A.2.a. Gather and interpret information about the past from informational sources and biographies.

Grade 3

5.A.2.a. Collect and examine information about people, places, or events of the past using pictures, photographs, maps, audio or visual tapes, and/or documents.

Visual Arts

Grade 2

1.1.a. Describe colors, lines, shapes, textures, forms, and space found in observed objects and the environment.

1.2.b. Use color, line, shape, texture, form, and space to represent ideas visually from observation, memory, and imagination.

1.2.a. Describe how artists use color, line, shape, texture, form, and space to represent what people see, know, feel, and imagine.

2.1.a. Observe works of art and describe how artists express ideas about people, places, and events.

2.2.b. Communicate a variety of reasons for creating artworks, such as feelings, experiences, events, places, and ideas.

Grade 3

1.1.a. Describe similarities and difference between the elements of art in observed forms.

1.2.a. Compare and describe how artists communicate what they see, know, feel, and imagine using art vocabulary.

1.2.b. Represent ideas and feelings visually that describe what is seen, felt, known, and imagined.

1.3.a. Describe how the elements of art and principles of design are organized to communicate personal meaning in visual compositions.

2.2.a. Discuss and compare how selected artworks from different times or cultures are similar or different (e.g. common themes, content, form, and style)



Shell Holes and Observation Balloon, Champagne Sector, c. 1931, Oil on muslin
Horace Pippin
Born: West Chester, Pennsylvania 1888, Died: West Chester, Pennsylvania 1946
Gift of Mrs. John Merryman, Jr., BMA 1967.48
©Artist's estate



Baptism, 1948, Oil on canvas
 Haywood Bill Rivers
 Born: Morven, North Carolina 1922
 Died: Brooklyn, New York 2001
 Gift of the Negro History Committee, BMA 1949.56
 ©Artist's estate