

Think Like An Artist

Countless artists have called Iowa home, and the state boasts many rich arts programs. The work of these creative people can be found in every part of the state.

Use the State Historical Society of Iowa Think Like an Artist cards to explore the history of remarkable artists in Iowa, the notable work they created and questions to help you interpret their art.

Each artist card (front and back) includes:

- Brief biography about the artist
- Notable pieces of work
- Questions to analyze the artists' works, courtesy of [Visual Thinking Strategies](#)



Grant Wood (1891-1942)

Grant Wood was born on a farm near Anamosa, Iowa, and after his father's death in 1901, the Wood family moved to Cedar Rapids. Wood spent most of his life in Cedar Rapids, and it was here he first developed his artistic aspirations. During multiple trips to Europe from 1920 to 1928, Wood was inspired by Northern Renaissance artists to develop a more complex approach to the way he represented people. In late 1930, his painting "American Gothic" won third prize in the Art Institute of Chicago's 43rd Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture, and made Wood a national figure. In 1934, Wood was appointed Director of the Public Works of Art Projects in Iowa. A year later, he began teaching at the University of Iowa, which he continued to do until his death in 1942.

Notable Works

- [American Gothic, 1930](#)
- [Victorian Survival, 1931](#)
- [Dinner for Threshers, 1934](#)

Think Like Grant Wood

Interpreting the Artist: Grant Wood is hailed as one of America's foremost regionalist painters in the 1930s. He depicted rural subjects that embodied the values of hard work, community and austerity. Wood mixed art styles, with the precision of Northern Renaissance to the curves and lines of Art Deco design. In painting small town and rural life, Wood gave the American public an idealized vision of itself at a time during the Great Depression when most common, working Americans faced great hardship.

Pick one of the [notable works](#) by Wood. Interpret the art by answering the questions below.

- What do you see in the image?
- What makes you say that?
- What else do you see?



Rose Frantzen (1965-Present)

Rose Frantzen was born and raised in the town of Maquoketa in east-central Iowa. She attended the American Academy of Art in Chicago, and would gain national and international acclaim for her oil paintings of landscapes, still lifes and figurative works. In the early 1990s, Frantzen traveled and painted her way through Australia, Mexico, Guatemala, Russia and different parts of Europe. In 1991, Frantzen and her parents purchased the former city hall in Maquoketa, opened Old City Hall Gallery on the first floor and used the second floor council chambers as a studio. She also began to focus on paintings of small town and rural Iowa, painting subjects from life in the studio, around town, and in the surrounding countryside.

Notable Works

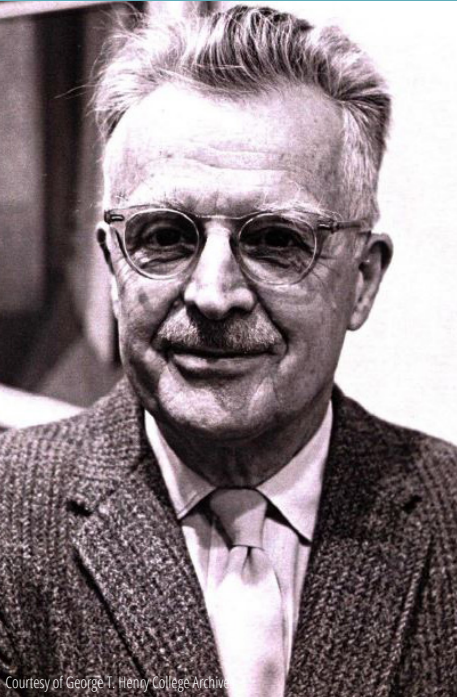
- [Portrait of Maquoketa](#)
- [Dormancy Series](#)
- [Maquoketa Series](#)

Think Like Rose Frantzen

Interpreting the Artist: Rose Frantzen gained international acclaim for her oil paintings done in a contemporary version called the Alla prima method – this is a style of painting where, instead of building colors up with layers or glazing over an underpainting, the piece is completed while the paint is still wet. She usually does landscapes, still life and portrait pieces in oil, but Frantzen has been known to step away from painting concepts and turn towards different materials that add style to her work, such as gilding, stained glass and mosaic.

Pick a portrait from Frantzen's [Portrait of Maquoketa series](#). Interpret the art by answering the questions below.

- What do you see in the image?
- What makes you say that?
- What else do you see?



Marvin Cone (1891-1965)

Marvin Cone was born and raised in Cedar Rapids. He graduated from Coe College in 1914 and then studied for several years at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1917, he served as an interpreter in World War I in France for several years. As a painter, he was known as a leader in the regionalist movement, bringing themes and scenes of the Midwest to the forefront. He lived all his life in Cedar Rapids, where he married his wife Winifred, raised a family and for more than four decades taught art at Coe College. Cone exhibited his works in most of the nation's major galleries, and he was highly respected by his fellow artists. Cone also maintained a lifelong friendship with fellow Iowa artist, Grant Wood.

Notable Works

- [Studio Corner \(Corner of my Studio\), 1931](#)
- [River Bend No. 5, 1938](#)
- [Blue Door, 1954](#)

Think Like Marvin Cone

Interpreting the Artist: Marvin Cone was known as a regionalist painter, and his work integrated his firsthand observation of nature. As a painter, he was known for his circus and carnival scenes, doors of different hues, red barns, cloud-filled skies, villages with odd-shaped houses, twisted staircases and images in empty rooms. Cone also earned a reputation for his abstracts.

Pick one of the [notable works](#) by Cone. Interpret the art by answering the questions below.

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Elizabeth Catlett (1915-2012)

Acclaimed printmaker and sculptor Elizabeth Catlett was born in Washington, D.C. She became one of the first three people - and first African-American woman - to receive a Master of Fine Arts degree in sculpture from the University of Iowa in 1940. In 1947, she produced her first major show "I am a Negro Woman," a series of sculptures, prints, and paintings that toured African-American women's colleges in the United States. She later married Mexican painter Francisco Mora, and was part of a lively community of artists that included Frida Kahlo and her husband, Diego Rivera. Catlett taught at the National School of Fine Arts in Mexico City from 1958 until her retirement in 1976. During the past 40 years, museums and galleries have held more than 50 solo exhibitions of Catlett's sculptures and prints.

Notable Works

- [Sharecropper, 1952 \(published 1968-70\)](#)
- [Singing Head, 1980](#)
- [Central America Says No!, 1986](#)

Think Like Elizabeth Catlett

Interpreting the Artist: While studying at the University of Iowa, Elizabeth Catlett's painting teacher was Grant Wood. He encouraged students to make art about what they knew best and to experiment with different mediums, inspiring Catlett to create lithographs, linoleum cuts and sculptures in wood, stone, clay and bronze. Catlett pursued her lifelong interest in African and pre-Hispanic Mexican art traditions, and highlighted celebratory themes, such as African-American motherhood, education and civil rights.

Pick one of the [notable works](#) by Catlett. Interpret the art by answering the questions below.

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- What makes you say that?
- What else do you see?



Mauricio Lasansky (1914-2012)

Mauricio Lasansky is one of the most important and innovative printmakers of the 20th century. Lasansky was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and in 1945, he was invited to teach at the University of Iowa, where he quickly set about reinvigorating the printmaking program. With his guidance, this program quickly gained international attention. Lasansky remained the head of the department until 1984 and today many of his students are well-known artists and teachers. The University of Iowa printmaking department continues to be widely recognized.

Notable Works

- [The Nazi Drawings, 1968](#)
- [Quetzalcoatl, 1972](#)
- [Emilia at 10 With Black Cat, 1980](#)

Think Like Mauricio Lasansky

Interpreting the Artist: Mauricio Lasansky's prints explored aspects of the human condition, such as the innocence of children and the love of family to the terrible horrors of war. Lasansky is best known for significantly expanding the possibilities of intaglio printmaking, which is a process where an image is created on the surface of a metal plate using a range of techniques such as etching, drypoint, aquatint and engraving.

Pick one of the [notable works](#) by Lasansky. Interpret the art by answering the questions below.

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Ana Mendieta (1948-1985)

Ana Mendieta was born in Havana, Cuba. At the age of 12, Mendieta was sent to America with her sister under Operation Pedro Pan. They spent their first weeks in refugee camps before being sent to an orphanage in Dubuque. In 1966, she began studying painting at the University of Iowa. Mendieta became a performance artist, video-artist and sculptor interested in the relationship between the female body and nature. She tragically died in New York at the age of 36. In 2005, the exhibition "Ana Mendieta: Earth Body, Sculpture and Performance 1972-85" opened to critical acclaim at the Des Moines Art Center. Today, her works are on display at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Art Institute of Chicago and Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, among others.

Notable Works

- [Silueta Muerta, 1976](#)
- [Untitled: Silueta Series, 1978](#)
- [Guanaroca & Iyaré, 1981](#)

Think Like Ana Mendieta

Interpreting the Artist: Ana Mendieta explored her identity as a female emigrant in work captured by photography, film and sculpture. Mendieta used the land as a site to address issues of displacement, impressing her body in various outdoor locations and recording its imprint in photographs and video.

Pick one of the [notable works](#) by Mendieta. Interpret the art by answering the questions below.

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Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling (1876-1962)

Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling was born in Norwood, Michigan. His nickname was originally a contraction of his last name: D'ing. His family moved to Sioux City in 1884, and after graduating from Beloit College, he began working as a reporter for Sioux City newspapers before switching to editorial cartooning. He produced thousands of editorial cartoons during his career - two of which won him Pulitzer Prizes in 1924 and 1943. His cartoons were published in as many as 150 newspapers. Darling also is credited with starting the national wildlife refuge system during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration, when Darling became head of the U.S. Biological Survey, which evolved into the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He spent most of his life in Des Moines with his wife and two children.

Notable Works

- ["The Long, Long Trail," 1919](#)
- ["In Good, Old U.S.A.," 1924](#)
- ["What a Place For a Waste Paper Salvage Campaign," 1943](#)

Think Like Ding Darling

Interpreting the Artist: An editorial cartoon, also known as a political cartoon, is an illustration or comic strip containing a political or social message, that usually relates to current events or personalities. Ding Darling combined his talents as an editorial cartoonist with his love of wildlife to bring attention to environmental conservation.

Pick one of the [notable works](#) by Darling. Interpret the art by answering the questions below.

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Jean Adeline Morgan Wanatee (1910-1996)

Jean Adeline Morgan Wanatee was born on the Meskwaki Indian Settlement in Tama. She was a member of the Wolf Clan. She was known as a role model, advocate and artist who worked to preserve her culture by teaching the Meskwaki language and arts. As a child, she attended the Sac and Fox Day School in Tama, the Flandreau Indian School in South Dakota and then, in the 8th grade, returned to Iowa to attend Tama Public Schools. Today, photographs of her sashes are included in several books on Meskwaki art, and a number of her belts and sashes are in the State Historical Society of Iowa collection. Wanatee also was involved in politics, and nationally, she became the first woman elected to the Meskwaki Tribal Council. She was inducted into the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame in 1993.

Notable Works

- [Sash \(1\)](#)
- [Sash \(2\)](#)
- [Sash \(3\)](#)

Think Like Jean Adeline Morgan Wanatee

Interpreting the Artist: As an artist, Jean Adeline Morgan Wanatee was known for her appliqué, ribbon work and weaving of “yarn belts” or sashes by the traditional finger weaving (warp face braiding) technique.

Pick one of the [notable works](#) by Wanatee. Interpret the art by answering the questions below.

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