



Land of the Golden Fleece— Arthur Streeton in the Western District Education resource

Education sponsor



**Geelong
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Little Malop Street
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Arthur Streeton
Land of the Golden Fleece (detail) 1926
oil on canvas
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
The Oscar Paul Collection, Gift of Henriette von Dallwitz
and of Richard Paul in honour of his father 1965

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Land of the Golden Fleece—Arthur Streeton in the Western District



Studio portrait of Lieutenant Arthur Ernest Streeton, Official War Artist c. 1918
Collection of the Australian War Memorial (P03451.001)
Photographer unknown

Introduction

Land of the Golden Fleece—Arthur Streeton in the Western District brings together works by one of Australia's foremost and much-loved artists. The exhibition focuses on Arthur Streeton's landscape paintings of Victoria's Western District, and associated coastal vistas, executed in the period 1920 to 1932. This education resource examines some of the key works of art in the exhibition and identifies the cultural, historical and geographical significance of the works.

Students and educators are encouraged to use this resource to explore important themes and ideas of the exhibition and to ask questions that generate in discussions in the classroom and the Gallery. The resource is mainly directed towards levels 9 to VCE in the curriculum. The questions, research topics and activities in this resource seek to promote visual analysis and foster creative and innovative thinking across the different learning areas. The learning material also presents links to understand and connect to the cross-curriculum priorities of the AusVELS and the Australian Curriculum.

Learning areas

The Arts (Visual arts):

Exploring and Responding, Creating and Making
Levels 2 to VCE

English:

Language, Literature and Literacy
Levels 7 to 10

Humanities (History):

Historical Knowledge and Understanding
Levels 9 to 10

Humanities (Geography):

Geographical Knowledge and Understanding
Levels 6 to 10

General capabilities

- Personal and social capabilities
- Critical and creative thinking
- Ethical understanding
- Literacy

Cross-curriculum priorities

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
- Sustainability

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Artist timeline



Jack Cato (photographer)
Arthur Streeton c. 1932
Pictures Collection, State Library of Victoria

- 8 April 1867** Born at Duneed, near Geelong
- 1882–c. 1887** Completed night classes at the National Gallery School of Design, Melbourne, and for two years during that time (from 1886) he worked as an apprentice lithographer with Troedel & Co., Melbourne
- 1886** Streeton met Tom Roberts at Mentone and was invited to join a painting group that included Frederick McCubbin and Louis Abrahams. For the next two years he painted outdoors at Box Hill and Heidelberg, on the outskirts of Melbourne, with Roberts, McCubbin, Abrahams and Charles Conder
- 1889** Streeton exhibited about forty small *plein air* paintings in the *9 x 5 Impressions* exhibition at Buxton's Art Gallery, Melbourne, alongside the other Heidelberg painters
- 1890** Moved to Sydney where he became known for his views of the area around Sydney Harbour and heroic landscapes of the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury River
- 1890** *Still glides the stream, and shall for ever glide* (1890) acquired by the National Art Gallery of New South Wales (now known as the Art Gallery of New South Wales)
- 1891** Streeton's *Golden summer, Eaglemont* (1889) is exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, and hung 'on the line' (and in 1892 awarded an honourable mention at the *Salon de la Société des Artistes Français*, Paris)
- 1896** *The purple noon's transparent might* (1896) acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria
- 1897** Left for an extended stay in England (spending five months in Cairo): while living in London he visited Italy and France and made return trips to Australia (in 1906–07 and in 1913–14)
- 1908** Marries Esther Leonora Clench, a Canadian violinist, on 11 January (they honeymoon in Venice)
- 1915–18** During the First World War, Streeton enlisted as a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps at the 3rd London General Hospital, Wandsworth, and was appointed an official war artist in 1918, working in France documenting activities on the Western Front (particularly on the Somme battlefield)
- 1920** Returned to live in Australia
- 1928** Awarded the Art Gallery of New South Wales' *Wynne prize* for landscape for *Afternoon light: the Goulburn Valley* (1928)
- 1929** Becomes art critic for Melbourne's *The Argus*
- 1935** Self publishes his *catalogue raisonné*
- 1937** Knighted (for his services to art)
- 1938** Retired to Olinda, Dandenong Ranges, after his wife's death (where he had built a cottage in the early 1920s)
- 1 Sept 1943** Dies at Olinda

Collated from the following resource: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*

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Questions, research and activities



Arthur Streeton
Land of the Golden Fleece 1926
oil on canvas
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
The Oscar Paul Collection, Gift of Henriette von Dallwitz
and of Richard Paul in honor of his father 1965

A resurgence in landscape subjects and in particular scenes that not only remained unchanged, but resilient, strong, powerful and enduring, offered much needed reassurance. In painting, photography, watercolour, pencil and etching, depictions of mountain ranges, valleys, oceans, rivers, trees, and forests, reached a peak during the 1920s and 1930s. This genre, known as Pictorialism, provides the context for Arthur Streeton's art of this period and the present exhibition.¹

AusVELS Levels 2 to 5 the Arts, English

There are three versions of the painting, *Land of the Golden Fleece* (1926): two are included in this exhibition. Examine the works of this title included in the exhibition and discuss as a class. Are they different? Has Arthur Streeton created different effects of light in each of the paintings?

Activity: How would you describe the Australian landscape? Discuss in small groups your ideas and create a drawing that represents different symbols, images and words that describe the Australian natural environment. Present your artworks to the class.

Created during the final weeks of 1926, Arthur Streeton's composition Land of the Golden Fleece occupies a singular position within his career and also within the history and development of Australian art.²

AusVELS Levels 5 to 9 the Arts

Arthur Streeton is considered a master of depicting the quality of Australian light in his paintings. Describe what you believe to be an effective depiction of Australian sunlight. How has the artist achieved this in the paintings titled *Land of the Golden Fleece*?

AusVELS Levels 8 to 10 the Arts

What do you think Arthur Streeton's own ideas and attitudes were towards the Australian landscape? How has he communicated these ideas through his work?

AusVELS Level 7 Humanities (History)

The title *Land of the Golden Fleece* references an ancient Greek myth. Research the classical story of Jason and the Golden Fleece and its importance as an historical narrative. Why do you think the artist used this title in 1926? Discuss the relationship of the title to the meaning of the work.

AusVELS Levels 9 to 10 the Arts, Humanities (History)

Streeton and other artists during the late 19th century and early 20th century have been closely linked to the Australian Federation movement. Research the Australian artists associated with the movement and discuss how they have represented a sense of nationalism in their work.

AusVELS Levels 8 to 10 the Arts

Streeton's paintings depict the play of light on the environment at different times of the day.

Activity: Create a still life arrangement using objects of a different size and position them beside a window that gets good light. Take a series of photographs of the objects using a digital camera at different times of the day. Record your findings and comment on the process in your visual diary. Develop one of the photographs and create a pencil or charcoal drawing that represents the different tonal values in the photography.

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Arthur Streeton
Land of the Golden Fleece 1926
 oil on canvas
 National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
 The Oscar Paul Collection, Gift of Henriette von Dallwitz
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(Below)
 Eugene von Guérard
View of Geelong 1856
 oil on canvas
 Geelong Gallery, Victoria
 Purchased through the Geelong Art Gallery Foundation
 with the generous support of the Victorian Government,
 the Australian Government, the City of Greater Geelong
 and numerous community and other donors, 2006

AusVELS Levels 8 to 10 the Arts

*The Australian landscape became a popular and widespread symbol of nationhood and the 'pastoral ideal' was developed as a vehicle for social, economic and political stability.*³

Investigate the changing style and role of landscape painting in Australian art. Discuss why the Australian landscape has been a central focus for many artists.

Consider at least three artists from different eras who worked with landscape and discuss differences in their works and the development of their styles.

Activity: Create a timeline that represents your research using both image and text.

AusVELS Levels 9 to 10 Humanities (History)

Land of the Golden Fleece is acclaimed as a good example of a rich pastoral landscape. The pastoral industry played a significant role in building the Australian economy and shaping the country's history. Research the nature of 19th century pastoral enterprise in Victoria's Western District.

VCE Art, studio art

*The masculine ideals of war were used to promote and validate a particular landscape of peace, an ideal of pastoral wealth and national potential.*⁴

What role has gender played in defining the Australian landscape? Discuss this question using the paintings in this exhibition and using an analytical framework.

VCE Art, studio art

In small groups, compare the painting *View of Geelong* (1856) by Eugene von Guérard to *Land of the Golden Fleece* (1926) by Arthur Streeton. Identify how each artist has approached the Australian landscape as a subject. Discuss the historical context and formal qualities of each of the artworks.

How do artists create a sense of place? Research paintings from other cultures and discuss how those artists create works that represent their own situation and setting. Compare and analyse these different approaches using one of the paintings in the resource.



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Arthur Streeton
Ocean blue, Lorne 1921
oil on canvas
Geelong Gallery, Victoria
Purchased with funds generously provided by Geelong Art Gallery Foundation, Robert Salzer Foundation Art Program, Geelong Community Foundation, Will & Dorothy Bailey Charitable Gift and numerous individual donors, 2011
Photography: George Stawicki

The images of Lorne celebrate the intrinsic beauty of one of Victoria's most spectacular coastal towns. Form, colour, light and shadow, all play their part in capturing the effect of where land meets sea and sky.⁵

AusVELS Levels 2 to 5 the Arts

How does the painting *Ocean blue, Lorne* (1921) make you feel? Is it a familiar image of a coastal scene? Have you been to this location before or to a similar place?

Look closely at *Ocean blue, Lorne* and describe how Streeton uses his paint brush to create details of the native trees in the painting.

Activity: Paint your own native tree that incorporates techniques similar to those Streeton has used in his work.

AusVELS Levels 9 to 10 Humanities (History)

The exhibition focuses on works of art painted during the inter-war years. Research the social and economic conditions in Australia between the First World War and Second World War. Look at other significant historical events that took place at the same time in Australia. What effect did these have on the Australian people?

Soon after his return, Streeton sought new landscapes to reflect his own changed emotional state and that of a nation in mourning. Of a population of some four million, 60,000 Australians had been killed in the war, and thousands of ex-servicemen returned home with their perceptions of the world irrevocably altered.⁶

AusVELS Levels 7 to 10 the Arts, English, Humanities (History)

During the First World War, Streeton enlisted as a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps at the 3rd London General Hospital in Wandsworth and was later appointed an official war artist in 1918, working in France. As a class, discuss and research what the role of an official war artist was. How can an artist offer another perspective on war?

Activity: Imagine you have been commissioned as a war artist by the Australian Government. What aspect of war would you capture? Create a drawing that reflects your thoughts and ideas of war.

AusVELS Levels 9 to 10 English, Humanities (History)

The first stretch of the Great Ocean Road from Lorne to Eastern View opened in March 1922 and was built by over 3000 returned Australian soldiers. *Ocean blue, Lorne* was painted a year before the road opened. Research the conditions and life of the ex-servicemen who built the Great Ocean Road.

Activity: Imagine you are the artist and write a detailed journal entry of your experience of camping and painting alongside ex-servicemen constructing the Great Ocean Road in the early 1920s.

AusVELS Levels 5 to 9 the Arts

Activity: As a class go into the open air and create at least three different drawings of what you see. Spend only 10 minutes on each drawing. Use colour pastels or another medium that allows you to work quickly. Concentrate on your observations of line, colour, shape and composition. As a class share your drawings and discuss what you liked or disliked about the process of drawing from life?

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Arthur Streeton
View up the valley 1920
oil on canvas
Geelong Gallery, Victoria
Purchased 1976

AusVELS Levels 7 to 9 the Arts,

Look carefully at the painting *View up the valley* (1920). Why do you think the mountains and other land forms in the distance appear a cool blue colour? How do artists use aerial perspective in painting to help create a sense of distance? Discuss your findings as a class.

AusVELS Levels 8 to 10 Humanities (Geography)

Even when viewing these paintings today, there remains a strong sense of gratitude in acknowledging not only the inherent beauty of the landscape, but also that the land has been protected and preserved for present and future generations.⁷

Investigate the environmental issues that have impacted the Grampians region.

Activity: Collaborate with another student and gather data to conduct an environmental research project on the area. Generate new ideas of how to promote conservation in the area and create either a poster or an educational video using your mobile phone or an iPad.

AusVELS Levels 5 to 8 the Arts, English, Humanities (History)

The Australian landscape has had an aesthetic, cultural and spiritual importance for both indigenous and non-indigenous people throughout history. The Aboriginal word for the Grampians is Gariwerd. Research the local Aboriginal people of Gariwerd history and their significant connection to the land.

Activity: Create a poster that displays your findings.

Activity: Read the Gariwerd Creation Story and then collaborate with a partner to create a picture book that visually represents the Dreamtime story.

AusVELS Levels 8 to 9 the Arts

How do you navigate the painting *View up the valley* as a viewer? What painting techniques has Arthur Streeton used to help direct you through the composition?

He was convinced that by travelling to more remote areas and locating panoramic and unpopulated vistas he could convey a broader and more expansive message that extended beyond the local and every day.⁸

AusVELS Levels 5 to 8 the Arts

The Australian bush was long considered a symbol of national identity. Do you agree? As a class, discuss your own relationship to the Australian bush. Are there other significant places or sites that you would consider as symbols of national life today?

Activity: Can you think of any other symbols, stories or places that reflect your own ideas of Australian identity? Create a collage combining both found images and your own drawings to create an artwork that represents these ideas.

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Arthur Streeton
Mount Rosea, Grampians 1920
oil on canvas
Private collection, Sydney
Courtesy of Deutscher and Hackett
Image courtesy of Deutscher and Hackett

AusVELS Levels 6 to 9 the Arts

The Grampians have inspired many artists to interpret its unique environment. Research how other artists have used the Grampians as subject matter and compare their works with Arthur Streeton's paintings. Discuss as a class.

Combining a plein-airist technique with his deep-felt emotional responses to the environment, he recorded what he saw with a mixture of accuracy and imagination and further extended his visual vocabulary of the Australian landscape.⁹

AusVELS Levels 6 to 9 the Arts, English

Think of different words that describe an impression, mood or emotion that is evoked by *Mount Rosea, Grampians* (1920). Use the words to create a poem or short story that is influenced by the artwork.

AusVELS Levels 8 to 10 the Arts

Arthur Streeton became known early in his artistic career through his involvement with what has been known as the Heidelberg School. Research the significance of the Heidelberg School and the role it has played in the story of Australian art.

AusVELS Levels 8 to 10 the Arts

Create three landscape drawings in pencil by manipulating different horizon lines in your visual diary. Choose one of the compositions and further develop as a complete work of art.

What are some of the painting techniques Streeton has used to create a sense of vast scale in his landscapes? Discuss the formal elements in this process such as colour, line and composition.

AusVELS Levels 9 to VCE the Arts

Streeton is considered an Australian Impressionist painter. What is Australian Impressionism? Discuss the style, techniques and influences of the movement in relation to the works in the exhibition.

The post-war landscapes appear to have achieved their greatest potency through images devoid of narrative and of people—the fertile, worked countryside without workers.¹⁰

Why do you think the artist has placed a greater emphasis on the natural environment than on a human presence or narrative in his paintings? What do you believe he is trying to say?

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Visit the Geelong Gallery

Pre-visit information

To help us conserve works in the Geelong Gallery's renowned collection for current visitors and future generations to enjoy, we recommend the following:

- Prior to your visit, educators/supervisors to brief students on appropriate behaviour in the Gallery (eg walking in the Gallery, listening to instructions and not touching the exhibits)
- Students should take care entering and leaving the building from and to the bus
- Food and drinks are not allowed inside the Gallery
- Please consider other visitors
- Educators to accompany their group at all times during their visit
- Stools and clipboards are available for student use
- Only pencils are to be used in the Gallery

Cost

An entry fee will apply to all Learn programs:

- Self-guided \$5
- Tour by Educator \$7
- Creative workshops \$10-\$15

Bookings

Bookings are essential for all Learn programs and group visits:

- T 03 5229 3645
- learn.booking@geelonggallery.org.au

Contact

- Elishia Furet
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Resource prepared by Elishia Furet,
Educator—*Land of the Golden Fleece* exhibition

Exhibition sponsors



Indemnification for this exhibition is provided by the Victorian Government.



**Geelong Art
Gallery Foundation**

Allan Myers AC QC

Frank Costa AO

Endnotes

1. Geoffrey Smith, 'On classic ground—love, beauty, fertility, prosperity and desire in the art of Arthur Streeton', *Land of the Golden Fleece—Arthur Streeton in the Western District*, Geelong Gallery, ex.cat., 2016, p. 13
2. Ibid, p. 19
3. Ibid, p. 17
4. Ian Burn, *National Life & Landscapes: Australian Painting 1900–1940*, Bay Books, Sydney, 1990, pp. 79–80, quoted in Smith, p. 21
5. Geoffrey Smith, 'On classic ground—love, beauty, fertility, prosperity and desire in the art of Arthur Streeton', *Land of the Golden Fleece—Arthur Streeton in the Western District*, Geelong Gallery, ex.cat., 2016, p. 18
6. Ibid, p. 13
7. Ibid, pp. 14–15
8. Ibid, p. 19
9. Ibid, p. 19
10. Ian Burn, *National Life & Landscapes: Australian Painting 1900–1940*, Bay Books, Sydney, 1990, pp. 79–80, quoted in Smith, p. 21
11. Geoffrey Smith, 'On classic ground—love, beauty, fertility, prosperity and desire in the art of Arthur Streeton', *Land of the Golden Fleece—Arthur Streeton in the Western District*, Geelong Gallery, ex.cat., 2016, p. 21
12. Arthur Streeton quoted in RH Croll, *Tom Roberts: Father of Australian Landscape Painting*, Robertson & Mullens Limited, Melbourne, 1935, p. 9

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