



Gollings & Kleiber: In the Classroom, Exhibit Lesson Plan for Grades 6 through 12
Curriculum Areas: Visual Arts / Social Studies / Geography

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn about the artist **Elling William “Bill” Gollings (1878 – 1932)** and examine the relationship between his art and the history of the West.
- Students will analyze the influences and inspirations found in Gollings’ work and discuss why these elements are historically important.
- Students will learn about the various subjects depicted in Gollings art, including that of cowboys and cowboy life as well as historical figures important in Wyoming’s history.

Benchmark Standards applied to this lesson:

FPA 8.2.A.1, FPA 8.2.A.2, FPA 8.2.A.3, FPA 11.2.A.1, FPA 11.2.A.2, FPA 11.2.A.3, FPA 8.3.A.2, FPA 8.3.A.3, FPA 11.3.A.1, FPA 11.3.A.3, SS 12.2.4, SS 12.4.1

PRE-MUSEUM VISIT:

To prepare the students for a tour of the Bill Gollings paintings in the *Gollings & Kleiber: In the Classroom* art exhibit it is helpful for the teacher to present background information about the artist and discuss the various inspirations that influenced his work. Digital images of paintings by Gollings can be provided on request.

ABOUT BILL GOLLINGS

Known as a cowboy artist, Elling William “Bill” Gollings was born in Pierce City, Idaho in 1878. He spent two years of his childhood in Idaho, and lived with his grandmother in Michigan following his mother’s death in 1880. Gollings finished his 8th grade education in Chicago. However, his dream was to become a working cowboy and in 1896 he joined his brother, DeWitt, on his ranch in Rosebud, Montana. For Gollings, living the life of a working cowboy went hand-in-hand with a love and passion of art. He deeply admired the American artist Frederic Remington whose drawings about the American West regularly appeared in *Harpers Weekly* and *Century Magazine*. Due in large part to the encouragement of his brothers, DeWitt and Oliver, and also, Mrs. Marion White, editor of the *Chicago Fine Art Journal*, Gollings eventually received an art scholarship at the prestigious Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. As a young man, he was working as a cowboy in southern Montana and northern Wyoming, eventually becoming an accomplished artist who painted scenes of life on the Wyoming range as well as various historic figures important to Wyoming’s history. Gollings would work roundups in the spring and summer and then go back to studying art and painting in the winter months. By 1909, he had his own art studio in Sheridan, near the site of what is today the Henry A. Coffeen Elementary School. Bradford Brinton (1880 – 1936) who purchased the Quarter Circle A Ranch from the Scotsman William Moncreiffe in 1923, was an acquaintance and patron of Bill Gollings. The painting, *Wrangling Horses on the Quarter Circle A*, once hung in Bradford Brinton’s library in the Main Ranch House, mirroring the view of the Bighorns from the south window.

Gollings’ art reflects a deep admiration for the hard-working cowboy and a love of ranch life. In contrast to a more romanticized vision of the American West that depicted spirited scenes of wild broncs and six-shooters, he also painted everyday wranglers on horseback rounding up horses on the dusty, open range. Cowboys and Indian

camps and the romantic glow of an amber-color campfire on a cold winter's night give us a glimpse of life in the Old American West forever kept alive through an artistic hand that is nothing short of poetic. It is this sentimentality for the end of an era that Gollings captured on canvas, as he saw life for the American Indian and cowboy rapidly changing. During his career, Gollings had met several well-known artists including Will James, Charles Russell, Joe De Yong, and Joseph Henry Sharp of Taos, New Mexico who kept a studio at Crow Agency during the years 1901 to about 1913. He was also friends with the Wyoming artist Hans Kleiber. It was Kleiber who helped Gollings get started with etchings. And it was the Gollings' etchings and illustrations that supplemented his income. Bill Gollings lived in Sheridan until his death of heart failure in 1932.



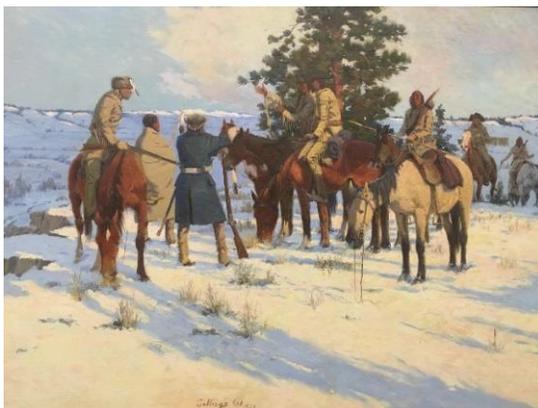
Wrangling Horses on the Quarter Circle A, 1924



Bronco Buster

THE WYOMING CONNECTION

- Gollings is celebrated as an important Wyoming artist who translated his love of the American West into art. The beauty of the land, the open range, wildlife, cowboys, ranches and the American Indian peoples are all subjects that he painted.
- The French fur trader, **Pierre de la Verendrye**, along with his brothers were the first Europeans to cross the northern Great Plains into the Bighorn Mountains and Rocky Mountains in the early 1740s. In Gollings' painting *The Verendryes*, he depicts the brothers with a group of Indians looking west at the Bighorns, which they called the Shining Mountains. This sighting, according to Gollings' handwritten notations about this painting, took place on the 1st of January in 1743. The Verendryes' explorations would spark the beginning of the **North American Fur Trade** and the settlement of the West by trappers and frontiersmen. The subject of trappers and traders again appears in Gollings' painting, *The Trapper*, painted in 1925.



The Verendryes, 1926



The Trapper, 1925

Gollings kept a personal journal in which he would often write about the subjects in his paintings. In describing *The Trapper*, he offers this description:

“The Trapper” “Back in the history of our West, less than one hundred years ago, lived a man, seldom mentioned today, and yet whose mission on earth really framed the way for the advances of civilization. This man the trapper and trader, or mountain man, as he was sometimes called was the real pioneers of the West He knew the trails and passes, knew the Indians, the game and the weather, and was fitted with knowledge to guide such men as Fre[e]mont, Pike and others who came later ...”

- It was in 1803 that Lewis and Clark embarked from St. Louis, Missouri, on the nation’s famous Corps of Discovery Expedition (1803 – 1806). Members of the Lewis and Clark party included John Colter and George Drouillard who, like other mountain men, would return to the West in search of furs. Colter and Drouillard traded with the Indians at a post built in 1807 at the confluence of the **Bighorn and Yellowstone rivers**. It was not long before other trappers such as Robert Campbell, Jedediah Smith, David Jackson and William Sublette also came West to trap for furs. Jackson and Sublette trapped in the Teton range area. Later, Campbell would join up with Jim Bridger to trap beaver in the **Crow country in northeastern Wyoming**, wintering in the Wind River area.
- **Father De Smet (1801 – 1873)** was born Pierre-Jean De Smet in Flanders. He came to the United States in 1821 where he began his novitiate at a Jesuit estate near Baltimore, Maryland. He later moved to Florissant, Missouri, near St. Louis, where De Smet served as an ordained Jesuit priest at St. Francis Regis Seminary, a school for Osage Indian boys. He was given permission to travel as a missionary to the Flathead Tribe in the northern Rocky Mountains. His group traveled from the Fort Laramie area to Red Buttes near present-day Casper, they then traveled past Independence Rock and on to Green River Rendezvous in eastern Idaho. It was in July 1841, when Father De Smet offered the first Holy Mass in Wyoming, a mile east of Daniel, a town in the west-central part of the state.¹ In 1851, he made an overland trip from the Fort Union Trading Post on the Missouri River, on what is today the Montana-North Dakota border, to Fort Laramie. It was on this journey when he traveled into Sheridan County, near the foothills of the beautiful Bighorn Mountains in northern Wyoming. Lake De Smet near present-day Buffalo (WY) is named after Father De Smet.

¹ Pierre-Jean De Smet, Wikipedia,



*Father De Smet Learns the Water Courses from the Indians,
a.k.a. Father De Smet Leaving the Headwaters, 1928*

MUSEUM VISIT: (40 to 45 minutes)

Students will be given a guided tour of the *Gollings & Kleiber: In the Classroom* art exhibit. Discussion will include the three points outlined in the Learning Objectives about the artist Bill Gollings. The exhibit guide or docent should specifically point out three paintings that are included in the Pre-Museum Visit and Post Museum Visit lesson plan. These are: **Wrangling Horses on the Quarter Circle A, The Verendryes** and **Father De Smet Learns the Water Courses from the Indians**.

POST MUSEUM VISIT:

Students will research one of three topics listed below, and write a 500 word essay that relates this topic to a Gollings' painting. The essay will include three points of interest: 1) Background information about Bill Gollings; 2) Historical information about the subject he or she selected; and, 3) A connect between the subject and history related to Wyoming, Sheridan County or the American West.

Topics:

- Cowboy life and the open range
- Trappers, Traders and Mountain Men – Opening the Frontier
- Historical figures of interest to Wyoming and its history and geography

Rubric / Assessment

<u>4 Advanced</u>	<u>3 Proficient</u>	<u>2 Basic</u>	<u>1 Below Basic</u>
Student demonstrates a excellent and comprehensive understanding of the relevance of Gollings' art to Western history, geography and in particular Sheridan County	Student demonstrates a fair understanding of the relevance of Gollings' art to history and geography as they relate to Sheridan County and/or Wyoming	Student articulates an understanding of the topic he or she selected by stating three or more factual statements about the subject	Student describes two or less facts about the subject he or she chose, but does not explain a connect to the artist Gollings, or his work.
Sites three or more examples that identify the subject of a Gollings' work of art to a specific time or place	Sites two or more examples that identify the subject of a Gollings' work of art to a specific time or place	Sites at least one example that identifies the subject of a Gollings' work of art to a specific time or place	Does not relate the subject in Gollings' art with any connect to time or place
The student shows excellent use of verbal and grammar skills, and enumerates the topic in a clear and understandable manner.	The student's verbal skills well articulate two of the three points of interest denoted in the Post-Museum Visit assignment description	The student's verbal skills well articulate one of the three points of interest denoted in the Post-Museum Visit assignment description	The student's points of explanation are not well organized and do not summarize clear information about the subject

Lesson Design by Curator of Exhibitions Barbara McNab
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The following works of art illustrated in this Lesson Design were loaned by Whitney Benefits for The Brinton Museum exhibit:

The Verendryes

The Trapper

Father De Smet Learns the Water Courses from the Indians