



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2024 Volume I: Landscape, Art, and Ecology

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## **Art in D.C.: Using Rock Creek Park as Our Playground**

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by Sandy Alvarez

Children learn through play; they love being outdoors and are curious, creative individuals. The unit "Art in D.C.: Using Rock Creek Park as Our Playground," intended for first graders, will leverage children's curiosity and love for play and the outdoors by exposing students to art through nature. They will learn about American landscape painters, such as Thomas Cole, Frederic Edwin Church, Albert Bierstadt, and Thomas Moran, and how they were inspired by nature. Students will explore nature just like these artists did two centuries ago--through art itself. Students will have the opportunity to see how nature influences their own art as they learn to draw the National Park System's oldest natural urban park, Washington, D.C.'s Rock Creek Park, en plein air. Students will also learn how artists influenced the overall National Park System. To that end, this curriculum unit will review the history of Rock Creek Park and the larger National Park System. Students will answer questions such as "How did the work of artists play a role in the development of national parks?" Students will use art as a vehicle to learn about nature and experience nature to learn about and create art.

(Developed for English Language Arts, grade 1; recommended for Art, grades 1-12, and English Language Arts, grades 1-5)

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