



“Have you ever reclined upon some gentle slope, some hillside in a beautiful country with your eyes half closed and your mind away from care, dreaming of...the lovely and beautiful in nature and art with a far away and o’er the hills feeling of the chameleon sky, the glowing sunshine and soothing shadows—the distant smoky town—the rich autumnal foliage, bits of green pasturage and nibbling sheep and stately trees, a stream of water winding in and out around some wooded headland...” **Jasper Francis Cropsey**

Jasper Francis Cropsey,  
*Autumn – On the Hudson  
River (detail)*, 1860, National  
Gallery of Art, Gift of the  
Avalon Foundation



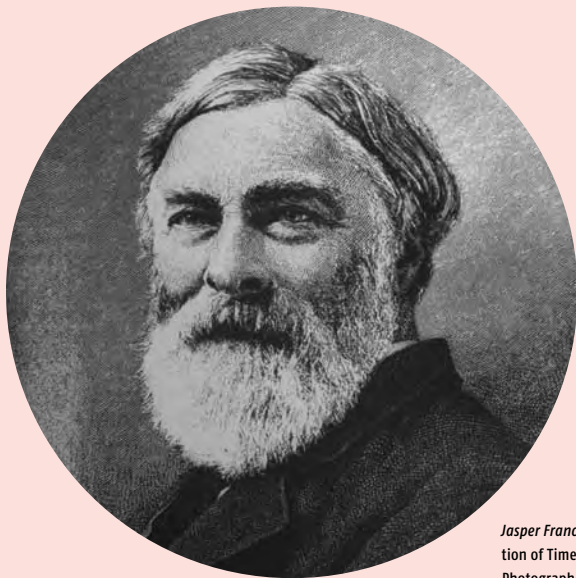
# 1

## Tell me about the artist

In the mid-nineteenth century, landscape painting grew in popularity among American artists. Captivated by the sweeping vistas of their country, many of them explored and painted the picturesque valley of New York's Hudson River. These "Hudson River School" artists included Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823–1900).

Born on Staten Island, Cropsey trained as an architect, but his real love was painting. In the 1840s he made summer trips to New Jersey, upstate New York, Vermont, and New Hampshire to sketch. In 1856 he and his wife moved to London, where they lived for seven years before returning to America.

Cropsey became best known as a painter of autumn landscapes. His images of America were more than just descriptions of nature: they were patriotic exaltations of the wonders and promises of a young civilization carved from wilderness.



*Jasper Francis Cropsey. Collection of Time & Life Pictures. Photographed by Tony Linck.*



# 2

## *Autumn—On the Hudson River*

This monumental view of the Hudson River Valley shows a scene set about sixty miles north of New York City, between the towns of Newburgh and West Point. From a high vantage point on the west side of the Hudson River, a small stream leads back to the wide expanse of the river. The distinctive sharp profile of Storm King Mountain is off in the distance. Behind thick gray-blue clouds, the sun's piercing rays give a mellow glow to the hazy atmosphere. Celebrating the richness and variety of autumn foliage, tall, graceful trees frame a view into the distance. The red oak, sugar maple, birch, and chestnut trees—having assumed their different shades of yellow, bronze, scarlet, and orange—are intermingled with the evergreen hemlocks and pines.



Jasper Francis Cropsey,  
*Autumn—On the Hudson River*,  
1860, National Gallery of Art,  
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Remarkably, Cropsey painted *Autumn—On the Hudson River* in his London studio, relying on his memory of the fall in rural New York as well as sketches he made there. At approximately 9 feet wide and 5 feet tall, Cropsey's largest painting took more than a year to complete, but was an immediate success. When it was exhibited in London, the work created a sensation among Englishmen who had never seen such a colorful panorama of fall foliage. Indeed, because autumn in Britain is customarily far less colorful (due to fewer deciduous trees), Cropsey felt the need to display specimens of North American leaves alongside his painting to persuade skeptical visitors that his rendition was botanically accurate!

# 3 Wander into this landscape

*Autumn—On the Hudson River* is a sweeping vista with precise details. The magnificent panorama, with meticulously observed elements, conveys an idea of the magnitude and splendor of the American landscape.

## LOOK CLOSELY TO FIND

a group of hunters with their dogs

a log cabin

a thin, winding stream

large boulders around a pool of water

grazing sheep

children playing on a bridge

cows wading in the water

boats traversing the river

a small town nestled along the shore

## IMAGINE YOU HAVE TRAVELED TO THIS PLACE

What are some sounds you might hear?

What are some things you might smell?

How would you dress for this trip?

What parts of the landscape would you explore?

Where would you stand for the best view of the mountain?

How might this place look different in the winter?  
In summer?



## book nook

These books about autumn can be found at your local library or bookstore.

### Mouse's First Fall

By Lauren Thompson, illustrated by Buket Erdogan | baby – preschool

### Every Autumn Comes the Bear

By Jim Arnosky | baby – preschool

### Fletcher and the Falling Leaves

By Julie Rawlinson, illustrated by Tiphonie Beeke | ages 4 – 8

### In November

By Cynthia Rylant | ages 4 – 8

### Red Leaf Yellow Leaf

By Lois Ehlert | ages 4 – 8

### Leaf Man

By Lois Ehlert | ages 4 – 8

### Leaves! Leaves! Leaves!

By Nancy Elizabeth Wallace | ages 4 – 8

### When Autumn Falls

By Kelli Nidey, illustrated by Susan Swan | ages 4 – 8

### Autumn: An Alphabet Acrostic

By Steven Schnur, illustrated by Leslie Evans | ages 6 – 12

### Look What I Did with a Leaf!

By Morteza E. Sohi | ages 6 – 12

### Why Do Leaves Change Color?

By Betsy Maestro, illustrated by Loretta Krupinski | ages 6 – 12

### Tree (Eyewitness Books)

By David Burne | ages 8 – 12

## try this!

# activity

### Celebrate Autumn!

Before winter arrives and branches are bare, the ground covered with snow, take some time to appreciate autumn.

**Wander** through your backyard, neighborhood, or a park.

**Look** at leaves the way an artist might.

**Examine** the range of colors—bright reds, oranges, yellows, browns, and greens.

**Notice** the different sizes—big, small, thin, fat, round, and pointy.

**Consider** the shapes, textures, and vein patterns of leaves.

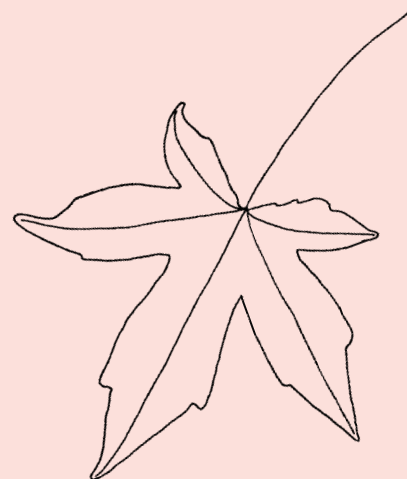
**Collect** leaves that have fallen to the ground—choose a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors.

**Create** a work of art with the leaves.

### Leaf Rubbing

**You will need:** leaves, plain white paper, and crayons

1. On a piece of plain white paper, position leaves with the vein side up in a pattern you like.
2. Lay another sheet of plain white paper on top of the leaves.
3. Select crayons and peel off the paper wrappers.
4. Turn a crayon on its side and gently rub it over the top sheet of paper.
5. The leaf images will begin to appear on the paper! Experiment with different crayon colors and leaf arrangements.



### Leaf Collage

**You will need:** leaves, newspaper, rubber cement, paper, and contact paper

1. Clean the leaves you've collected by rinsing them in warm water. Blot them dry with a paper towel.
2. Place the leaves between pieces of newspaper. Then place them in a book or between two books. In about a week, the leaves should be flat, stiff, and dry—and ready to work with!
3. Arrange the leaves in an interesting design on a piece of paper. Then use rubber cement to paste the leaves to the paper.
4. Let the rubber cement dry for one day. If you wish to protect the surface, place a sheet of clear contact paper over your collage.

