
Spiritual Geographies: Religion and Landscape Art in California, 1890–1930

Spiritual Geographies

Note to Teachers

UCI Jack and Shanaz Langson Institute and Museum of California Art (Langson IMCA) is a rich resource for educators and students grades 3–12, and offers school visits, programs, digital tools, and activities that contribute to the development of critical thinking, empathy, and curiosity about art and culture. School visits offer the opportunity for students to develop their skills of observation and interpretation of art, to build knowledge independently and with one another, and to cultivate an interest in artistic making. This Teacher Resource Guide includes essays, artist biographies, strategies for integrating the exhibition into an interdisciplinary curriculum, discussion questions, methods for teaching with objects, a vocabulary list (words marked in **bold**), and activities focused on four works included in *Spiritual Geographies: Religion and Landscape Art in California, 1890–1930*.

About the Exhibition

Spiritual Geographies explores a period during which California became known for its broad-minded tolerance of new creeds alongside more established religions, even as the national mood shifted increasingly toward a secular worldview. *Time* magazine remarked in 1930 on “a flourishing of cults, of religious novelties, and new fashions in faiths” in the state, and linked this spiritual effervescence to California’s natural world: “Flowery, sun-drenched California, where Nature exhibits herself in mystical opulence . . . is particularly propitious for this flourishing.”

This association drove artists to depict the state’s landscape with a sense of drama and purpose. *Spiritual Geographies* therefore examines how landscape painting became a spiritual pursuit in California between 1890 and 1930, when the beauty of the state’s wilderness reconfigured notions of the sacred, and as California’s painters imbued the pictured landscape with spiritual meaning—even as many of them avoided overt religious imagery. The exhibition also presents historical publications that used landscape in theological discussions.

These artworks often portrayed places that hold sacred meaning and spiritual kinship for California’s **Indigenous** peoples, many of whom were forced to convert to Christianity and dispossessed of their ancestral lands by waves of **colonists** and **settlers**. Their mistreatment exposes the limits and contradictions of California’s religious openness at the time. The exhibition acknowledges the original and enduring spiritual significance of this land to Indigenous communities.

Featured Works

George Henry Melcher, *The Eternal Hills*, after 1907

Thomas Hill, *Following the Trail, Hetch Hetchy*, 1880

Agnes Pelton, *San Geronio in Spring*, 1932

Arthur Grover Rider *Mission Bells, San Juan Capistrano*, circa 1930

See listings below for medium, dimensions, and collection information.

Learn More

For questions about scheduling a school visit, please contact the Education Department by email or phone at imca@uci.edu or 949-232-3174 or register online at imca.uci.edu.

About the Artwork



George Henry Melcher (1881–1957), *The Eternal Hills*, after 1907, oil on canvas, 30 × 40¼ in. UCI Jack and Shanaz Langson Institute and Museum of California Art, Gift of the Irvine Museum

About the Artwork

During the late 19th and early 20th century, landscape painters approached California’s lands as religious and spiritual subject matter and as testaments to God’s powerful creation. **Evangelical Protestants**, for example, saw the landscape as a type of holy scripture, written by the hand of God and awaiting interpretation by the viewer/reader. Landscape painting, as Evangelicals saw it, was therefore a path toward spiritual enlightenment.

An artwork’s title often suggests a particular way to “read” the work. Melcher gave this artwork the title *The Eternal Hills* to signal that this was not a mundane vision of nature, but rather was a depiction of the land’s transcendence of time and mortality. This approach to landscape painting accordingly became popular among Southern California’s **Protestant** elites.

Melcher’s painting also highlights how the land can be used and transformed by people. A farmer tilling soil in the painting’s foreground implies that this is a place to be cultivated. The mountains are high, but not threatening, and the colors are vivid and harmonious. A trail of freshly tilled soil invites the eye into the composition. In this way, the painter depicts an industriousness that Protestants at the time considered a moral and spiritual virtue. Nature, man, and divinity thus operate hand in hand in this work.

The name *Topanga* was given to this area by the Indigenous Tongva tribe and may mean “a place above.” In the 1920s, Topanga Canyon became a weekend getaway for Hollywood stars. The rolling hills and lush vegetation provided both privacy and attractive surroundings for the rich and famous. Later, in the 1950s and 60s, Topanga Canyon began to draw a lively community of artists, hippies, surfers, and other advocates of a nonconformist lifestyle.

The Eternal Hills

George Henry Melcher About the Artist



George Henry Melcher paints at his Topanga ranch, late 1920s. Courtesy Topanga Historical Society Digital Archive

About the Artist

The son of a sculptor, George Henry Melcher was born in Germantown, Pennsylvania, on November 16, 1881. He began studying painting at the age of twelve, and later attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Due to ill health, he sought a milder climate and in 1905 established a studio in Los Angeles in the cupola of a Methodist Church.¹

After living in Los Angeles for two years, he settled permanently on a hilltop ranch in Topanga that overlooked the San Fernando Valley and the Pacific Ocean. There, Melcher farmed and captured the timeless elegance of the mountains in oil and watercolor paintings, even setting

Melcher farmed and captured the timeless elegance of the mountains in oil and watercolor paintings.

up a roadside stand in Topanga Canyon to sell small landscape paintings as “art souvenirs.”

Melcher was employed from 1938 to 1940 by the Federal Art Project, for which he created a series

of paintings of the canyon that highlighted its breadth and flourishing plant life. The program hired artists for \$24 to \$34 per week to produce works in their studios or as derived from their travels. It helped to support some 10,000 artists through the Great Depression, the longest, deepest, and most widespread economic depression of the 20th century.



View and Discuss

View and Discuss

Give students time to look at *The Eternal Hills* and ask them each to create a written list of everything they notice about the painting. When they have completed their lists, have individual students share an item from their list with the class, and then ask, “How many of you had _____ on your list?” Keep a tally of the aspects of the painting noticed by the most students, and those noticed by only a few—or even uniquely. Summarize the broad trends and ask the students what went entirely unnoticed.

Call on students to point out similarities between Melcher’s painting and the 1938 painting *Gentle Evening Bendeth*, by William Wendt (1865–1946), in the same section. These paintings appealed to a similar audience of California’s Protestant elites, many of whom left a life of farming on the plains to seek greater success in California. What qualities in the two works might have appealed to these prosperous, religious Californians?

Melcher titled this work *The Eternal Hills* to emphasize eternity—and therefore the lack of change—in the landscape. But the painting also depicts forms of change and transformation through its portrayal of farming (a productive act) and fire (potentially destructive). Why might the work set up this relationship between the time-based activities of humans (the fields) and God’s divine and “eternal” creation of the world?

Activities

Activities

Compare and Contrast

Ask students to compare *The Eternal Hills* with Thomas Hill's 1880 painting *Following the Trail, Hetch Hetchy*. These two painters saw the land in different ways and sought different outcomes through their work.

Direct students to fold their paper in half the long way so that there are two columns, one headed "similarities," the other "differences." Project images of the two paintings side by side and provide students with time to build their lists, individually looking for elements in the paintings that are comparable or distinctive.

Ask them to share their most surprising findings. Although the artists depict very similar subject matter—a landscape with mountains and a path—students may discover that the two works provide very different viewing experiences, including their visual style (Melcher's painting is more **modernist** and impressionistic than Hill's).

Ask students to discuss their responses to these works, and how they might feel if transported into these landscapes. Which one would they rather explore—and why?

The Importance of Titles

By titling this painting "*The Eternal Hills*," Melcher suggests that we should view this work and subject matter with reverence. Imagine this work titled *The Rolling Hills* or *The View from my Window*—these titles would signal another way to view this work.



William Wendt (1865–1946), *Gentle Evening Bendeth*, 1938, oil on canvas, 30¼ × 36 in.
Courtesy of Hoefer Family Foundation

William Wendt, Melcher's contemporary, went even further, often titling his paintings of California landscapes with direct quotes from the Bible, or with references to Christian hymns that would have been familiar to Evangelical Protestants. Ask students to view Wendt's painting *Gentle Evening Bendeth*—the title refers to a Christian hymn well-known at the time.

Ask students to suggest titles they might give this painting, and to consider how their titles may influence the understanding of the painting. At the end of the conversation, discuss Wendt's title and explore the connotations that accompany it.

About the Artwork

Following the Trail, Hetch Hetchy



Thomas Hill (1829–1908), *Following the Trail, Hetch Hetchy*, 1880, oil on canvas, 20 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 30 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. UCI Jack andShanaz Langson Institute and Museum of California Art, Gift of the Irvine Museum

About the Artwork

Thomas Hill’s painting invites us to follow a trail into a majestic landscape of towering mountains bathed in pink light—a monumental vista, despite the painting’s relatively small size. As we take in this view, we may notice details: travelers walking along the trail, a distant waterfall, and an artist at work, visible in the painting’s lower left corner.

The painting’s subject—perhaps unfamiliar to some—is the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Northeastern California. People have lived in this valley for more than 6000 years, including multiple communities of Indigenous peoples who inhabited the valley into the mid-20th century. (European-Americans arrived only in the 1850s.) The valley’s name is derived from the Miwok word *hatchhatchie*, which means “edible grasses.” Because of its year-round water supply, mild winter weather, good hunting and fishing, and plentiful edible plants, Indigenous people used resources from this area and gathered here for trading.

In the late 19th century, the city of San Francisco began to look to Hetch Hetchy as a potential site for a reservoir to provide a water supply for the city’s rapidly growing population. Led by John Muir, preservationists opposed the plan, believing that the Hetch Hetchy should remain untouched, and launched a campaign to protect the valley. Hetch Hetchy became a flash point in American environmentalism, and caught between the competing claims of preservationists and developers. Until the early 1900s, most Americans viewed the wilderness as something to subdue and natural resources as infinitely renewable.

In 1906, an earthquake and fire devastated San Francisco and the inadequacy of the city’s water system was made tragically clear, adding urgency and public sympathy to the search for an adequate water supply. In 1913 Congress authorized the construction of a dam in the Hetch Hetchy Valley. Today the reservoir holds 117 billion gallons of clean drinking water.

About the Artist

Thomas Hill



Thomas Hill, July 15, 1906. Public domain, courtesy of Wikipedia.

About the Artist

Thomas Hill was born in 1829 in Birmingham, England, and moved to the United States at the age of fifteen. Nine years later he enrolled in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. He visited the White Mountains in New Hampshire and began painting **en plein air**. At this time Hill was associated with the **Hudson River School**, a 19th-century American art movement comprised of landscape painters who depicted New York State's Hudson River Valley and the surrounding area.²

In 1861, Hill and his family moved to California, and he set up a studio in San Francisco. The move brought new inspiration and he began painting monumental vistas, such as those of the Yosemite Valley. In 1866 he

Amid the beauty and grandeur of the California landscape, Hill thrived and became an important part of the growing California art scene.

traveled to Paris, where he was exposed to the **Barbizon School**, a group of artists who worked around Barbizon, a village outside of Paris near the Forest of Fontainebleau. Members of this group came from different backgrounds and worked in a range of styles but were drawn together by their passion for painting

en plein air and their desire to elevate landscape, at the time seen as a minor genre, to a powerful subject.³

In 1872, Thomas Hill returned to San Francisco with his wife Charlotte Hawkes and their nine children. Amid the beauty and grandeur of the California landscape, Hill thrived and became an important part of the growing California art scene. His paintings of California have continued to resonate into the 21st century. His 1865 painting *View of the Yosemite Valley*, for example, was chosen as a backdrop for the head table at Barack Obama's 2009 inaugural luncheon.⁴

View and Discuss

View and Discuss

Give students time to look at Hill's painting—thirty seconds or more—then ask them to describe the scene it depicts in as much detail as possible. What did they notice first? What did they notice only after prolonged looking?

Looking at an image of an artwork on a screen often changes the experience and loses both scale and detail visible in the original. The art auction house Christie's provides a "superzoom" of another Thomas Hill painting of Yosemite, which by contrast allows you to observe the artwork's smallest details. Have students create a list of things they notice with the "superzoom" feature that are not visible on first impression.

Activities

Activities

Points of View

Look at the painting and think about where the artist might have been standing to get this point of view or perspective. Hill would frequently go on walks during which he would make quick oil sketches from various perspectives. He made thousands of these sketches in his lifetime. Some would be worked into complete oil paintings in his studio.⁵

When we look down on something below us, it is called a bird's eye view. When we look up from a low vantage it might be called an ant's eye view.

Take students to a place where they can experience a bird's eye and ant's eye view of the same place. They might look out a window on the top floor of their school and then experience that same place standing on the ground below the window. Perhaps there is a sports stadium where they can see the field from the top tier of the bleachers and on the field below. Encourage students to talk about the differences in perspective and ask them to make sketches, of the same place from varied points of view.

Debating the Hetch Hetchy

The battle over Hetch Hetchy represents a flash point in the history of the United States when preservationists and developers found themselves at odds. Controversy over Hetch Hetchy continues, however, between those who want to retain the dam, and those who wish to drain the reservoir and return Hetch Hetchy Valley to its former state.⁶ Have students research and debate both sides of this issue.

For tips on conducting a classroom debate see Harvard University's "[Want to Facilitate a Debate in Your Class?](#)"

Learning about John Muir

John Muir (1838–1914) was America's most famous naturalist and conservationist and has been called "The Father of our National Parks."⁷ He worked tirelessly to convince Americans that the Sierra Nevada wilderness should be permanently protected. His legacy is, however, marked by racism, including a view of conservationism that entailed the removal from Yosemite of Indigenous people who had shaped and cared for this environment for thousands of years before him. Have students research the contributions of this important environmental activist and discuss his complex legacy.

About the Artwork



Agnes Pelton (1881–1961), *San Gorgonio in Spring*, 1932, oil on canvas, 24 × 30 in.
The Buck Collection at UCI Jack and Shanaz Langson Institute and Museum of California Art

About the Artwork

Painted only months after Agnes Pelton settled in California, *San Gorgonio in Spring* captures the artist's profound engagement with the place where she would spend the rest of her life. In the foreground, desert flora burst with life and cacti bloom rose-pink. Snow-capped mountain peaks rise in the distance. Pelton sought to intensify the light and color of her adopted home and accentuated visual and tactile elements to heighten her sensory experience of it.

Pelton had views of Mount San Jacinto, the steepest mountain in North America, and Mount San Gorgonio, as depicted in this painting. These mountains shield the valley from rain for most of the year, creating desert conditions. A sensitive observer of nature, Pelton was fascinated by desert plants' flourishing after spring rain in April and May. Pelton frequently referenced photographs to paint her landscapes but did not copy them directly. She believed her paintings of nature had to reach a more immersive level and reveal the essence of the place.⁸

In the foreground, desert flora burst with life and cacti bloom rose-pink.

San Gorgonio in Spring

About the Artist

Agnes Pelton



Agnes Pelton photographed in 1932 in Cathedral City, CA. Mount San Jacinto in the background. © Raymond Jonson Archive, University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque

About the Artist

Agnes Pelton was born to American parents in Stuttgart, Germany. When she was a child, Pelton moved with her mother to Brooklyn, New York, to live with her maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Tilton, a prominent advocate of women's rights.⁹ Pelton was drawn to art emotionally and intellectually, and enjoyed success with her paintings, two of which were included in the landmark Armory Show of 1913, which introduced modern art to America.¹⁰

In 1921, Pelton left Brooklyn for Southampton, Long Island, New York, where she lived in an historic windmill that she considered a cosmic

Pelton was drawn to the California desert for its boundlessness and serenity, but also for the spiritualist colonies that flourished there.

place—activated by nature and connected to a rich web of life.

There she earned money by making portraits of summer residents while studying and painting the natural world. In 1926, she began making her first abstract paintings, inspired

by the **occult** and by natural phenomena like the movement of air, water, and flower petals. In 1932, Pelton left New York for the desert near Palm Springs, California, and she painted both landscapes and abstractions for the next thirty years.

Pelton was drawn to the California desert for its boundlessness and serenity, but also for the spiritualist colonies that flourished there. She studied **theosophy**, a philosophical movement that sought to express universal truths by drawing from Asian religions, Christianity, mysticism, and science. Theosophy offered Pelton a way of thinking about how one might convey the spiritual realm visually.¹¹ In 1938 she became a founding member of the Transcendental Painting Group, an artists' collective that aimed to deliver spiritual truths through the language of abstraction. Though Pelton was not well known in her lifetime, recent exhibitions have garnered more attention for her work. She lived in California until her death in 1961 at the age of 80.

View and Discuss

View and Discuss

Five Senses Collaborative Poem

Pelton believed every place had “the voice of locality,” or its own unique aura, and wanted us to view her landscape paintings with all our senses. This activity invites students to immerse themselves in this kind of experience of Pelton’s painting.¹²

Cut 8.5” × 11” sheets of blank paper into thirds “the long way,” and then fold each strip into five horizontal sections. Give each student a strip of the folded paper and tell them they will be responding to a prompt by writing a one- or two-word response in each of the folded sections.

Have your students look at *San Geronio in Spring* and ask them to “Write something that you *see*.” Students write their response in the top section, fold it back so that it cannot be seen, and pass the strip to the person on the left. (Be sure to establish in advance the route the papers will be passed.) In the second section, each student writes their brief response to the question, “What might you *hear*?” Again, they should fold back the paper and pass to the left, following the pattern for the rest of the exercise, and moving through each of the five senses: “What might you *smell*?” “What might you *taste*?” “What might you *feel* or *touch*?”

Once the five sections are completed, students should unfold their papers and read their collaborative short poem—a “snapshot” of the artwork from multiple perspectives—to the class.¹³

Activities

Activities

Color Correspondences

Like other modern California painters influenced by theosophy, Pelton was interested in how artists could perceive and picture a metaphysical world beyond the human senses. Many of these artists thought the spiritual could be conveyed by revealing connections between sound, color, and emotions. Pelton, for example, created in her sketchbook a list of colors that she associated with various emotional or metaphysical states: “Red = creation; orange = passion; yellow = life; blue = beauty; green = nature; purple = pain; white = death.”¹⁴ Ask students their impressions of Pelton’s equations. Do they believe that colors have universal meanings? What associations do certain colors have for them? What images, emotions, or sounds come to mind? Ask them to make a sketchbook entry with colored pencil to represent their own associations with color.

A Single Bloom

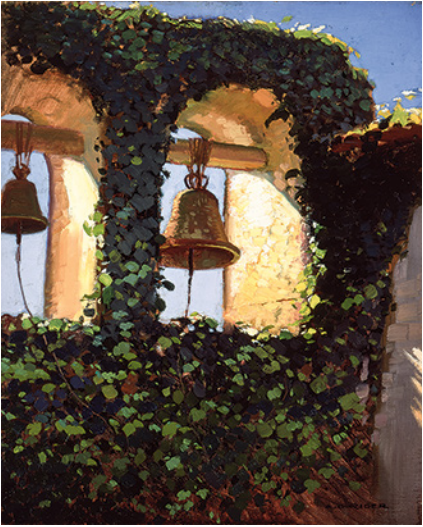
Many artists in this exhibition focused on the imposing or dramatic aspects of the California landscape. As a theosophist, Pelton was interested in more intimate aspects of nature, and viewed plants as spiritual symbols of death, birth, and renewal. This caused her to focus on the cycles of plant life and the infinite variation found in nature.

In *San Geronio in Spring*, Pelton pays close attention to desert flowers and blooming cacti as much as the snowcapped mountains in the background. She revered the complexity of a single flower and incorporated floral imagery into both her figurative and abstract works. What might students learn from the intricacies of a single flower?

Have each student select a flower—even a dandelion—and ask them to devote most of a class period to drawing that single bloom. When done, have students share their drawings, discuss their process, and describe what they learned from this exercise.

About the Artwork

Mission Bells, San Juan Capistrano



Arthur Grover Rider (1886–1975), *Mission Bells, San Juan Capistrano*, circa 1930, oil on canvas, 26 × 21 in. UCI Jack and Shanaz Langson Institute and Museum of California Art, Gift of the Irvine Museum

About the Artwork

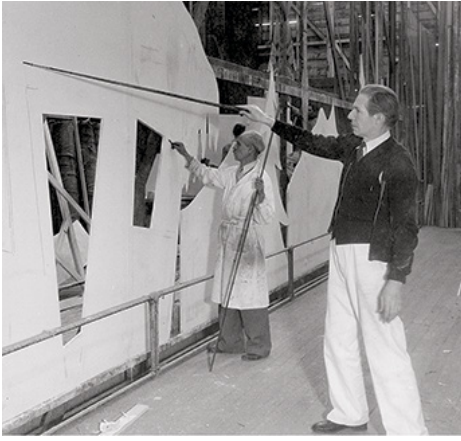
This deceptively simple painting holds significant historical associations. For some, mission bells represent a source of pride and affiliation, but for many Indigenous peoples they are a reminder of the abuse and hardship that their ancestors experienced under the mission system, including forced labor, poor living conditions, and imposed conversion to Christianity.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many of the missions along **El Camino Real** fell into disrepair, even ruin. The effort to preserve and renovate the state's Spanish missions was due in part to Helen Hunt Jackson's 1884 novel *Ramona*, which romanticized the Spanish and Mexican rule of California, especially the **Catholic Church's** treatment of Native Americans at the missions. The novel was a massive success and was republished and adapted many times in the early 20th century, including in films and theatrical productions. Rider painted *Mission Bells, San Juan Capistrano* in 1930, during the novel's popularity, and the abundance of **Impressionist** paintings depicting California's missions can be seen as part of this literary phenomenon, which generated demand for sentimental representations of the missions.

The romance of this fictional past prompted Californians to repurpose crumbling Spanish missions into tourist destinations that promoted misleading depictions of peaceful collaboration between Catholic padres and willing Native American converts. These accounts were widely promoted and eventually entered grade-school curricula statewide. Similarly, the cast-iron bells of these missions became a defining element of California iconography used by civic boosters, automobile associations, real estate developers, and women's clubs, and promoting commerce, settlement, and tourism in the state.¹⁵

About the Artist

Arthur Grover Rider



Arthur Grover Rider "cartooning" on hard scenic profile unit, ca. 1930s. Bill Anderson Collection

About the Artist

Arthur Grover Rider was born in Chicago and studied art at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, later traveling to Paris to continue his studies. Early in his career he painted for various opera companies, and spent

Rider traveled throughout California and Mexico in search of the brilliant color and sunlight that inspired his work in Spain .

summers in Valencia, Spain, where he met the Spanish Impressionist artist Joaquin Sorolla (1863–1923), who became a major influence on his work. On returning to the United States, Rider traveled throughout California and Mexico

in search of the brilliant color and sunlight that inspired his work in Spain, painting landscapes along the way.

Rider moved to Los Angeles in 1924 and worked as an artist and set designer for Hollywood movie studios. He set up a studio-home in Laguna Beach in 1928. While living in California, he became fascinated with the architecture of Spanish missions, and even lived near San Juan Capistrano for a time to paint the bells, fountains, and adobe arches of the mission.

During his last years, Rider made trips to Taxco, Mexico, and specialized in architectural themes such as cathedrals and buildings with red tile roofs. Alongside his artistic endeavors, he worked for Hollywood studios until his retirement in 1970 at the age of 84.¹⁶

View and Discuss

View and Discuss

Provide students with time to look at Rider's painting *Mission Bells, San Juan Capistrano*. Ask them to describe some of the many decisions the artist made to complete this painting. These may include his choice of subject matter (what is included, and what left out); how he applied paint to canvas, and his depiction of various textures; composition (how the parts of the painting are put together); color and use of light and dark; and depth of field (the relative distance of the painting's focus).

Compare Rider's painting with a [2019 photograph of the wall that houses the bells at the Mission San Juan Capistrano](#). Have students discuss the similarities and differences between the two images, noting how Rider has stamped his perspective on this subject. This should allow them to appreciate how an artist doesn't just copy but interprets what they see, even when the image appears to be a direct depiction of something real.

Activities

Activities

Cropping with a Viewfinder

Rider's painting focuses on two of the mission's bells, eliminating much else that might have been in his view. Artists sometimes use a viewfinder to create a strong composition. Have students make a viewfinder by cutting a 1" × 1.5" rectangle into the center of an index card and ask them to experiment with using it to select a view, considering what happens when they hold their viewfinder close to their eye, versus with their arm fully extended. Once they have chosen a view, have them draw it, keeping the proportions the same as those within their chosen frame. Once the drawings are complete, have students discuss what they saw and learned.

Debating the Bells

Bells have played an important part in Mission San Juan Capistrano's history since Father Junipero Serra first rang them to bless the area in 1776. The daily tolling of the bells allowed people from miles around to keep track of events, including times for work and prayer, and to mark important celebrations, such as births, deaths, and holidays. The bells of the California missions have been heard for over 200 years and have become a symbol for the history of California.¹⁷

But not all Californians see the bells in the same way. Many Indigenous people see the mission bells as a reminder of painful history and some have called for the removal of the bells that mark El Camino Real (the Royal Road or the King's Highway), which today approximates California's Highway 101. They say the highway markers symbolize the painful history of the missions. Others say removal erases history.

Have students listen to [this brief interview](#) that explains why some are calling for the removal of the bells.¹⁸ Have students research both sides of this argument, then divide the class in half. One side will be for keeping the bells, while the other side will be for removing them.

For tips on conducting a classroom debate see Harvard University's "[Want to Facilitate a Debate in Your Class?](#)"

Vocabulary

Vocabulary

Barbizon School A 19th century movement in French painting centered on the village of Barbizon, France, and known for landscapes painted with loose brushwork and earthy colors.

El Camino Real A 600-mile commemorative route established in California in the early 20th century to link historic Spanish sites, including twenty-one missions.

Catholic Church The largest Christian church which traces its origin to the teachings of the apostles of Jesus Christ, and which includes distinctive sacraments, such as the Eucharist.

Colonist Members of a group that establishes domination over a foreign territory or area, whether for settlement or the extraction of resources.

En plein air Relating to painting outdoors in daylight, and especially to a branch of Impressionism that attempts to represent the changing effects of light and air.

Evangelical Members of an interdenominational movement within Protestant Christianity, particularly devoted to spreading the Christian gospel, or evangelism.

Hudson River School A movement in American art in the 1820s focused on landscape paintings of countryside and wilderness, especially the Hudson River Valley in New York.

Impressionism A movement in French painting in the 19th century that depicted the effects of light and atmosphere by using loose, visible brushstrokes, often rendered quickly outdoors.

Indigenous Members of the original inhabitants of a place, especially before the arrival of colonists or settlers.

Modernism In the fine arts, a break with the past and search for new forms of expression, especially during a period of artistic experimentation from the late 19th to the mid-20th century.

Occult A belief in supernatural, mystical, or magical powers, or in deep hidden meanings.

Protestant A follower of Christian churches that broke with Roman Catholicism in the 15th century, and focused on scripture, rather than the Church, as the source of doctrine.

Settler See **colonist**.

Theosophy A spiritual movement founded in the United States in 1875 that drew on a wide range of religions, occultism, science, and the observation of nature to determine universal truths. Theosophy played an important role in California's cultural history.

Notes

- 1 “George Henry Melcher,” askArt, accessed December 26, 2023, https://www.askart.com/artist/George_Henry_Melcher/86208/George_Henry_Melcher.aspx.
- 2 “Hudson River School,” Wikipedia, accessed December 26, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudson_River_School.
- 3 “Thomas Hill,” National Parks Service, last updated October 31, 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/yose/learn/historyculture/thomas-hill.htm>.
- 4 “Thomas Hill: View of Yosemite Valley,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/11101>.
- 5 “Thomas Hill (1829–1908),” Sullivan Goss: An American Gallery, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://www.sullivangoss.com/artists/thomas-hill-1829-1908>.
- 6 “Hetch Hetchy,” Wikipedia, accessed December 26, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hetch_Hetchy.
- 7 “Who Was John Muir?” Sierra Club, accessed December 26, 2023, https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/about/default.aspx.
- 8 Michael Zakian, *Agnes Pelton: Poet of Nature* (Palm Springs, CA: Desert Museum, 1995), 70.
- 9 Zakian, 70.
- 10 Zakian, 11.
- 11 Rachel Middleman, “Outlying Modernism: Agnes Pelton, Theosophy and Gender,” in *Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy, the Arts and the American West*, ed. James G. Mansell, Christopher M. Scheer, and Sarah Victoria Turner (Somerset, UK: Fulgur Press, 2019), 66.
- 12 Middleman, 67.
- 13 Sharon Vatsky, *Museum Gallery Activities: A Handbook* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 34.
- 14 Anna Gawboy, “Agnes Pelton and the Musicalization of Colour,” in *Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy, the Arts and the American West*, 72.
- 15 Valentin Lopez, “Op-Ed: Why the California ‘mission bell’ road markers must come down,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2022-03-21/mission-bells-indigenous-remove-el-camino-real>.
- 16 “Artist Profile: Arthur Grover Rider,” Laguna Art Museum, accessed December 26, 2023, <https://lagunaartmuseum.org/artist/arthur-grover-rider/>.
- 17 “California Missions,” seecalifornia.com, accessed December 26, 2023, <http://www.seecalifornia.com/missions/san-juan-capistrano.html>.
- 18 Jeremiah Oetting, “Many Indigenous people see California mission bells as a reminder of painful history,” NPR, February 2, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/1077710140>.