

Prairie Fire

Blackbear Bosin (1921 – 1980)

Style: Native American Art

What are you looking at in this picture?

What animals do you see? What are they doing? Why are they running? Are all the animals running away?

What is occurring in the distance?

What feeling of energy does the painting give?

-Danger, calm, fear, courageous, panic, tense, aggressive or passive?

How does the artist create this feeling of energy?

-Through lines? Shape? Color? Balance? Repetition?

Can you tell the story of what is happening?

Is this a real or imagined painting? What makes you think so? Could the artist have witnessed such an event? Do you think the artist lived in these times or in this place?

The artist's name is Blackbear Bosin. What does his name tell you about him?

He was an American Indian from the Great Plains Region.

How would it affect the painting if the artist was not an American Indian?

What would you call this painting? Identify the title. Now that you know the title – does that change the story?

What style of painting does this painting remind you of?

Would this landscape look like this? How has Bosin changed the landscape in shape and color from a real landscape? *Reduction of shape and color to simple form and limited color.*

Close your eyes. Now look at the painting.

-What do you see first, the foreground and the background?

-What makes you look at it first?

-What do you see second?

-Is it for the same reason that you saw the background first? *The color red.*

-Do you see the antelope or the group of Indians in the middle ground first?

-Why do you see them first? *(The antelope and the direction from the fire on the left)*

-What do you see last?

-Why?

How important is the color to the story? Why is the sky black, gray, white and red? Why is the ground yellow? How would it change if the ground were green?

Are most of the shapes natural and organic or angular and geometric?

Do the shapes run horizontal or diagonal? Does this make a calm picture or one full of action?

Is there a difference between shape above and below the horizon line?

Is there more detail on one side (left or right) of the painting? Is the painting balanced?

How is the horizon different than the sky? (Soft vs. sharp edged shapes in the sky) Is fire soft?

Do you see any straight lines in the painting? Where? The staff the Indians are carrying. Why are they only used there? Are these the only “man-made” objects in the painting?

How does the use of texture make the subject matter stand out? How does the artist use color or line to show texture?

Would you have used the texture Bosin did to show a prairie fire?

How would prairie fires affect Indians and animal life? How might this prairie fire have started? Would there be any way to stop this fire? How would prairie fires be stopped today?

Do you think it was important that Bosin paint the subject matter with a lot of detail? Can you give examples of this?

Being an Indian, portraying Indians (and related subject matter) was it important for Indians or others to see this?

We are not sure when this was painted – When do you think it was?
(Bosin’s earliest shown works were after 1959)

How important is art and crafts to the American Indian?

Do you think there were a lot of Indian artist painters?

Is there a relationship between their arts and crafts to their spirituality?

Blackbear Bosin died in 1980. Do you think his spirit has lived on through his art and painting? Just by talking about this painting do we rekindle the spirits of the past? Would Blackbear be proud of his painting being talked about in a classroom?