

Exploring Rural Kentucky Through Documentary Art: Unit 2 - *Irvin Store, 1920s* - Documentary Art Interactive - For the Student -

BACKGROUND READING

Video producers who document a community's history like to use compelling visual images. The images help viewers picture the past. Historic photographs help to tell the story, and sometimes a film clip might be available for use. But there are rarely enough strong visuals from the time period to bring the past to life. Producers often purchase the right to use paintings that add visual interest.

In *Creelsboro and the Cumberland River: A Living History*, Producer/Director Tom Law used a well-balanced mix of historic photographs and artwork. However, he wanted a scene that no one had ever photographed or painted. He commissioned an artist to create it specifically for this video.



Irvin Store, 1920s by *Dennis Thrasher (2018)*.

The artist, Dennis Thrasher, created *Irvine Store, 1920s*. Law provided Thrasher with details about what he wanted included in the painting (see [Directions to the Artist - Irvin Store, 1920s](#)). He explained the mood that he wanted the painting to convey. He also provided historic information and any existing photographs. This helped Thrasher make the painting reflect the time period as accurately as possible.

As the artist, Thrasher drew on his experience living in the area. He was free to make his own artistic choices about things like style, colors, focal points, contrasts, and perspective. The resulting painting adds a vibrancy to the video, the feeling that you could almost step into the past.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

After reading the BACKGROUND READING, look at the painting, and consider these questions. There are no right or wrong answers – the idea here is to sharpen your observation skills and get you to start thinking visually:

1. What is happening in this painting?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What else can you find?

After watching **Rural Life** and reading **Video Script for Rural Life**, consider these questions:

1. Why did the artist make the decisions he did about which elements to include, what to exclude, and what to add to the painting?
2. Would you have made the same decisions? Why or why not?
3. Do you think the video producer intended that the artist would include all the elements in the painting or was he providing a list of *possible* elements to include? How would the mood of the painting have changed if the artist had included all the elements?