Norman Rockwell

Pictures for the American People



A Family Guide

Norman Rockwell's paintings...

Rockwell was born in New York City on February 3, 1894. When he was nine years old, his family moved to the small town of Mamaroneck, New York. He was a skinny boy and not very athletic, so he chose drawing as his hobby. At age eighteen, Rockwell became art editor of Boys' Life, the official magazine of the Boy Scouts of America. When Rockwell was twenty-two years old, one of his paintings appeared on the cover of The Saturday Evening Post, which showcased the works of the finest illustrators of the period. Remarkably, in forty-seven years, 321 of his paintings appeared on the cover of the Post, making him one of the most famous painters of the twentieth century.

Norman Rockwell created paintings to be enjoyed by everyone. Many fine artists create paintings and sculptures for private collectors, and sometimes this artwork is not shown to the general public. Rockwell's paintings were seen across America, as they appeared in books, advertisements, calendars, and on the covers of popular magazines, such as *The Saturday Evening Post, Look*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*.

Are humorous: Look at No Swimming on the cover of this guide. Rockwell often paints the funniest moment in a story. Rather than picture the boys swimming in the forbidden pool, Rockwell paints the moment when the rascals have been discovered and are frantically trying to put their clothes back on as they race from the scene of the crime.

Celebrate ordinary, everyday life: Rockwell's stories about swimming holes, gossiping,

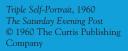
Rockwell's stories about swimming holes, gossiping, family vacations, and barbershops are not what you read about in newspaper headlines and history textbooks. Rockwell painted scenes from the daily life of ordinary people.

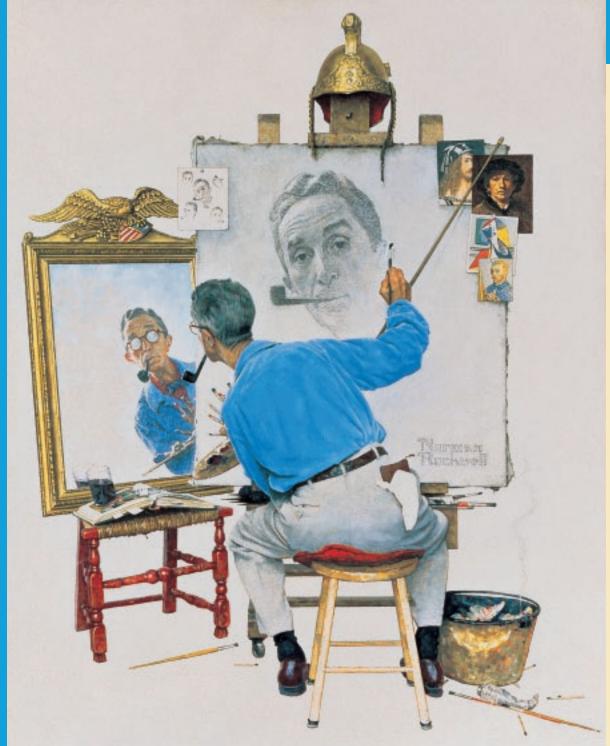
Are skillfully painted: Rockwell carefully studied the works of great artists like those pictured in the upper right corner of the easel in *Triple Self-Portrait*. He also spent weeks, even months creating his paintings.

LOOK Look closely at the painting *Triple* Self-Portrait. Can you find these items? See page 15 for answers.

• The "antique" that fooled Rockwell

 The soft drink he often enjoyed as he worked A reference to the accidental burning of his studio A tribute to the great artists he admired 				





Many artists paint pictures of themselves, known as self-portraits. When Rockwell painted this self-portrait, he included images of some of his favorite artists and shared details about his life.

"It is no exaggeration to say simply that Norman Rockwell is the most popular, the most loved, of all contemporary artists...[H]e himself is like a gallery of Rockwell paintings—friendly, human, deeply American, varied in mood, but full, always, of the zest of living."

-Ben Hibbs, Saturday Evening Post Editor

TRY IT
Pretend you made a
visit to Rockwell's studio. You two
hit it off quite well, and Rockwell
told you that, as a gift, he would like
you to select any item from this
painting. What would you bring
home and why? Draw a portrait of
yourself with your new treasure.

Rockwell The Artist



FUN FACT

Did you know Rockwell left actual globs of paint on this canvas? Look closely at the critic's palette. Each color is a dried clump of paint!

Art Critic, 1955, The Saturday Evening Post, © 1955 The Curtis Publishing Company

LOOK Here is a finished painting entitled Art Critic. To the right is an early sketch. How many differences can you find between the two versions? Can you think of any reasons why Rockwell changed what he did?				

Look more closely at some of Rockwell's techniques.

Rockwell didn't just sit down and begin to paint. Each painting was carefully planned, and many took several months to complete.

- When he had an idea for a painting, Rockwell often took photographs of models (sometimes his friends and neighbors) in various poses. A photo he used to create *Art Critic* is shown at the right.
- He then mixed and matched details from these photos and made numerous pencil sketches, rearranging the composition and adding new details.
- Rockwell sometimes coated the back of his final sketch with charcoal dust and laid it on top of a canvas. By tracing the top image, he left a dust outline on the canvas.
- He then painted on top of this sketchy image with oil paints, which covered
 up the charcoal lines. Even while he was painting the picture, Rockwell often
 made changes in the poses, the backgrounds, and facial expressions.



Photo by Gene Pelham



Photo by Bill Scovi

FUN FACT

The painting of the woman in Art Critic was based on photographs of Rockwell's wife, Mary.



Art Critic (study), 1955, © The Curtis Publishing Company

Rockwell The Humorist



The paintings on these two pages are called sequence paintings because they are composed of lots of little images that are combined to tell a story, just like a comic strip or a movie. The painting above is entitled *Day in the Life of a Little Girl*. Rockwell created another sequence painting entitled *Day in the Life of a Little Boy*. Look closely at this little girl's day and try to imagine what the boy's day might look like.

Day in the Life of a Little Girl, 1952, The Saturday Evening Post © 1952 The Curtis Publishing Company

TRY IT

Find a partner. Choose one of the images on this page but don't tell your partner which you chose. Simply imitate the action and invite your partner to guess. Switch and then guess as your partner imitates one of the images. Remember, if you were a model for Norman Rockwell, you might have to hold that pose for several minutes!

SEARCH The people who posed for *The Gossips* were Rockwell's neighbors in Arlington, Vermont. His wife, Mary, appears in the painting, too. Look at her photograph on page 5 (posing for the painting *Art Critic*), then see if you can find her in the painting below. The answer is on page 15. The models never knew how they would look in the finished painting.



FUN FACT

The editor at The Saturday Evening Post did not believe that anyone could have a mouth as big as the man with the black hat. He said that no one in America would believe it. Rockwell sent him a photo of this man with his mouth open, and the editor had to agree-that man had one enormous mouth! So the painting was published exactly how Rockwell painted it.

The Gossips, 1948, The Saturday Evening Post © 1948 The Curtis Publishing Company



TRY IT
Write dialogue for the people in the painting. Why is the woman at the end shocked?
Do you think the story the woman tells in the beginning has changed by the end?
Why are some of the folks laughing?



Inventing America

America went through many changes during Rockwell's sixty-year career. He often illustrated these transitions from an old way of life to a new future by combining something traditional with something modern. Today, these paintings help us imagine what it must have been like to live in earlier times.



In the painting *Going* and *Coming*, Rockwell shows an old-fashioned tradition: family gatherings. This family, however, is wrapped in a modern invention: the American station wagon.



LOOK Notice the feelings Rockwell shows in the top part of the painting. How are the two parts the same, how are they different? Look for the one person who remains unchanged.

Going and Coming, 1947 The Saturday Evening Post © 1947 The Curtis Publishing Company

During the 1940s and 1950s, a feeling of hopeful idealism could be found in a number of movies and television shows, such as It's a Wonderful Life or Leave It To Beaver. Like many Rockwell paintings, these shows depicted life in an idealized American home.

- Can you think of a TV show or movie about average people doing ordinary things in a small town?
- If you were to write a story or make a movie, would it resemble your own life, or would it be a fantasy of your imagining?
- Can you think of any changes that have taken place in our world since your parents were your age?

FUN FACT

Rockwell said if he were to paint this work again, he would leave out the magazine. How would this change the meaning of the painting?



Girl at Mirror, 1954 The Saturday Evening Post © 1954 The Curtis Publishing Company

Rockwell remembers thinking about growing up when he was a child. He was a bit concerned about not always fitting in with the other kids, "When I got to be ten or eleven...I could see I wasn't God's gift to man in general or to the baseball coach in particular....At the age boys who are athletes were expressing themselves fully....I didn't have that. All I had was my ability to draw."

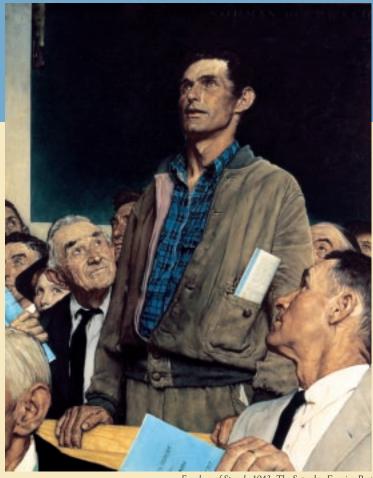
LOOK This painting captures a change from an old way of life to a new way. See how the girl is in a room surrounded with old-fashioned things—her doll, the chair, her clothing. They all relate to the past. She is looking in a mirror thinking about growing up, and the comfortable old things around her may be Rockwell's way of suggesting that the old-fashioned values and traditions of the past will help her as she moves into the future.

SEARCH The little girl in this painting is Mary Whalen Leonard, who Rockwell met at a basketball game. Rockwell often used her as a model because he found she could act out "any story." Look through the family guide to find another painting in which you can find her acting out several stories.

Honoring the American Spirit

When the United States entered World War II in December 1941, Rockwell wanted to help in the war effort. Remembering a speech President Franklin D. Roosevelt had made earlier in the year, Rockwell painted pictures to help people better understand the four basic freedoms the president thought everyone in the world should have: freedom of speech, freedom to worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

It took Rockwell seven months to complete the four paintings. He painted *Freedom of Speech* and *Freedom to Worship* several times before he was satisfied with the results. In the middle of the night when pondering how to best depict freedom of speech, Rockwell was struck with what he called "the best idea I'd ever had." He remembered a man who stood up at a town meeting and made a comment. Everyone disagreed with him but believed that he had the right to speak his mind. This, Rockwell thought, was what freedom of speech was all about.



Freedom of Speech, 1943, The Saturday Evening Post © 1943 The Curtis Publishing Company

indman



Freedom from Want, 1943, The Saturday Evening Post © 1943 The Curtis Publishing Company

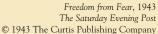
FUN FACT Rockwell claimed that the turkey featured in Freedom from Want was, in fact, the Rockwell family's Thanksgiving turkey. He later confessed, "This was one of the few times I've ever eaten the model."

SEARCH Rockwell used many of his friends and family in this painting. The woman serving the Thanksgiving turkey in *Freedom from Want* was the Rockwell family cook, and he also included his wife, Mary. Look closely to find her.

SEARCH The father in Freedom from Fear appears in all four paintings. Can you find him?

FUN FACT

The American people responded enthusiastically to *The Four Freedoms*. After the paintings appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*, 70,000 people wrote letters of praise to the magazine. That's a stack of letters over six basketball goals high!







Freedom to Worship, 1943, The Saturday Evening Post © 1943 The Curtis Publishing Company

LOOK Rockwell was able to convey complicated ideas without using words. By looking at the details of a painting—the clothing people wear, the expressions on their faces—we discover things about them that would take pages of text to explain.

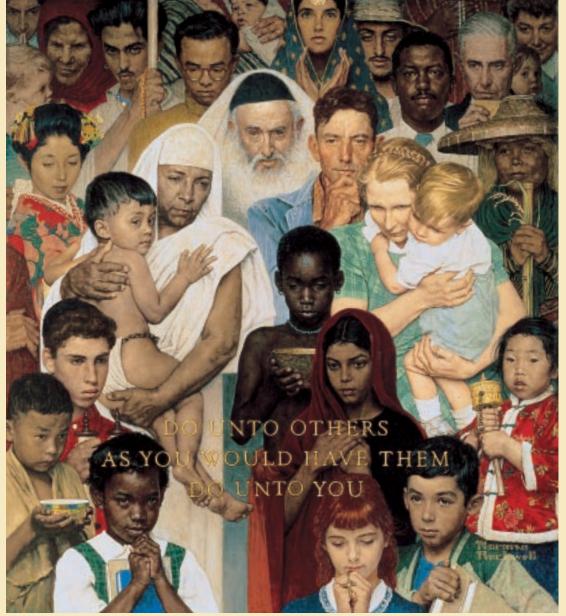
TRY IT Pick a person from one of *The Four Freedoms* and describe everything you can about his or her life just by the details Rockwell has painted.

SEARCH The woman with a braid in her hair in *Freedom to* Worship also appears in another painting in this guide. Can you find her?

Honoring the American Spirit

"Like everyone else, I'm concerned with the world situation, and like everyone else, I'd like to contribute something to help."

-Norman Rockwell



Golden Rule, 1961, The Saturday Evening Post © 1961 The Curtis Publishing Company

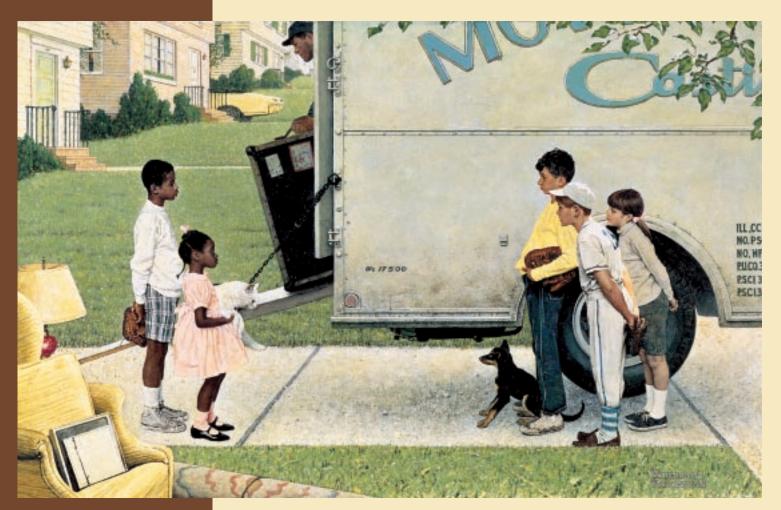
LOOK Rockwell used photos of his friends and neighbors in Vermont and Massachusetts to compose the painting *Golden Rule*. What similarities do you see between these individuals? Notice he shows two different women holding babies. Why do you think he put two people in almost the same pose at the center of the painting?

Throughout his life, Rockwell was concerned with political issues, such as racism, poverty, and social injustice. In the 1960s, Rockwell painted for Look magazine. These illustrations addressed important events of the day and were generally less humorous than those he painted for The Saturday Evening Post.

FUN FACT

During his life, Rockwell traveled to many countries in Europe, as well as India, Egypt, Iran, and Turkey.

When Rockwell painted *New Kids in the Neighborhood*, America was experiencing the civil rights movement. Families from different cultures and backgrounds were beginning to live in the same neighborhoods, eat at the same restaurants, and sit next to each other on buses.



New Kids in the Neighborhood, 1967, Look © 1967 The Norman Rockwell Estate Licensing Company

LOOK The two groups of children in *New Kids in the Neighborhood* may look different, but they also have several things in common. Can you find them? When the kids start to talk and play together, what do you think they will find?

Celebrating the Commonplace

"Commonplaces are never tiresome. It is we who become tired when we cease to be curious or appreciative...[We] find that it is not a new scene which is needed, but a new viewpoint."

-Norman Rockwell



Rockwell liked to focus on the lives of ordinary people in typical American towns, enjoying the simple pleasures of life. These images proved very popular with Saturday Evening Post readers. They felt that they were seeing themselves on the cover of a magazine!

TRY IT
In this painting,
Rockwell carefully created a
composition out of rectangles.
With a dark marker, outline the
rectangles you can see. Notice
how Rockwell built his painting
around these shapes.

Shuffleton's Barbershop, 1950 The Saturday Evening Post © 1950 The Curtis Publishing Company

LOOK When looking at the painting <i>Shuffleton's Barbershop</i> , what is your viewpoint? Where are you standing as you look in on this scene?	
What kinds of clues can you find about the shop? Who might work there? What other hobbies do they have?	
Who are the people inside, and how long have they known each other? Can you think of a tune they might be playing? What other instruments might be in the group hidden from our view?	
Rockwell gives us lots of clues to help us understand the story he's telling. Sometimes he leaves things hidden so we can imagine stories of our own.	
14 stories of our own.	

Norman Rockwell: Pictures for the American People

is organized by The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta.

Ford Motor Company,

The exhibition and its national tour are made possible by Ford Motor Company.

The exhibition and its accompanying catalogue are also made possible by The Henry Luce Foundation.

Additional support is provided by The Curtis Publishing Company and

The Norman Rockwell Estate Licensing Company.

Education programs for the national tour are made possible by

Fidelity Investments through the Fidelity Foundation.



In Atlanta, the exhibition is made possible by The Fraser-Parker Foundation.





ON THE COVER No Swimming, 1921, The Saturday Evening Post © 1921 The Curtis Publishing Company

Page 11 Rose Hoyt also appears in Golden Rule.

Page 7 Mary is the second person from the left in the third row.

Page 10 (Find Morman)
Only a portion of
Rockwell's face can be
seen. His eye is visible
on the left edge of the
painting, looking at the
man speaking.

The pictures pinned to Rockwell's canvas are self-portraits by Albrecht Düret, Rembrandt, Pablo Picasso, and Vincent van Gogh.

Page 10 Mary Rockwell is sitting on the left of the table, and Rockwell's mother is on the right.

The smoke rising from the trash can is a reference to the accidental dio in 1943.

Page 9 She also was the model for Day in the Life of a Little Girl on page 6.

Norman Rockwell's daily cola drink is precariously perched on his art book.

Page 7 (Find Norman)
Rockwell appears in the last row, pointing at the woman. He was the subject of the gossip.

Page 2 The gold helmet atop the easel: Rockwell thought it was an antique army helmet but later discovered it was just a fireman's hat!

VANSWERS

WORD SEARCH

self-portrait Norman Rockwell sequence

D

I

P

H

0

T

0

G

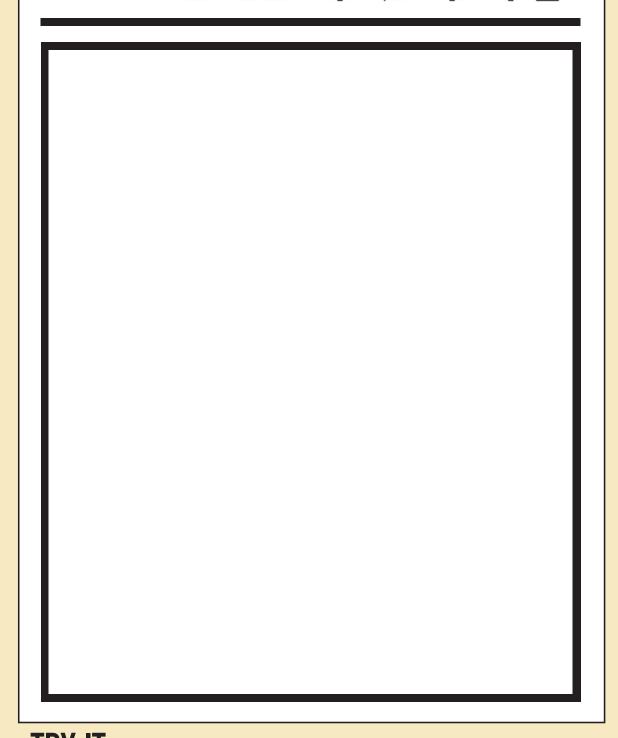
R

P

traditional modern magazine golden rule freedoms photograph models American political illustrator humorous commonplace

E D N \mathbf{E} M Ψ H R D 0 E E D L N I I \mathbf{R} Α 0 T D Α R T \mathbf{E} E A R S P I H S 0 G I \mathbf{H} A 0 D C M M 0 N P L A C E M Ι T 0 T H W R \mathbf{Z} Η L E B A T Ι \mathbf{E} A D E U M T A A L R C Ι R R I E M R \mathbf{E} Ι N M E L T \mathbf{E} B 0 P C E 0 C N 0 W S E R P R A I T D K 0 N A U P U F E 0 \mathbf{H} I L R E C N Ι L E L U R N E D L G E L G S S T C H S Y \mathbf{E} \mathbf{E} \mathbf{R}

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST



Make your own Saturday Evening Post cover using Rockwell's technique (see pages 4-5 for ideas). Think of something you want to celebrate about your life, your town, or your neighborhood. Sketch all the different ideas you have, then select the very best one. Using a sharp pencil, lightly trace the outlines of the image in the box provided. Add more details by tracing from different images. When you are finished, use crayons or paint to color in the image.