



THE ARTIST

Although born in Germany, Albert Bierstadt is famous for his large paintings of the American West. In the 19th century, when this was painted, few people had been to the western part of the United States. Bierstadt introduced them to the beauty of its lakes, mountains, and valleys through scenic paintings, like this one, of Mirror Lake in Yosemite Valley. In fact, paintings like this helped convince Congress that it was important to preserve this unique and majestic landscape which is one of the reasons why places like Yosemite are now part of the National Park system.



LOOKING CLOSELY

This painting is called a landscape and is a view of nature. Most landscapes can be divided into three sections: foreground, middle ground, and background. The foreground is the part of the painting that appears to be closest to us. Move your eye from foreground to middle and into the distance. What details do you see? Notice the boat in the middle ground.

IMAGINING

Imagine you are one of the people inside the boat. What sounds do you think you would hear? What would you feel? What would you smell? How far away are the mountains from where you are sitting? How long do you think it would take to walk around the lake or row to the shore?

Bierstadt used mostly soft muted colors. Try coloring this line drawing with the same soft tones or use bright bold colors to change the feeling or mood. Add someone waving from the shore or a fish on a line coming from the boat, you can even add snow or stars and make it nighttime.

