N
orman Rockwell was born in New York City on February 3, 1894. He had success with his artwork from an early age. When he was about six years old he drew ships on pieces of cardboard for his brother and a friend to play with. In the evenings he listened to his father read aloud from the books of Charles Dickens and young Norman Rockwell drew the characters described in the stories. When he was in eighth grade, Norman Rockwell got his first paid commission to paint a series of Christmas cards for a neighbor.

As a teenager, Rockwell began art school. One of the first publications to hire him as an illustrator was the popular *Tell Me Why* series of children’s magazines. Then, at only nineteen years old, he became the art editor for *Boys’ Life*, the official magazine for the Boy Scouts of America. His big break came in 1916, when one of his paintings was published on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* — the first of 321 Rockwell paintings to appear on the cover over the next forty-seven years. *The Saturday Evening Post* was one of the most popular magazines of the time, and since so many readers saw and liked Norman Rockwell’s artwork, he became one of the most well-known illustrators of the 20th Century.

Norman Rockwell drew and painted over four thousand images in his lifetime. His work was seen across America in books, advertisements, calendars, and in such popular magazines as *The Saturday Evening Post, Look, Ladies’ Home Journal, Family Circle, Boys’ Life, Literary Digest,* and *Life.* “The commonplaces of America are to me the richest subjects in art,” Rockwell said. “Boys batting flies on vacant lots; little girls playing jacks on the front steps...the things we have seen all our lives, and overlooked.” He died on November 8, 1978, in Stockbridge, Massachusetts at the age of 84.
Other details are interesting, too. Light and shadow on the water create the feeling of a bright summer day. The man, the boy and the dog may be enjoying the coolness of standing in the shade while looking out over the water.

Look up! The spiral of seagulls fades into the distance. Just when you think you’ve seen the gull that is farthest away, it looks as if there may be one more in the background. If you allow your eye to follow the trail of gulls forward, you’ll find yourself led right to the main characters.

**DETAILS**

Small touches can make a big difference in a painting. Some of the details to notice in *Outward Bound* include a tattoo on the man’s hand, the lighthouse in the distance, the ships’ masts and the texture of the grass. What do these and other details tell us about the story behind the painting? Look closely at *Outward Bound*, and make a list of other important details that inspire your imagination:

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

Painted for a 1927 issue of *Ladies’ Home Journal* as a featured illustration without an accompanying story, *Outward Bound* continues to be one of Norman Rockwell’s most popular pictures. Let’s take a closer look at the image to discover why.

**LOOKING AT ART**

One of the things people notice about this picture is its color. Look at the variety of blues and greens, even in the sky! It may be unusual to think of a sky as green, but there are often many colors in a sky. Where else do you see blue and green being used in the painting?
Checkers illustrated a 1928 story in Ladies' Home Journal magazine about a circus clown named Pokey Joe who feels that he is no longer funny. His circus friends try to lift his spirits by playing a game of checkers and letting him win. Do you think they were successful in making him feel better? Why?

Circuses are busy places. Even though we can’t see outside of this circus tent, we can imagine the activity all around. What are some things that might be happening nearby?

**USE YOUR IMAGINATION**

Imagine that you could walk right into this scene.

Use your senses to describe things that you could:

See______________________________________

Smell____________________________________

Hear____________________________________

Touch___________________________________

Taste___________________________________
Welcome to Elmville appeared on the cover of The Saturday Evening Post at a time when towns across America were discovering a new way to raise money. Drivers who were caught speeding had to pay fines. Typical speed limits in 1929 were:

- Twenty miles per hour in the business district and closely built-up parts of town
- Thirty-five miles per hour in all other portions of town
- Forty-five miles an hour on highways outside of town

As drivers enter Norman Rockwell’s fictitious Elmville, they would be well-advised to slow down to avoid a speed trap!

**WRITE A SLOGAN**

What would be a good slogan for Elmville to help drivers obey the speed limits? Write a one-line advertisement to go along with the picture Rockwell painted.

*For example:*

Welcome to Elmville…a place where life slows down.

Welcome to Elmville…


**FUN FACT:**

In 1929 America, Ford and Chevrolet cars were running neck-and-neck for top speed: Ford’s *Model A* could reach a top speed of 60 miles per hour, while Chevy topped that with a six-cylinder car that could reach 65 miles per hour.
On the inside cover of this family guide, you’ll find a photograph of Norman Rockwell posing for and working on this painting. Notice the details that tell us that a deadline is getting closer and closer — the ticking watch and the puzzled artist facing his canvas.

Have you ever been late with your homework or struggled to get an assignment done on time? Norman Rockwell did too. Published in 1938, Artist Facing Blank Canvas shows an artist at a loss as to what to paint for his Saturday Evening Post cover.

YOU TRY IT!
Help the artist meet his deadline by designing a Saturday Evening Post cover here. Create an image inspired by the deadlines that you have to meet.


*Going and Coming* uses two images to describe the “before” and “after” of a family’s summer outing. Norman Rockwell has provided many clues to help us discover what they did on their trip in this 1947 *Saturday Evening Post* cover.

Compare the top panel to the bottom panel. Almost everyone in the car has something about him or her that has changed. Where did the family go? What did they do on their trip? How did each character feel while heading out and on the trip home? Look closely at the two pictures to find out.

**DRAW!**

This family brought home a souvenir from the day’s trip. A bright banner can be seen in the lower right corner fluttering in the breeze. Create a souvenir of your own! Draw a banner from a place you have been or would like to visit someday:
Norman Rockwell describes a busy day in the life of a young girl by using many smaller scenes built into one larger painting. The sequence of pictures in this 1952 painting can be read from left to right beginning at the top like words on the pages of a book.

**TAKE A CLOSER LOOK**

Can you list five different places this little girl has visited during her day?

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

**YOU TRY IT!**

Use the spaces below to draw pictures describing a day in your life.
In *Girl at Mirror*, Norman Rockwell captures a private moment as a soon-to-be teenage girl ponders her reflection. What do you see in the picture that tells us this girl is still a child? What objects hint at the fact that she is growing up?

Rockwell said later that he thought his 1954 *Girl at Mirror* would have been a better picture if he had left out the magazine showing Jane Russell, a popular film star at the time. What do you think? Is the magazine important to the story?

**UPDATE THE IMAGE**

If Rockwell painted this picture today, who do you think might be pictured in the magazine?

Design your own magazine pages below.
Norman Rockwell illustrated for the Boy Scouts of America throughout his long career. The Boy Scouts of America insisted that each picture Rockwell painted for them show a uniform correct in all details. All badges and insignia must be accurately described, as well as hats, neckerchiefs, footwear and even the color of the stitching. Even though the scouts might be undergoing challenges in the picture, the uniform still had to be perfectly presented.

*A Scout is Helpful*, painted in 1939, illustrates one of the twelve characteristics described in the Scout Law. According to Scout Law, a scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean and Reverent.

**YOU TRY IT!**
How would you illustrate one of the important characteristics listed above?
LOOK FOR...

Rockwell includes details in the picture that tell us something about him. For example, if you look closely at the book on the chair, you will see that it has bits of paper marking pages. What does this tell you about the way he might have used his art books?

Norman Rockwell admired the work of other artists, and tacked the artwork of four of them to his easel in this picture. The four artists’ self portraits we see here are, top to bottom: Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), Rembrandt van Rijn (1606 or 1607–1669), Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890).

Compare the Norman Rockwell you see in the mirror with the version on the canvas. Describe the differences between the two. Why do you think he would show himself in two different ways?

YOU TRY IT!

Draw two versions of your own self portrait in the spaces below.
Two years before he was elected president, Abraham Lincoln made the town of Beardstown, Illinois famous when he tried a murder case there. This particular trial became known as Lincoln’s famous “Almanac Trial.”

**THE TRIAL**
A young attorney at the time, the resourceful Lincoln produced an 1857 almanac (the year the incident occurred) to argue that the state’s witness could not have seen the accused Duff Armstrong kill the victim. According to the almanac, the moon was in its first quarter and about to set. Lincoln argued that it would have been too dark for the witness to have seen the crime being committed from 150 feet away. The judge and jury agreed, and Mr. Armstrong was acquitted.

**POINT OF VIEW**
Notice how Norman Rockwell paints the image from an interesting point of view. In this 1964 painting, we look up at Lincoln, which makes him seem larger than life. His height and the strength of his fist pressing on the book emphasize his powerful presence and strength of character.

**YOUR TRY IT!**
Discover the differences point of view can make. Pick an object to draw like an ordinary cup. Draw it from eye level — the point-of-view you would usually have. Then, try placing it much lower or higher and draw it again. Your two drawings will look different, even though the object is the same.

Eye level:

Looking up or down:
In *The Problem We All Live With* we see a little girl going to her first day of first grade in a newly desegregated public school, escorted by federal marshals. This 1964 image for *Look* magazine captures, in her courageous steps, the essence of an important part of the civil rights movement. Rockwell’s painting was inspired by an actual event that occurred in 1960 as six-year-old Ruby Bridges walked into William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Louisiana, becoming the first African-American child to attend that elementary school. Even after so many years this scene grips our imaginations.

**EVENTS HAVE IMPACT**

Think for a moment of an event that changed things in your life. Maybe you made a new friend, moved to a new community, or became part of a team. Draw and describe your event below.

An event that changed things for me was__________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________
This young art student is carefully studying a painting in an art museum that is brought to life through Norman Rockwell’s humor. In Rockwell’s 1955 painting, Art Critic, the artist looks at the works on view and they look back at him!

**EXPLORING THE CREATIVE PROCESS**

Norman Rockwell did a lot of preparation for each of his paintings. After coming up with the original idea, Rockwell would make sketches of the layout of the picture. He would find the right model or models to pose and have his assistant photograph the scene from many angles — both full shots and close-ups. From these photographs, he drew a full-sized study of the scene in pencil and charcoal. When he was satisfied with his sketches, Rockwell painted color studies. When all of this preliminary work was finished, the final oil painting was started.

**A PAINTING BEGINS WITH AN IDEA**

This thumbnail sketch is very small, about five inches square. It was enough to allow Norman Rockwell to develop his idea. He often got ideas well before he began to work on the painting — sometimes years before.

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

After Rockwell decided to develop an idea into a painting, he would pose models and photograph them. Sometimes he would use many different photographs, combining different parts to get the look he wanted.
As it turned out, Rockwell decided to paint some rather outraged Dutch masters instead. Their reactions help to create a humorous scene.

**YOU ARE THE CRITIC**

Just imagine that you could redo *Art Critic* with yourself as the young artist studying paintings in a museum. What painting would you enjoy studying? How might the painting react to you?

Add your own profile and painting to this scene!

**DRAWING AND RE-DRAWING**

In the process of creating this image, Norman Rockwell settled upon the appearance of the woman in the portrait by sketching her many times. In order to make judgments about how all the elements of the picture would work together, he painted different versions of her on clear plastic acetate which he could tack onto the canvas. He created about eighteen different studies of the woman in the frame.

**DECISIONS**

Norman Rockwell had two ideas for how the painting on the right-hand wall might appear. One was to include the 17th century Dutch landscape seen here. He attached the landscape to the canvas with when he was trying it out.
Norman Rockwell’s charming paintings of children enjoying Kellogg’s Corn Flakes were seen on the cereal box fronts in food stores across America in the mid 1950s. The Kellogg’s campaign encouraged shoppers to check on their supply of corn flakes. The advertisement read, “You know how it is — one minute you have a big full package, then the next thing you know, you’re down to the last Corn Flake.”

YOU TRY IT!
Create a design for a cereal you like!