

FROM THE VAULT: LEARNING WITH THE MARTIN MUSEUM PERMANENT COLLECTION

Educator Materials | Pre Visit

Collection Spotlight: Hogarth's Modern Morals

Featured Artist: William Hogarth (1697-1764)

Time Period: 18th Century

Medium: Engraving and Etching

Audience: Grades 9–12, College-level

Pre-Visit Preparation

Objective: Introduce students to William Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress*, a six-plate narrative series critiquing the moral decay of 18th-century London society. Students will examine how Hogarth's visual storytelling employs satire and symbolism to critique class, gender, and power.

Key Terms, Subjects & Definitions

- **Satire:** The use of humor, irony, or exaggeration to criticize society's flaws.
- **Moral Subject:** A type of artwork depicting a story that teaches a lesson about right and wrong.
- **Etching:** A printmaking technique where a design is carved into a metal plate, inked, and pressed onto paper.
- **Narrative Series:** A sequence of images that tells a story over multiple scenes or plates.
- **Social Critique:** Analyzing and challenging the values, behaviors, and structures of a society.
- **Bawd:** A woman who manages or facilitates prostitution (like Hogarth's character, Mother Needham).
- **Venereal Disease:** A sexually transmitted infection, often referenced in 18th-century art as a moral consequence.

Discussion Starters

- How does Hogarth use storytelling to communicate moral lessons?
- What details in each plate reveal the characters' social status and choices?
- Can art influence public opinion or behavior? How?

Background Reading (Summary)

A Harlot's Progress tells the story of Moll Hackabout, a young woman's descent from innocence to death through the temptations and dangers of London life. Hogarth's vivid characters, layered details, and satirical tone reveal the hypocrisies and moral failures of 18th-century society.