

## ROSA BONHEUR SLIDE NOTES

### Slide 1

Marie-Rosalie (*Rosa*) Bonheur (**bon-err**) was born in Bordeaux, France in 1822. Her father was a successful painter and taught art to his children. Rosa began her artistic training with her father at the age of 13 and at 27 was a celebrated, successful painter. Few women artists have been as successful in their lifetimes as Rosa Bonheur. She was a talented painter and one of the few female sculptors of her time.

*Extension: Throughout her life, Rosa defied all norms, and was an outspoken feminist. She often dressed as a man, and entered the male dominated field of art, and rejected the idea of marriage. She will not only be remembered for her independent character, but also for her accomplishments as a leading painter of animals with a list of international honors. Today, Bonheur is widely considered the most famous woman painter of the 19th century.*

### Slide 2

Rosa was the oldest of four children in an artistic family. These are 3 portraits of Rosa—one at 35 years old, and the other two at 71 years old. In 1857, another artist asked Rosa to pose for this portrait. He originally painted her with her arm resting on a table. When Rosa saw the painting, she thought it was boring so she asked for permission to repaint it - she added her favorite bull in place of the table.

### Slide 3

Rosa created such realistic paintings of animals, which were aided by her endless hours spent sketching, as well as studying animal taxonomy. From the time she was a little girl, she was always drawing animals. Rosa's mother taught her to read and write by having her draw an animal for each letter of the alphabet. Here we see her study of elk, horses, and lions.

*Extension: What does it mean to sketch? Rough unfinished drawing, often used to create a more finished drawing, like an outline. Most often done by very light markings with pencil that is easy to erase.*

### Slide 4

When Rosa was 19 years old, she created this painting. It was submitted and accepted into the Salon in Paris, which was a very important place to display art in Rosa's time. It was an accomplishment to have her art accepted at the Salon, especially because it was unusual at that time because of her young age and because she was a woman.

### Slide 5

With increased fame and after receiving several prizes from the Salon in recognition of some of her paintings, the French government hired Rosa to paint this picture. This team of oxen is painted so realistically, it almost looks like a photograph.

*Extension: She exhibited this painting in the Paris Salon in 1842. At the time, it was considered one of her greatest works.*

### **Slide 6**

This is Bonheur's most famous painting. In real life, this is a huge painting at 8 feet tall by 16 feet long; the horses are almost life-size. Rosa spent a lot of time observing and studying horses at fairs and horse markets before she painted this. Today, this painting is on display in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

*Extension: She even went as far as to visit slaughterhouses (with cropped hair, dressing as a man to discourage attention), a highly unusual practice for a woman of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She paid careful attention to the anatomy of animals in order to create authentic realism.*

*In this painting, she depicts horse merchants bringing their beasts to auction. Notice all of the drama she created from the energy of the horses and the struggle of the men trying to control them. How does she show movement?*

### **Slide 7**

This painting is called "Gathering for the Hunt". Can you see the sun in this picture? (No). We don't see the sun, but we know that it is shining. How?

*Extension: Which direction is the sun shining from? (Look for the shadows on the ground.)*

### **Slide 8**

Notice the careful way Rosa painted the shadows on the grass in this painting. Using darker colors below the sheep helps make them look more "rounded" and realistic – just like real sheep!

### **Slide 9**

In addition to horses, lions were also one of Rosa's favorite animal subjects. After earning enough money from her art, she bought a large home in the French countryside with a studio. She then brought many unusual animals to live there after she painted them: a monkey, gazelles, a yak, an eagle, an otter, a wild boar, deer, horses, dogs, sheep, rabbits, and three lions!

### **Slide 10**

What does it look like the lion is doing in this picture? (Roaring)

Notice that Rosa used shadows and different colors mixed together to create the mane. The hair is also several different lengths to make it more realistic. She also added highlights in the eyes (a little white dot in the black pupils); black on the lips (to highlight the mouth); and white whiskers (to make the chin stand out).