

Thomas Moran Biography

Thomas Moran

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Biography

Thomas Moran (1837-1926), American painter and graphic artist, specialized in landscape painting. His gigantic canvases depict the grandeur and immensity of the Far West.

Born in Bolton, Lancashire, England, on Jan. 12, 1837, Thomas Moran was taken to the United States at the age of 7. He was educated in Philadelphia public schools. He early became familiar with the work of Washington Allston, Rembrandt Peale, John Neagle, and other American artists. Three of Moran's brothers were artists, and he learned to paint from his brother Edward.

In 1853 Moran was apprenticed to a wood engraver and illustrator in Philadelphia. In his spare time he did watercolor drawings, and in 1856 he painted his first oil, *Among the Ruins There He Lingered*.

In 1861 Moran went to London to study firsthand the paintings of Claude Lorrain and J. M. W. Turner. Moran returned to America the next year and married. He found that he was increasingly fascinated by the grandiose and vast in nature. In 1860 he had visited the Lake Superior region in northern Michigan. In 1871, serving as a guest artist with the Geological Survey of the Territories, he traveled into the Yellowstone country. The following year he toured the Yosemite Valley in California. In 1873, accompanying a party of the U.S. Geographical and Geological Survey, he explored the mountains of Utah to the north rim of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River.

Moran sought to suggest the vastness and sweep of the West through huge landscapes that lacked a focal point. His paintings, more than those of any other artist, made the western wilderness familiar to people on the eastern seaboard. At the end of the 19th century few Americans had seen the Rockies, and largely because of this Moran gained great fame. His enormous *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* (1893-1901) and his subsequent *Chasm of the Colorado* were purchased by the U.S. Congress. Although his grandiose paintings were executed with considerable skill, he seems best in his smaller paintings and in his drawings.

Moran made some 1,500 illustrations, mostly woodcuts, for *Scribner's Monthly Magazine* and other periodicals, for school texts, travel books, and special editions of American poets. He also did many etchings, especially between 1878 and 1888. He died in Santa Barbara, Calif., on Aug. 26, 1926. Mt. Moran in the Teton Range is named after him.