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LeRoy Neiman – American Artist

LeRoy Neiman is an American artist whose unique style of painting is admired in art circles around the world. Although he has created works of art based on a wide variety of subjects, he is particularly known for his brightly colored action-filled paintings of sporting events. In these paintings he uses intense shades of deep blue, red, yellow, green, and black. Through his use of bright colors he captures the spirit of athletic competition of all kinds. Neiman applies bold strokes of color so the viewer gets the impression of the fast-moving action of sports.



Neiman has said, "Concentrating on sports has helped me. There hasn't been any sports art to speak of ... I've had the field pretty much to myself."

Born on June 8, 1921 in St. Paul, Minnesota, Neiman attended Catholic elementary school where he claims he "was always drawing pictures and getting special treatment." While a sixth grader his painting of a fish won a prize in a national art competition. When he was a teenager during the Great Depression, Neiman earned money drawing pictures of fruit, vegetables and meat for local grocery stores. At the beginning of World War II Neiman enlisted in the army and at first served as a cook. After finding out about his talent as an artist, the



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army assigned Neiman to the Special Services division and he painted stage sets for Red Cross shows.

After his military service, Neiman's work as an artist began to be recognized. In 1953 the Minneapolis Institute of Arts bought one of his prize-winning paintings. Neiman has made his living as an artist ever since. The American public has enjoyed his sports paintings since he began painting sports scenes in the early 1960s. He covers all types of action sports and has done paintings and sketches of Olympic events from the 1972 through 1984 Olympic Games.

Neiman enjoys being a celebrity and strives to be an outstanding figure. His signature look includes a long handlebar moustache. He's said, "I like being outrageous ... I don't actually do anything, except be conspicuous. It keeps me revved up."



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Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. LeRoy Neiman comes from which state?
 - a. Massachusetts
 - b. Mississippi
 - c. Minnesota
 - d. Maine

2. To create the action of sports Neiman uses
 - a. Intense colors
 - b. Bold strokes
 - c. Both a. and b. above
 - d. None of the above

3. When did LeRoy Neiman earn his first art award?
 - a. Fourth grade
 - b. Sixth grade
 - c. Eighth grade
 - d. Tenth grade

4. Neiman enlisted in the army during
 - a. World War I
 - b. World War II
 - c. Korean War
 - d. Viet Nam War

5. Neiman's sports art includes sketches of
 - a. Olympic Games
 - b. National Championships
 - c. World Series
 - d. All of the above

6. What physical feature contributes to Neiman's signature look?
 - a. Shoulder length hair
 - b. Tattoos
 - c. Flowing beard
 - d. Handlebar moustache



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Short Answer Questions

1. Do some research and locate sports paintings by LeRoy Neiman. Select your favorite and describe it in detail in a descriptive essay.
2. Do some research and locate sports paintings by LeRoy Neiman. Describe how the vivid colors and bold strokes create action in these paintings.
3. Locate paintings by early French Impressionist painters like Claude Monet and Édouard Manet and non-sports paintings of Neiman. Briefly explain why Neiman has been called an Impressionist painter.
4. Create your own painting in the style of LeRoy Neiman.
5. What is a handlebar moustache? When were they popular in the United States?
6. LeRoy Neiman once said, "For an artist, watching a [Joe] Namath throw a football or a Willie Mays hit a baseball is an experience far more overpowering than painting a beautiful woman or leading political figure." Explain what you think Neiman meant with this statement.
7. Do you like LeRoy Neiman's paintings? Explain why or why not.



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Answer Key

Multiple Choice

1. c.
2. b.
3. c.
4. b.
5. a.
6. d.

Short Answer

1. Individual response
2. Individual response
3. Individual response
4. Individual response
5. A handlebar moustache is a long moustache that extends away from the mouth and has curved ends. It is called a handlebar moustache because it looks like the handlebars of a bicycle. It was popular in the 1800s.
6. Individual response
7. Individual response

