



MARCH 2012

## Moving Toward the Horizon

William Lamb Picknell

*Paysage (A Winter Day in Brittany)*



**VISIT THE BMA**  
and see *Paysage*  
(*A Winter Day in*  
*Brittany*) in the  
American Wing.

William Lamb Picknell (American, 1853-1897).  
Detail, *Paysage (A Winter Day in Brittany)*. 1881.  
Oil on canvas. 52 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 79 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches.  
The Baltimore Museum of Art: W. Clagett Emory  
Bequest Fund, in Memory of his Parents,  
William H. Emory of A and Martha B. Emory.  
BMA 2011.44

The horizon is a place, far in the distance, where the sky comes down to meet the land. If you live in a crowded city, you may never see the horizon if buildings are blocking your view. But if you stand out in the middle of a field you can probably see the horizon whichever way you look.

In this painting, the low horizon stretches out under a big sky as a man on horseback makes his way down a road wet with puddles from a recent rain. It is a cloudy day in Brittany, a region of France close to the seacoast where winters are mild. The grass near the roadside ditches remains green, and the air takes on a silvery cast.

When the horseman entered this picture, the road was wide, stretching halfway across the bottom of the painting. But as he looks ahead, strange things happen: the two sides of the road seem to move closer together until they all but disappear at a single point between two stands of trees. Tall pine trees growing along the roadside seem to get shorter and shorter as the road goes on.

Will all this seem odd to the man on horseback? Not at all. As his horse trots toward the horizon, the horseman knows that the road will remain as wide as it was when he started out (even though it looks very narrow ahead) and the pine trees down the road will loom as tall as ever. And he can be sure that the horizon, which seems so firmly in place, will keep moving away from him, always out of reach.

### CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Make a diagram that shows how the lines of the road, the triangular-shaped grassy area, and the endpoints of the wedge-shaped fields all converge at a single point on the horizon line. Extend the imaginary line that connects the tops of the bare tree trunks and see where it ends up. Study the one-point perspective system to learn how to create the illusion of three-dimensional space in a landscape painting. Then compose your own landscape in which the lines that move into space converge at a single “vanishing point” on the horizon line. See more at [tinyurl.com/art-to-go](http://tinyurl.com/art-to-go)

**PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.**



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William Lamb Picknell. *Paysage (A Winter Day in Brittany)*.

1881. Oil on canvas. 52  $\frac{5}{8}$  x 79  $\frac{5}{8}$  inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: W. Clagett Emory Bequest Fund, in Memory of his Parents, William H. Emory of A and Martha B. Emory. BMA 2011.44