



“HOMEWARD TO THE PRAIRIE I COME”:

Gordon Parks Photographs
from the Beach Museum of Art

Family Guide

Welcome to the SU Art Museum!

This guide is designed to help kids and families explore the exhibition ***“Homeward to the Prairie I Come”: Gordon Parks Photographs from the Beach Museum of Art.*** You’ll find engaging activities for each gallery as you learn about the life and groundbreaking work of artist **Gordon Parks.**

Museum Manners



Please look at the art with your eyes but do not touch. This helps keep both the art and you safe!



Kids should always stay close to their parents or adult companion.



Walk, don’t run, in the museum. Be aware of your surroundings and remember that art may be behind you!



If you have any questions or need help, museum staff are stationed at the front desk.



The artworks included in this guide are marked with an orange slice!



Alfred Eisenstaedt, *Portrait of Gordon Parks*, 1964.
© LIFE Picture Collection

About the Artist

Gordon Parks (1912-2006) was born and raised in the segregated town of Fort Scott, Kansas. He was the youngest of 15 children and left his hometown when he was teenager, after his mother died. He lived in Minneapolis, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and New York City. He also traveled to Europe. He took photographs of everyday people and also of athletes, artists, fashion models, and celebrities. He was the first Black photographer for *LIFE* magazine, where he focused his lens on the lives of poor people and people of color. He also made movies, composed music, and wrote poems, novels, and essays.

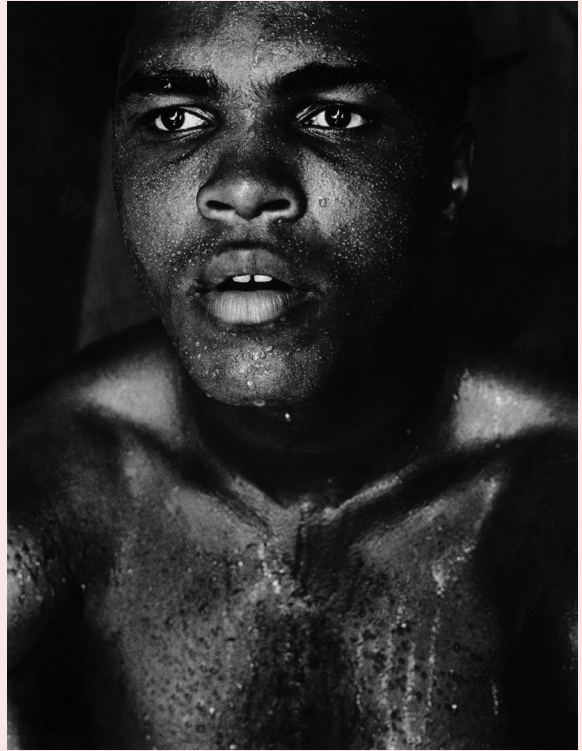
In his life and career, Parks cared deeply about people: their challenges, their triumphs, and their everyday experiences.

Use this guide to look closely at Gordon Parks's photographs and talk about what you see, think, and imagine. You'll also have opportunities to create your own artwork!

Talk about it!

What do you see?

Circle the words below that match what you see in this photograph.



sweaty

breathing hard

focused

happy

tired

bored

Can you think of more?

Gordon Parks wanted his photos to show Muhammad Ali as a powerful athlete and a hero. He knew that heroes in art and stories were usually white, and wanted to show what it might mean for a Black man to be shown as beautiful and strong.

Can you find other photos that show Ali as an athlete? Do you have a favorite athlete?

Now find the photograph of Muhammad Ali with a small child.

It was important for Parks to show Ali as someone who was not just a boxer. ***What do you see? How does Ali look different?***

We all have different interests and parts of our personalities. ***What are some of yours?***

Left: Gordon Roger Alexander Buchanan Parks, *Muhammad Ali*, from the series *The Redemption of the Champion*, 1966, printed 2017, gelatin silver print, 24 x 20 in. Kansas State University, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of Gordon Parks and the Gordon Parks Foundation, 2017.410. Image courtesy of and copyright by The Gordon Parks Foundation.

Draw it!

Find the poem *Kansas Land* by Gordon Parks. The first line reads, “I will miss this Kansas land that I was leaving...”

Park grew up in Kansas, where life was hard for him and his family. They were treated unequally, faced violence and didn't always have enough food to eat. At the same time, Parks appreciated the beauty of his home state.

Read this poem together and look at the nearby photographs of Kansas.

(You can also just look at the photos!)

Now you get to be an artist. Create a picture of a scene described in the poem or in one of the photographs. Or, draw a picture of your yard, neighborhood, city, or any other place you love!

A large, empty white rectangular space with rounded corners, intended for a student to draw a picture. It occupies the majority of the page below the instruction box.

Write it!

Gordon Parks liked to show stories of people who were struggling and might not be able to tell their own stories. In the 1950s and 1960s, Parks often showed the challenges that Black Americans faced, including segregation and discrimination. He also took photographs of people coming together to stand up for what was right.

In his work and life, Parks valued justice, understanding, and compassion. He urged people to remember how they could be alike, regardless of their skin color, how much money they had, or other differences.

Find the photograph titled *At the poverty board*. It shows the five members of the Fontenelle family. Mother Bessie is with her four children: Kenneth, Little Richard, Norman, Jr., and Ellen. Father Norman, Sr. is not included in the picture. They are meeting with a man sitting behind a desk. The man's job is to help them get the money and food that they need.

Look at the faces and bodies of the Fontenelles. What feelings do you see?

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These photographs appeared in the March 8, 1968 issue of *LIFE* magazine. *LIFE* was very popular during the 1960s. Many people saw these pictures! How would you share the Fontenelle family's story today?

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Do it!

Parks also took pictures of famous artists, like the one of Alexander Calder. Calder made innovative sculptures of metal and wire. In the photograph, do you see how he tinkers with one of his sculptures, both hands reaching for wires?

Practice posing like Alexander Calder!

How does it feel? What do you think Calder might do next?

Have a family member take a picture of your pose. Show the picture to museum staff at the front desk for a small prize!

Gordon Parks photographed other artists to highlight their creativity. There are many ways to be creative. In addition to taking photographs, Parks made movies and wrote music and poems.

Think of a time when you were creative. Maybe you were dancing or writing, building things or playing sports.

**How do you look when you are being creative?
How do you feel?**

Find it!

This exhibition highlights Gordon Parks's work as a photographer. Now is your chance to reflect on what you saw and circle back to areas you need more time in.

How many of these did you see in the exhibition? Put an "X" over each one you saw! Try to find any you missed.

a child or children	a snow scene	someone giving a speech	women dressed fancy	buildings or architecture
a color photo	an athlete	men in groups	women in groups	an artist
scenes around town	faith or religion		an animal	desk objects
men with hats	a classroom	landscape without people	a poem	a story of friendship
a path in the forest	a story of conflict	a family	raised hands	signs



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Cover: Gordon Roger Alexander Buchanan
Parks, *Pool Hall*, from the series *Fort Scott
Revisited*, 1950, printed in 2017, gelatin silver
print, 11 x 14 inches. Kansas State University,
Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art,
gift of Gordon Parks and the Gordon Parks
Foundation, 2017.445. Image courtesy of and
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