

The Voyage of Life

The series of paintings by Thomas Cole, called *The Voyage of Life*, tells an allegory or story about one man's life in four stages, *Childhood*, *Youth*, *Manhood*, and *Old Age*.



To follow along with the story, search for clues hidden within the paintings. Some clues are listed on the back of this card.

top left: Thomas Cole, *The Voyage of Life: Childhood*, 1839-40, oil on canvas, 65 x 91 x 6 ½ in., Museum Purchase, 55.105

top right: Thomas Cole, *The Voyage of Life: Youth* 1840, oil on canvas, 65 x 91 x 6 ½ in., Museum Purchase, 55.106

bottom left: Thomas Cole, *The Voyage of Life: Manhood* 1840, oil on canvas, 65 x 91 x 6 ½ in., Museum Purchase, 55.107

bottom right: Thomas Cole, *The Voyage of Life: Old Age* 1840, oil on canvas, 65 x 91 x 6 ½ in., Museum Purchase, 55.108

Where is he going in each picture? How would you describe each place?

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Hourglass: Do you know how an hourglass tells time? Look closely (but not too close) at the amount of sand left in each hourglass. It will give you a clue as to how much time has passed in this man's life.



Wait! Where is the timepiece in the last painting? What do you think it means if there is no hourglass?

Guardian Angel: Where is the guardian angel located in each picture? How much assistance does the man need at each stage of his life?



The Boat: Angels cover the surface of the boat but they are more than decoration. How would you describe the changes of their facial expressions and body language in each picture?



Sun and Nature: The series illustrates the passage of time by capturing different times of day and seasons of the year. See if you can identify the four phases of one day (morning, afternoon, evening, and nighttime) and the four seasons of one year.



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