

## “Reading” Historical Images

Images, such as paintings and photographs, can be valuable keys to understanding historical events. Historians try to answer many kinds of questions by studying different types of images. You can practice “reading” a historical image by completing the exercise below.

Study the painting *Independence Creek* by Michael Haynes on page two of the bicentennial issue of *Kansas Kaleidoscope*. Answer the following questions based on your observations.

1. What emotions are being expressed by the characters in the picture? Why are they expressing these feelings?

- Happiness, excitement, patriotism, pride, etc.
- Because they are celebrating the Fourth of July, and a special Fourth at that—the first Independence Day celebrated in the West.

2. What objects did the artist include in this painting? How were these things used by the Corps of Discovery?

- Journal—to record their discoveries
- Boat—for transportation
- Tent—for shelter
- Guns/weapons—for hunting and protection
- Uniforms—to identify themselves as military men

3. How did the explorers celebrate the Fourth of July? How is this like or not like the ways you celebrate this holiday?

- They wore their dress uniforms for the morning and evening ceremonies. They fired the keelboat’s bow gun and named two creeks in honor of the holiday.
- Some people wear patriotic clothing in celebration of the Fourth of July. Fireworks, like the firing of the bow gun, commemorate the battles of the Revolutionary War.

4. What did the artist have to know about this subject before painting “Independence Creek”? Why do you think he painted this scene?

- He had to know how the Corps celebrated, what their supplies looked like, and what the landscape was like near present-day Atchison.
- Because this scene is important to both Kansas and United States history.

