

## Two Illinois Photographers: Frank Sadorus and Nathan Lerner

The museum staff chose these two particular photographers because of the contrast between them in their locations (rural eastern Illinois and Chicago, Illinois) and consequently their subject matter, and at the same time for their similarity in the way they composed photographs and handled such elements as light, value, and composition. This module is structured so that other photographers could be added or substituted.



### The Collection and Exhibit

The Illinois State Museum is the home for the entire collection of Frank Sadorus photographic glass negative plates. There is a book on Frank Sadorus (*Upon a Quiet Landscape* by Raymond Bial) that contains 65 plates and biographical information about the Sadorus family. [http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/dd\\_bio.html#](http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/dd_bio.html#)

The copyright and possession of the Nathan Lerner images rests with his widow, Kiyoko Lerner, who has graciously offered to share them in this Web module. The Museum's exhibit Nathan Lerner: 50 Years of Photographic Inquiry will open at the Museum's Lockport Gallery on March 18, 2000. Another Lerner exhibit will arrive at the **Chicago Art Gallery** and the **Museum in Springfield** in 2001. The print resources section of this module has references for books about Lerner.

### Text

The text in this module was kept to a minimum so that each viewer can look at each image closely, perhaps think about the question asked, and begin to interpret it. This is important in our presentation of a discipline-based art education format. The images can also be read for historical and geographical content related to the Great Depression and the Heartland of America. A social survival skill and career skill for future citizens is the ability to read images and symbols in an age of pervasive media.

### Interdisciplinary Use

**History** is the strongest subject to which these art images connect. The Sadorus photographs picture the end of a way of life on the prairie at the turn of the twentieth century. The Lerner photographs make tangible some of the events and emotions connected with the Great Depression of the 1930s and early 1940s and the influence of Modernism on art. Teachers who are teaching their students these American History topics can lead discussions about the subjects and environments depicted in the photographs and discuss how people who took photos were recording history.

**Writing** in a journalistic style suits itself to the photographs which hint at headlines in a changing world – Roosevelt's death, the homeless, migration from farms to towns by some numbers of rural people – are a few. Students could write or give a mock-interview of one of the five people depicted in the various photographs – a homeless man, a young lady, a farm girl, a farmer who is an art photographer, and his brother.

**Grade Levels of Activities**

The photographic analysis forms will help students read the photographs artistically and historically. The teacher should lead the first analysis to guide students through one image then let pairs of students try their hand at it. When students are accustomed to the method, they should be able to do it independently, perhaps even as a life skill for enjoyment and research. The older the students and the more practiced they become, the more in depth they will be able to discuss their results. The hands-on camera activities may need the assistance of a camera club volunteer in your area. Many are experienced in helping novices use cameras and compose photographs artistically.

**Web Sites**

<http://www.kodak.com> Kodak's Web site has an educational section with lesson plans and camera advice for student use.