

Cousin Reginald Plays Pirates

1917

Oil on canvas on board

Country Gentleman magazine cover, 3 November 1917

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

As Rockwell was beginning his career, he incorporated children into most of his published works. An example was the ongoing adventures and misfortunes of Cousin Reginald, a popular theme and character for Rockwell's *Country Gentleman* magazine covers. Cousin Reginald, modelled by Claude Fitzhugh, was an arrogant, yet harmless city boy who was often made the target of pranks by his country cousins. Cousin Reginald and his mischievous relatives, Chuck Peterkin and the Doolittle brothers, are pictured playing pirates. Cousin Reginald is tied up and being charged by Rusty Doolittle while his brother Tubby and Chuck assist with menacing glares. In the background, their dog Patsy observes the mischief.

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The Doughboy and His Admirers

1919

Oil on canvas

Saturday Evening Post cover, 22 February 1919

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

Throughout Rockwell's career, the theme of patriotism is consistently present in his illustrations. During World War I, Rockwell, ineligible for active duty, served in the United States Naval Reserve for a short period of time. In addition to producing illustrations for the Navy, Rockwell's support for the war is evident in each magazine cover he created of American servicemen.

In *The Doughboy and His Admirers*, the group of children proudly surrounding the hero returning home reflect the joy and happiness the entire country felt at the end of World War I.

First Shave

1919

Oil on canvas

Farm and Fireside magazine cover, April 1919

Private Collection

First Shave is one of five illustrations Rockwell completed between 1918 and 1922 for the cover of *Farm and Fireside*, 'The National Farm Magazine.' Many of these covers focused on a country boy's childhood memories such as fishing, hiking, being scolded by father, swinging with a girl and of course, first time shaving. Similar to the characters of his *Country Gentleman* covers, Rockwell depicts this young boy barefoot with suspenders and a tattered straw hat with a hole in the top. Repeated use of the same character encouraged readers to identify with the boy, and return month after month to follow his story.

The Party After The Party

1922

Oil on canvas

Edison Mazda advertisement

Ladies' Home Journal, June 1922

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

This work was commissioned for Edison Mazda as a light bulb advertisement. Ultimately Edison Mazda became General Electric and much of their early success was attributed to illustrations such as this, by Rockwell, N C Wyeth, and Maxfield Parrish.

In this painting, Rockwell uses the soft, warm glow of a lone lamp to highlight an elderly woman and young girl. The woman listens attentively as the girl recounts the details of a party she attended earlier in the evening. Both figures are posed in a dynamic diagonal layout, emphasising the intimacy of their conversation and drawing the reader's eye to the lamp as a focal point.

The Runaway

1922

Oil on canvas

Life magazine cover, 1 June 1922

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

The Runaway shows Rockwell's ongoing interest in using a palette with broad, rich colours and thick impasto in the 'Old Master' manner. This more painterly approach allowed him to create more detail with stronger shades and shadows, and a fully finished background. A photograph of Rockwell at work painting *The Runaway* was featured in a Devoe Artists' Materials advertisement in 1923. It shows a Rembrandt reproduction hanging in the background, suggesting the source of Rockwell's inspiration and technique.

Threading the Needle

1922

Oil on canvas

Saturday Evening Post cover, 8 April 1922

National Museum of American Illustration,
Newport, Rhode Island

Threading the Needle is typical of Rockwell's early *Saturday Evening Post* covers. He used a 'design system' that focused on a single, central item surrounded by an abstracted, simple white background. The cover's job was to sell magazines and Rockwell intuitively realised that meant to 'tell a whole story with a single image.' The model for this cover, Dave Champion, offered himself as a perfect Rockwell 'type' with his lanky, lean physique. In fact, he was so popular that the artist used him many times for *Post* covers and in advertisements.

Good For Another Generation 1923

Oil on canvas

Lowe Brothers Co. advertisement
Saturday Evening Post, 5 May 1923
Private Collection

Scenes of elderly couples were popular subjects for Norman Rockwell during the 1920s. In this illustration for Neptunite Varnish, he humorously conveys the idea that the varnish on the clock will most likely outlast the folks using it. According to the advertisement, the man applying the varnish is Colonel Dandle, a resident of New Rochelle, New York, who is very particular about the materials he uses in his home. Rockwell cleverly guides the viewer's eye from the paintbrush on the old grandfather clock, down the man's arm and directly to the product advertised, held in his wife's open palms.

Time to Retire – Sleeping Tramp

1923

Oil on canvas

Fisk tire advertisement

Country Life magazine, May 1924

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

During the early 1920's, the Fisk Tire Company published a series of advertisements by Norman Rockwell, which capitalised on the double meaning of the Fisk 'Time to Re-Tire' slogan. *Time to Retire – Sleeping Tramp* demonstrates Rockwell's use of 'outsider' characters during the twenties, when he began to incorporate sheriffs, hobos, and circus performers into his illustrations. Rockwell's portrayal of these characters remains sympathetic, preventing the illustrations from being mere 'gags,' and he usually added a touching element of humanity and sensibility to his humour.

*Winchester Stage Coach – How To Solve Your
Christmas Shopping Problem in Five Minutes*
1941

Oil on canvas

Reader's Digest Christmas gift subscription card, 1941

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

Rockwell's 1941 *Reader's Digest* Christmas gift subscription card depicts Dickensian characters in 19th century English garb in this Winchester Stage Coach scene jammed with people and carriage traffic. Rockwell illustrated two Christmas gift subscription cards for *Reader's Digest* during his career. The excitement and bustle of the Christmas season is accurately portrayed in this crowded canvas of animated townsfolk.

The Four Freedoms – Freedom from Fear

1943

Original poster

United States Government Printing Office, 1943

National Museum of American Illustration,
Newport, Rhode Island

The fourth is freedom from fear – which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbour – anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called new order of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.

Breakfast Table Political Argument – Study 1948

Oil on acetate on illustration board

Saturday Evening Post cover study, 30 October 1948

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

The 1948 Presidential Election marked a turning point for the Republican Party, as the Democratic Party seemed weak and unstable. This painting reflects the historic battle of Thomas Dewey versus Harry Truman for President of the United States. The husband, dressed for work, shouts fiercely at his wife who pouts sullenly and stubbornly with folded arms. The husband points sharply at a magazine cover showing his support for Dewey, while his wife clearly supports Truman. Both are so involved in the debate over their candidates that neither seems to pay any attention to the upset child at their feet nor to the hungry dog in the corner.

Solitaire

1950

Oil on canvas

Saturday Evening Post cover, 19 August 1950

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

During the 1950s, the public continued to turn to *Post* covers as reflections of their American way of life. For this cover, Rockwell sought to dispel the myth that all commercial travellers spent their nights with an icy brew and a 'hot' woman. Many readers wrote to *The Post* thanking them for his touching and honest portrayal of a lonely salesman. Rockwell went on to use the theme of the travelling salesman for a Brown & Bigelow four seasons calendar. From that series, there is another classic Rockwell image of the travelling salesman selling an 'icebox' (fridge) to an Eskimo in the Alaskan Winter.

A Day in the Life of a Little Girl – Study 1952

Charcoal on paper

Saturday Evening Post cover study, 30 August 1952

Private Collection

This charcoal study for *A Day in the Life of a Little Girl* shows a very expressive child going through her daily activities. Rockwell met his model, Mary Whelan, at a basketball game in which his son, Tommy, was playing. The artist later commented that she was ‘the best darn model I ever had, sad one minute, happy the next, and she raised her eyebrows just the right way...’ Mary Whelan became Norman Rockwell’s favourite model and a very important figure in his paintings due to her charismatic, ever-changing face. In this painting her image appears twenty-one times, in twenty-one different moods.

Two Children Praying

1959

Oil on canvas

Advertisement for General Outdoor Advertising Company

Originally appeared as a billboard advertisement over Union Square, New York City, for Longchamps Restaurant

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

A dark starry background is used in this Christmas billboard advertisement. This simple Rockwell scene evokes a 'holy night' ambience, alluding to the classic nativity scene with a lone bright star in the East.

Boy Graduate

1959

Oil on canvas

Saturday Evening Post cover, 6 June 1959

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

Norman Rockwell has perfectly captured the expression of a youthful college graduate with unabashed optimism, coupled with newfound bewilderment at the real world he faces. Rockwell separately provided a politicising background for the finished cover, made up of newspaper headlines screaming contemporary problems to be shouldered by this young graduate and his generation.

The headlines ranged from Russia's 'Khrushchev Warns West of War Danger' to 'UN Atom Study Panel Sees Fall-Out Peril,' 'Inflation Number-One Problem,' 'State officials to Seek US Help for Job Woes' – all problems similarly faced today for young graduates. Rockwell's son, Tommy, posed for this near life-size portrait as the boy graduate.

Triple Self-Portrait – Study 1960

Charcoal, gouache, and oil on board

Saturday Evening Post cover study, 13 February 1960

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

Rockwell's *Triple Self-Portrait* is one of the most famous, and imitated, self-portraits in America. This study concept was earmarked for use on the cover of *The Post*. It was intended to herald the launching of Rockwell's autobiography on 13 February 1960, which was serialized in *The Post* over several issues. The study shows Rockwell's thought process leading up to the finished cover design. Around the self-portrait study is a virtual collage of the chapter headings from the book as published by Doubleday entitled, *My Adventures as an Illustrator*. It was released simultaneously with *The Post* magazine serialisation.

Lunch Break with Knight

1962

Oil on canvas

Saturday Evening Post cover, 3 November 1962

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

Norman Rockwell conceived of this *Post* cover after visiting the Higgins Armory Museum in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he viewed one of the world's most extensive collections of armour and weapons. The austerity of the museum's Medieval Great Hall is playfully interrupted in this humorous scene. A horse directs its impossibly animated and censorious stare at the museum guard, who is relaxing 'taking a lunch break,' on the pedestal. The guard has even treated the armour as an impromptu coat rack, while remaining contentedly unaware of his audience. Light streaming in from the peaked Gothic windows acts as a spotlight on the guard's breach of museum decorum.

Portrait of Nehru

1963

Oil on canvas

Saturday Evening Post cover, 19 January 1963

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

In depicting Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India who served from 1947 until 1964, Rockwell showed the powerful leader in a partial profile looking into the distance in deep thought. For the background, Rockwell chose to include a wallpaper-like pattern of Hindu figures praying and two symbols representing peace and war. In 1963, when this portrait was painted, Nehru had just won his last election and was facing turmoil with India's increasingly violent and aggressive neighbour, China.

The Problem We All Live With – Study 1964

Gouache on paper

Look magazine, 14 January 1964

Private Collection

The Problem We All Live With was first published on 14 January 1964 in *Look* magazine. Rockwell's composition accurately depicts a significant moment in history as a young girl is marched into school by 'headless' government officials. His decision to crop the men at their shoulders brings more emphasis to the courageous child, Ruby Bridges, walking to her New Orleans elementary school on the first day of desegregation. In this study, Rockwell depicted the United States Marshals in front of the little girl only, however as his idea developed, he added two more Marshals behind her. This was a 'new Rockwell', using his influence over his huge audience to draw attention to the civil rights movement.

Peace Corps in Ethiopia (Schoolroom) – Study
1966

Pencil and brown varnish on tissue paper mounted on illustration board

Look magazine study for story illustration, 14 June 1966
Private Collection

This is an initial concept for a *Look* magazine commission of a Peace Corps volunteer, John Schafer (neighbour of Rockwell from Arlington) teaching a secondary school class. In the end, Rockwell did not use this study prepared in Debra Markos, Ethiopia, but used instead a portrayal of an Ethiopian farmer by his plough in Dessie, Ethiopia.

Russian Schoolroom – Education
1967

Oil on canvas

Look magazine “Education” article, 3 October 1967

American Illustrators Gallery, New York City

Rockwell's *Russian Schoolroom* depicts a classroom filled with students all facing the teacher and a bust of Vladimir Lenin, the Russian revolutionary who led the Communist October Revolution in 1917. The students have their textbooks open and are all paying attention with only one exception, a single student looking away in the third row, a potential Gorbachev, perhaps.