



N.C. Wyeth

Title

The War Letter

Medium

Tempera and oil on hardboard (Renaissance Panel)

Date

1944

Dimensions

37 × 46 in. (94 × 116.8 cm)

Catalogue Number

81.19

Credit Line

Purchased with funds given in memory of Deo du Pont Weymouth and Tyler Weymouth, 1981

Web Description

This painting depicts Wyeth's parents on their Needham, Massachusetts, property, with the Charles River in the background. The artist first created the scene in oil on canvas in 1932 and titled the painting Spring-1918 (96.1.33). He based his compelling portrait on memories and family letters dating from World War I, especially the dark moments when the elder Wyeths worried about their sons who served abroad. The twisted tree trunks and barren ground evoke a war-ravaged land. The subject retained its powerful hold over him and in 1944, as World War II raged, he redid the composition in tempera with only minor changes. Although the painting still carried rich personal meaning, Wyeth emphasized the universality of the experience in his title for the tempera version, *The War Letter*.