

Harn Museum of Art

Educator Resource

Monet & Impressionism



About the Artist



Claude Monet, 1899
Photo by Nadar

“Everyone discusses my art and pretends to understand, as if it were necessary to understand, when it is simply necessary to love.”

— Claude Monet

Claude Monet was born in Paris on November 14, 1840. He enjoyed drawing lessons in school and began making and selling caricatures at age seventeen. In 1858, he met landscape artist Eugène Boudin (1824-1898) who introduced him to *plein-air* (outdoor) painting.

During the 1860s, only a few of Monet’s paintings were accepted for exhibition in the prestigious annual exhibitions known as the Salons. This rejection led him to join with other artists to form an independent group, later known as the Impressionists.

During the 1860s and 1870s, Monet developed his technique of using broken, rhythmic brushstrokes of pure color to represent atmosphere, light and visual effects while depicting his immediate surroundings in Paris and nearby villages. During the next decade, his fortune began to improve as a result of a growing base of support from art dealers and collectors, both in Europe and the United States. By the mid-1880s, his paintings began to receive critical acclaim.

By 1890, Monet was financially secure enough to purchase a house in Giverny, a rural town in Normandy. During these later years, Monet began painting the same subject over and over again at different times of the day or year. These series paintings became some of his most famous works and include views of the Siene River, the Thames River in London, Rouen Cathedral, oat fields, haystacks and water lilies.

By the time of his death in 1926 at age 86, Claude Monet had become France’s leading landscape painter and a figure of national importance.

Claude - Monet

Impressionism

French Impressionism

The movement known as Impressionism began in Paris in 1874 with an independent exhibition organized by a group of painters, including Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Alfred Sisley, among others. Although much admired today, the Impressionists were originally criticized by the French public. For example, Monet's painting *Impression, soleil levant* (*Impression Sunrise*) of 1873 led the art critic Louis Leroy to inadvertently name the group when he accused it of making only an unfinished sketch or "impression."

Although its members had varied painting approaches, the Impressionists were united in their separation from the Salon, an annual juried exhibition sponsored by the conservative Academy which promoted idealized subjects, subdued colors and highly finished painted surfaces. In contrast, the Impressionists preferred subjects of everyday life and a new style of painting with loose brushstrokes and bright, unblended colors. They were also interested in capturing the effects of light, shadow and color at a particular moment in time and place.

The Impressionists were influenced by new technologies of the time, including portable paint tubes and photography. The paint tubes allowed artists to take supplies outdoors and paint directly from nature rather than working in a studio from sketches. Photography inspired them to experiment with new ways to compose their scenes, including cropping subjects in unexpected ways.

The innovative forms, techniques and materials used by the Impressionists became well-loved by the public and paved the way for other innovative styles in art.

American Impressionism

American art students in Paris became aware of Impressionism through the group's eight exhibitions held between 1874 and 1886. Their initial responses were often negative, mirroring the harsh criticism of the French public.

By 1887, American artists had begun to visit Giverny, seeking inspiration from the French countryside. Attracted by Monet's presence, as well as the charming rural village, they painted outdoors while enjoying the companionship of other artists. Like Monet, these artists used bright colors and applied distinct strokes of paint in order to depict transitory light effects. These American Impressionists returned to the United States and shared their enthusiasm for the innovations of Claude Monet.

Important exhibitions in New York and Boston in the 1880s and '90s featured paintings by Monet, and American collectors discovered his work, making significant purchases. By the early 1890s, American artists were captivated with the new style and exhibited their own Impressionist paintings before a wide audience. The popularity of Impressionism continued for about forty years, making it one of the longest lived modes of artistic expression in American art.

"What most of these artists had in common was a fierce dedication to everyday subject matter and a conviction that new ways of painting were needed to breathe life into the outmoded conventions of French Art"

–Richard Kendall, *Monet By Himself*

About the Art

Champ d'avoine belongs to a series of *plein-air* landscapes depicting the fields of oats and poppies in the area of Monet's home in Giverny. Painted in summer when the fields were at their peak, this series depicts the flowering of the French countryside. The Harn's painting explores the brilliant interplay between the intense colors of the field and the effects of sunlight on the scene.

Champ d'avoine demonstrates Monet's technique of applying paint with small touches of the brush and building up the surface to create a shimmering texture with a tapestry-like quality. The composition is arranged along strong horizontal bands created by the field of poppies in the foreground, the hills of Giverny in the distance and the open sky in the upper half. The bold, asymmetrical design abandons linear perspective and three-dimensional modeling.

According to Monet scholar P. Hayes Tucker, the oat field paintings "show clearly how superbly well Monet was able to manipulate light effects. Only a mature artist, completely in control of his own technique and a master of his palette, could catch the sublime nuances of color and shadow that make each of the pictures so extraordinarily different in mood."

Champ d'avoine was purchased in October 1890 directly from Monet by his long-time Paris art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel. The following April, the painting was sold to American art dealer Desmond Fitzgerald on behalf of John Nicholas Brown of Rhode Island. In a handwritten note, Fitzgerald reported to Brown: "My dear John . . . The picture can be sold to other parties if you decide not to keep it, but it is of surpassing loveliness and of the very best quality . . . It is the most complete picture that I have ever seen of Monet's and a masterpiece."

"Color is my daylong obsession,
joy, and torment."
– Claude Monet



Claude Monet
French (1840-1926)
Champ d'avoine (Oat Field)
1890
Oil on canvas
26 x 36 7/16 inches
Collection of the Harn Museum of Art
Gift of Michael A. Singer

Questions for Viewing

Describe

- Where is this scene?
- What time of year is depicted in the painting?
- What time of day is it? What in the painting tells you this?
- Is this a garden or a wild field?
- Is it in the country or a park in a large city?
- What colors did the artist use?
- What adjectives would you use to describe the painting?

Analyze

- How has the artist painted an asymmetrical composition?
- What percentage of the painting is sky?
- Where is the horizon line?
- What techniques has the artist employed to create depth?
- How did the artist arrange warm and cool colors?
- How did the artist use complementary colors?
- How do the colors and brushstrokes change as you move from the foreground, to the middle ground to the background of the painting?

It's on the strength of observation and reflection that one finds a way. So we must dig and delve unceasingly.” — Claude Monet

Interpret

- Why do you think the artist chose to paint this scene?
- How does the painting make you feel? What about the painting gives you that feeling?
- What is this painting ABOUT?
- How do the formal elements of the painting affect your impression of it?
- What does the subject of the painting suggest about the painter?

Judge

- What elements of Impressionism are evident in this painting?
 - Does it capture an impression of an everyday scene?
 - Does it show the effects of light and shadow?
 - Is it painted with small marks of pure colors?
- If you could hang this painting in your house, where would you put it?

Imagine

- How would it feel to be in this field?
- What sounds do you think the artist heard as he painted?
- What do you think the artist was thinking about as he painted?

Historical Background

Industrial Revolution

Major changes in Europe and the United States during the 19th century are reflected in Impressionist painting. The earlier Age of Enlightenment (17th-18th century) initiated social changes with new ideas in philosophy, science, and the arts. Traditional, authoritative governments and customs that favored the wealthy began to loosen, and new opportunities developed for a more widely-educated and democratic population.

During the 19th century – the era of the Industrial Revolution – scientific discoveries and technological advancements accelerated, resulting in improved systems of production, transportation and communication. Modern cities were born, and people began moving to these quickly growing urban areas, seeking new opportunities for work and income.

Increasing numbers of urban workers formed the new middle class. More people with spendable income led to developments in leisure time activities and consumer products.

Artists began to paint images of people in this new social class as well as the subjects that appealed to them. Additionally, scientific discoveries in optics (the study of vision and light) and the new technology of photography inspired artists to look at the world and think about painting in new ways. The stage was set for radical developments in the world of art.

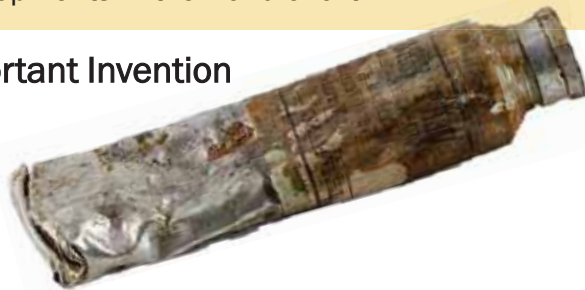
Paint, Pigments and the Artist's Palette

Pigments are ground, colored materials that are mixed with a binder such as water, plaster, glue or oil to create paints. In prehistoric times, ground earth and clay were used as pigments and mixed with water, saliva or animal fat to make paints that are still visible today. Through the ages, pigments and paints have developed and changed with scientific and technological advancements. Modern pigments are often sophisticated masterpieces of chemical engineering.

The earliest pigments are known as “earth colors” and include red ochre, yellow ochre, umber, carbon black, bone black and limestone white. These were the only colors available until the ancient Egyptians developed blue from copper in 3,000 BCE. Additional colors became available through the ages as technology advanced to extract pigments from minerals and plants. Additionally, experimentation with different binders, including plaster, eggs and different oils contributed to an increasing number of paints and painting techniques available to artists.

The 19th century marked a turning point for the artist's palette. Advances in color chemistry during the 18th century made it possible for a number of new colors as well as enhanced versions of established pigments. Equipped with this new selection of colors, the Impressionists painted scenes with vibrant, intense colors.

Important Invention



Portable Paint Tube

Before paints were commercially produced, artists had to make their own paints by grinding pigment into oil. The paint would harden and would need to be made fresh each day. In 1841, American painter John G. Rand invented a tin paint tube with a screw top lid. This kept the oil paint useable for a long time and still allowed painters to easily and repeatedly get to the paint. The invention of the portable paint tube made it possible to complete paintings outdoors.

Color & Vision

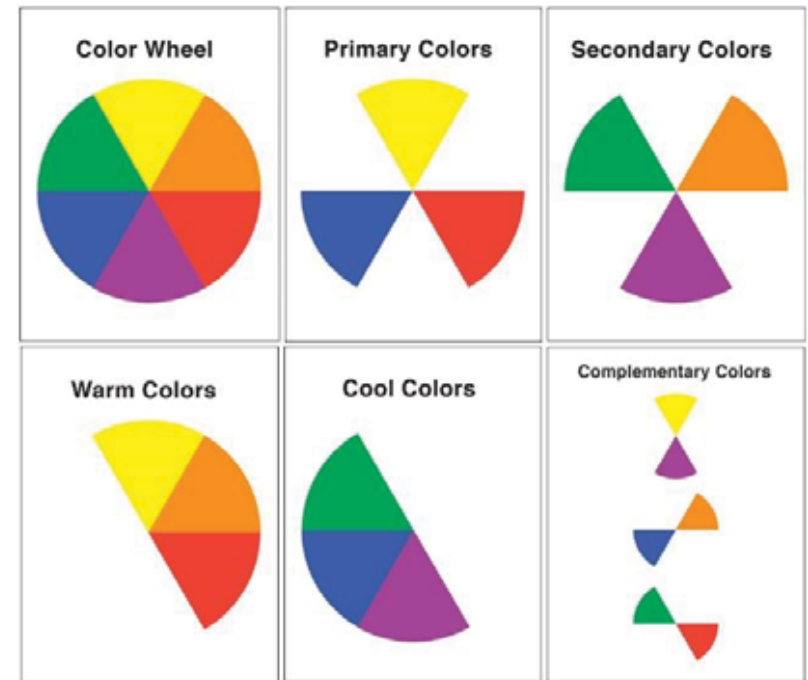
The Color Wheel

The color wheel is a chart representing the relationships between colors. It was first created in 1666 by Sir Isaac Newton to show the full range of colors that make up white light. Artists use the color wheel to learn how to combine and mix colors.

Primary colors (red, yellow, blue) are the three colors that may be mixed to create all other colors.

Secondary colors (orange, green, violet) are created by mixing primary colors. For example, mixing red and yellow creates orange; mixing yellow and blue creates green

Complementary colors are colors opposite each other on the color wheel. Complementary color pairs are: yellow and violet; orange and blue; green and red.



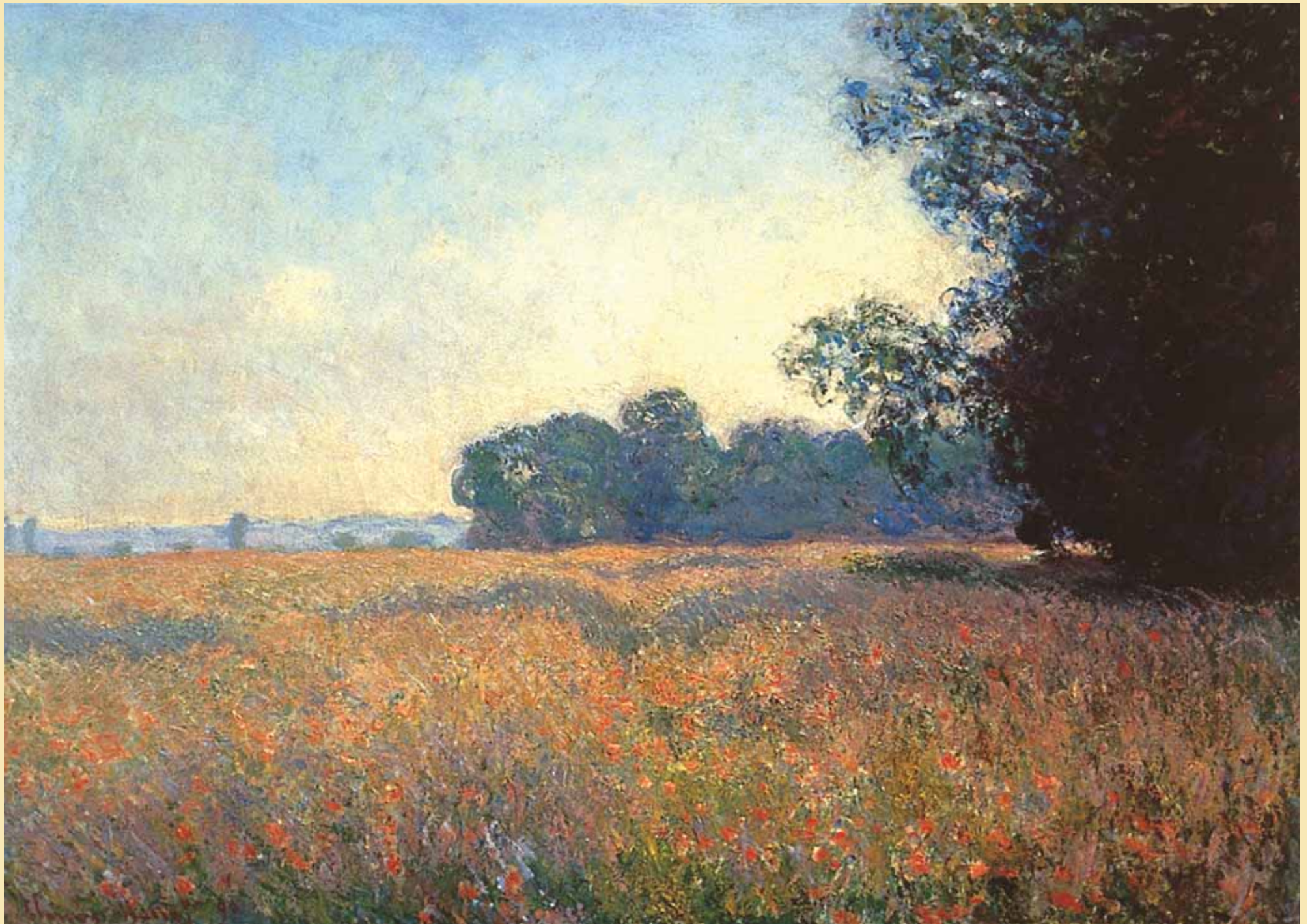
The Science of Color & Vision

During the 1800s, scientists studied how our eyes and brain work together to see colors.

In 1839, French chemist Michel Chevreul described how a color seems enhanced when it is viewed next to its complementary color. He called this *simultaneous contrast*.

For example, look at the orange and purple boxes to the left. The blue circle inside each box is the same color, but it appears brighter when viewed next to its complementary color, orange.

This principle of color contrast influenced Impressionist painters who used pure colors side-by-side in order to create scenes of bright, energetic and colorful light.



Claude Monet
French (1840-1926)

Champ d'avoine (Oat Field), 1890
Oil on canvas

Collection of the Harn Museum of Art
Gift of Michael A. Singer

Champ d'avoine

3 paintings in the series

“Each day I can return to the same effect, so it’s possible to track down and do battle with an effect.

- Claude Monet



Harn Museum of Art



Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art



Private Collection

Samples of academic paintings.



Jacques-Louis David
French (1748-1825)
Napoleon Crossing the Alps, 1801



William-Adolphe Bouguereau
French (1825-1905)
Youth, 1893

Resources/Bibliography

Books

Kendall, Richard, ed. *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*. London: Macdonald Orbis, 1989. Print.

Tucker, Paul Hayes. *Monet in the '90s: The Series Paintings*. Yale Press, 1990.

Film/Television

BBC Two, "Why the Industrial Revolution Happened Here". Documentary film, narrated by Professor Jeremy Black. January 22, 2013

History.com, "The Industrial Revolution". A&E Television Networks, 2009.
<http://www.history.com/topics/industrial-revolution>

Online

Art Institute, Chicago
Educator Resource Finder:
<http://www.artic.edu/aic/resourcefinder/>

National Gallery of Art
NGA Learning Resources
<https://learningresources.nga.gov:7008/vwebv/searchBasic>

Metropolitan Museum of Art
Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History/Claude Monet
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cmon/hd_cmon.htm

Web Exhibits
Color, Vision & Art:
<http://www.webexhibits.org/colorart/>
Causes of Color:
<http://www.webexhibits.org/causesofcolor/>
Pigment Through the Ages:
<http://www.webexhibits.org/pigments/>

Lesson: Parts of Speech Poem

Language Arts: Parts of Speech Poem

Goals

In this lesson, students will observe and discuss a work of art, then create a poem inspired by it.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Participate in a class discussion about a work of art.
- Describe a work of art using various parts of speech (adjectives, nouns, verbs, prepositions).
- Write a poem about the work of art.
- Read poems in class.

Activity

- Review this resource with students.
- Show the full-page image of Monet's *Champ d'avoine* and lead a class discussion about the painting.
- Use the text to the right to create a handout for students.
- Have students work individually or in pairs to review the parts of speech.
- Have students write a poem containing specific parts of speech.
- Ask students to read their poems aloud in class.

Florida Standards

Language Arts – multiple grade levels

- Standards for Speaking and Listening
- Language Standards

Parts of Speech

Before writing a Parts of Speech poem, recall the definitions for the following parts of speech:

- Article – a word that signifies a noun (a, an, the)
- Conjunction – a word that connects other words or groups of words
- Noun – a word that name people, places, things or ideas
- Pronoun – a word used in place of a noun
- Adjective – a word that describes nouns or pronouns
- Verb – a word that shows action or a state of being
- Adverb – a word that describes verbs, adjectives and other adverbs (tells where, how, when)

Parts of Speech Poem

For a Parts of Speech poem, follow this 5 line format:

Line 1 is one article and one noun

Line 2 is an adjective, a conjunction, and another adjective

Line 3 is one verb, one conjunction, and one verb

Line 4 is one adverb

Line 5 is one noun or pronoun that relates to line one

Sample poem about school:

A school
Quiet and loud
Learning and playing
Tirelessly
Education

Lesson: Technology & Change

Social Studies: Technology & Change

Goals

In this lesson, students will research and learn about a technological invention. They will look for the multiple individual discoveries and advancements that made the invention possible, and they will trace the invention's impact on culture and history. Students will present their research and findings as a written report with an accompanying visual display.

Outline

The development of Impressionism in art was influential to artists around the world and for generations to follow, but it did not happen on its own. Impressionism was made possible through a number of inventions and cultural changes. Scientific investigation of human physiology led to a better understanding of how we see light and color; Technological advancements introduced many new paint colors for artists to use; New industrial materials led to the invention of the portable paint tube; Factories and industrialization brought more people to newly forming or growing cities and created a "middle class" with leisure time and disposable income; Railroads connected more and more people to new and distant locations.

Just like Impressionism, most discoveries or technological advancements were achieved through a number of smaller changes. To gain an understanding of history and the cumulative changes inherent in groundbreaking advancements, students can research an invention to find a variety of contributions toward it.

Activity

Review this resource with students and discuss the scientific, technological and social changes that created an environment for the development of Impressionism.

Have students choose a discovery or invention to research. Ask students to write a grade-level appropriate report and prepare a visual display (perhaps a timeline). Students should think about the individual components of the invention and trace each of their developments that paved the way for their invention.

Topic suggestions include:

- Printing Press
- Combustion engine
- Cotton Gin
- Telephone
- Sewing Machine
- Telephone
- Incandescent Bulb
- Electric Motor
- Airplane
- Personal Computer
- Cell Phone
- The internet
- The icebox/refrigerator
- Television

Florida Standards

Grade 9-12, Social Studies

SS.912.H.1.1 – SS.912.H.1.7

SS.912.H.2.1 – SS.912.H.2.5

SS.912.H.3.1 – SS.912.H.3.3

Lesson: Making Oil Paint

Science: Types of Mixtures

Goals

In this lesson, students will learn how oil paint is made and make their own oil paint. They will learn about colloids and oxidation and practice mixing different pigments to create a variety of colors. Finally, they will make a painting.

Materials

- Powdered Pigments (dried & finely ground materials such as chocolate, activated charcoal, ground chalk – or purchase paint pigments through an art supplier)
- Linseed or Walnut Oil (walnut oil has a more pleasant odor)
- Palette knives
- Mixing plate – glass, metal or Plexi
- Brushes and painting paper

Activity

- Have students work in pairs or teams.
- Place about 1 TBSP of pigment on a mixing plate.
- Add a few drops of oil to the center of it.
- Mix the oil into the dried pigment with a palette knife. This may take a bit of pressure. Add oil by drops as needed to form a thick paste.
- Experiment with mixing new colors by combining dried pigments and/or finished paints. Have students predict what colors they will create through certain mixtures, and compare their predictions to actual results.
- Paint a picture.

Florida Standards

Grade 2, Science: SC.2.P.8.2 – SC.2.P.8.4

Grade 5, Science: SC.5.P.8.1 – SC.5.P.8.3

Grades 2-5, Visual Arts: VA.2-5.F.1.1; VA.2-5.F.3.2; VA.2-5.S.1.1

Colloidal Mixtures

Paint is a kind of mixture called a colloid. A colloid is a uniform mixture of two substances in which one is evenly dispersed, or suspended, in the other, and the two will not separate or settle out easily (imagine a microscopic version of fruit in gelatin). In addition to paint, other colloids include milk, shampoo, whipped cream and even fog.

Colloids can be mixtures between substances in different phases – solid, liquid or gas – and are categorized separately. The four types of colloids are:

- **Sol** - a colloidal suspension of solid particles in a liquid. Paint is a sol.
- **Emulsion** - a suspension of one liquid in another liquid. Milk and mayonnaise are emulsions.
- **Foam** - a suspension of gas particles in a liquid or solid. Shaving cream and whipped cream are foams.
- **Aerosol** - a suspension of liquid in a gas. Fog and hairspray are aerosols.

Oxidation

The most commonly used binder for oil paint is linseed oil. Unlike other vegetable oils – such as canola or olive oil – linseed oil will harden, or cure, when exposed to oxygen through a process called oxidation. Unlike drying, which is a process of releasing water or liquid, oxidation is a chemical reaction between a substance and oxygen. In the case of linseed oil, oxidation causes it to slowly change from a liquid to a gel to a tough, solid form. While we might refer to it as drying, linseed oil does not actually dry but instead hardens.

Linseed oil is not the only “drying” oil; Poppy seed, safflower and walnut oils can also be used to make oil paints.

Resources

http://www.sciencemadesimple.co.uk/topten/make_your_own_paint

<http://www.motherearthnews.com/diy/natural-paint-zmaz06onzraw.aspx#ixzz3QEOHgZGB>