

THE CLARK

IN YOUR CLASSROOM

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

✓ Best for Grades 4 and up
🔗 Links to Visual Art

INTRODUCTION

The **Impressionists** were a group of artists who worked in and around Paris during the 1870s and 1880s. They were most interested in experimenting with **brushstroke**, color, light, and shadow. They wanted to capture the feeling or experience of the scene they were painting and were less interested in perfecting the details. Sometimes they applied paint to the canvas thickly to give **texture**; other times they made long, energetic lines to show movement. Discover four paintings in the Clark's collection that demonstrate some of the different techniques used by the Impressionists:

- 1 *Rouen Cathedral, the Façade in Sunlight*
- 2 *Bay of Naples, Evening*
- 3 *Child with Red Hat*
- 4 *Landscape at Saint-Charles, Near Gisors, Sunset*

Look at a zoomed-in detail of Claude Monet's painting. Can you tell what it is? Notice how his **brushstrokes** look like little, bumpy dabs of paint. If you could run your hand over the painting, how do you think it would feel? View the whole painting [here!](#)



Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral, the Façade in Sunlight*, c. 1892–94. Oil on canvas. Acquired by the Clark in memory of Anne Strang Baxter, 1967. The Clark Art Institute, 1967.1.

TEXTURE

the look and feel of an artwork; sometimes it is *real*, meaning you can physically sense it on your fingertips, and sometimes it is *implied*, meaning it looks to your eyes like something it is not

BRUSHSTROKE

the visible marks made by the paintbrush's bristles interacting with paint

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Any type of drawing **medium**, the material used to make art, which could include markers, colored pencils, graphite pencils, crayons, pastels
- Any type and size of drawing paper
- A hard surface to draw on
- Your imagination!



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COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

BACKGROUND

the area farthest from the viewer; objects are smallest

HORIZON LINE

where the sky meets the ground

MIDDLE GROUND

the area between foreground and background

FOREGROUND

the area closest to the viewer; objects are biggest



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, detail of *Bay of Naples, Evening*, 1881. Oil on canvas. Acquired by Sterling and Francine Clark, 1933. 1955. 587.

Pierre-Auguste Renoir was an Impressionist painter who focused more on color and expressive **brushstrokes** than detail. In this painting, he tried to represent the feeling of what it might be like to be a part of such a **bustling**, or busy, scene. If you were going to describe this painting in one word, what would you say?

Look closely at the street in the **foreground** and the water in the **middle ground**. Notice how most of Renoir's **brushstrokes** and the details in the picture are all going in the same direction. Can you see how this technique provides a sense of activity and **motion**, or movement? Is there anything that is **stationary**, or still, in this picture?

DRAWING ACTIVITY:



Think about something that moves. It could be a friend dancing, you playing sports, an airplane, or even a spaceship!



Draw it, and use lines to depict **motion**. Can you also convey speed?

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Mary Cassatt was an artist who usually featured children as the **subjects** of her artworks. In this drawing, the details of the girl's face were drawn very carefully while more lively and energized marks sketch out her red hat and dress. These active strokes are called **gestural lines**. Gestural lines can show the movement of the artist's hand and also give a picture a unique kind of energy. Why might Cassatt have used these two different styles in **this portrait**?

SUBJECT

the focus of the artwork,
or the main idea

PORTRAIT

a picture of a person,
usually showing the face



Mary Cassatt, *Child with Red Hat*, c. 1904. Pastel on light blue paper. Acquired by Sterling and Francine Clark, 1935. 1955.674.

DRAWING ACTIVITY:

- ▶ Look for anything that catches your interest. It could be something in the room, a person, or a sleeping pet . . . your choice!
- ▶ Spend 15 minutes drawing this **subject** in the center of your paper, adding as much detail as you can.
- ▶ When time is up, turn your attention to the environment surrounding your **subject** and spend just 5 minutes sketching around your **subject** to show the specific space it's in.

Tip: if you're using a pencil, you can use the side of it to create broad strokes.

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Camille Pissarro is known by art historians as the “Father of Impressionism.” For a short time in the late 1880s, Pissarro experimented with the technique known as **pointillism**. This technique was very time-consuming: the artist applied tiny dots of colors side by side in different patterns to experiment with the visual effect. Pissarro’s version has slightly larger marks, making for quite a luminous painting!

LOOK CLOSELY

here's an enlarged view of the tiny dots of colorful paint that make up the grass in this painting



Camille Pissarro, detail of *Landscape at Saint-Charles, Near Gisors, Sunset*, 1891. Oil on canvas. Acquired by Sterling and Francine Clark, 1933. 1955.524.

DRAWING ACTIVITY:

- Find a spot with a window and a view of the outdoors.
- Pick out a small section of the scenery, and try to draw what you see by only making dots.
- Try to show shadow or light in your drawing. How might you do this?