Lesson Plan: Act It Out
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Suggested Grade Level: 4-6
Estimated Time: One to two class periods

Introduction
In this lesson plan, students use two 19th-century paintings of people in leisure settings as inspiration for dramatic presentations.

Lesson Objectives
• Learn to describe and analyze works of art
• Develop oral-presentation skills

Key Terms
• Moulin Rouge
• dialogue
• monologue

Procedures
Discussion:
• Examine Lunch at the Restaurant Fournaise (The Rower's Lunch). Encourage students to use their imaginations when answering the following questions:
  o Who are the three people and what are they doing?
  o How do the "props" in the painting tell us what is happening?
  o What do the gestures and facial expressions of these characters reveal about their moods and relationships to one another?
• Explain that Renoir was concerned with the motion of light in his art. Discuss the technique of the painting. Start discussion by asking:
  o How has Renoir used paint to suggest light and shadow on objects in this outdoor scene?
• Conduct a similar discussion with At the Moulin Rouge, asking:
Who are these people and where are they? (Explain that most of the figures have been identified and that one is the artist himself.)

How has Toulouse-Lautrec portrayed the people as if they are characters in a play? (through extraordinary perspectives, as if the figures are making stage entrances or exits)

Who is the main character of the scene? (Possibly May Milton on the right, because she seems to be dancing or floating out of the scene and into the viewer's space)

How does color create dramatic effects?

Describe the "stage lighting."

**Activity:**

Divide students into groups of three and ten (corresponding to the number of figures in each painting). Have each group collaborate to write a dialogue between the characters and then act out the scene. The conversation at Renoir’s table could be based on a sporting event, meal, or walk. The dialogue developed from the Toulouse-Lautrec painting could relate to a recent performance at the dance club. Props, music, and costumes can be added for dramatic effect.

**Evaluation**

Base students' evaluation on their participation in class discussion and dramatic presentations.

**Glossary**

**perspective** (*n*)

scientific method used by artists to represent three-dimensional objects on two-dimensional surfaces. Linear perspective uses vanishing points and orthogonals to make objects seem as if they are receding in space. Some maintain that a crude form of linear perspective was introduced by the Romans, refined by Islamic artists in the middle ages, and rediscovered by Italian architect Filippo Brunelleschi in the 15th century.

**Illinois Learning Standards**

Language Arts: 3-4
Fine Arts: 25-26