Lesson Plan: Urban Space
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Suggested Grade Level: 5-8
Estimated Time: One class period

Introduction
To create a unique view of modern Paris in Paris Street; Rainy Day, Gustave Caillebotte experimented with plunging perspective. By examining the painting, students will learn the conventions of perspective used to create a sense of depth in art.

Lesson Objectives
• Learn to describe and analyze works of art
• Address perspective and scale in art

Key Terms
• composition
• horizon line
• scale
• perspective
• vanishing point
• orthogonal line
• foreground
• middle ground
• background

Instructional Materials
• Photocopies of Paris Street; Rainy Day
• 11" x 17" white paper
• Colored pencils
• Rulers
• Magazines and newspapers
• Scissors
• Glue
Procedures  

Discussion:  
- Examine the composition of *Paris Street; Rainy Day* with students. Start by asking:  
  - What dominates the right side of the painting?  
  - What dominates the left?  
  - How did the artist distinguish the left side from the right? (lamppost)  
  - How do we know that some figures are close and others far away? (by their size or scale).  
- Explain that the points on the horizon line where people become smaller and buildings seem to disappear are called vanishing points. Ask:  
  - How many vanishing points can you see in the painting?  
  - What visual elements of the painting draw your eye back to these vanishing points?  
- Pass out a photocopy of *Paris Street; Rainy Day* and ask students to use rulers and colored pencils to mark the horizon line, vanishing points, and major orthogonal lines.  

Activity:  
- Ask students to make a collage of a contemporary urban scene. Start by giving students a blank sheet of white paper and asking them to draw a horizon line, a single vanishing point, and at least two orthogonal lines above and below the horizon line.  
- Have students look through magazines and newspapers to find pictures of figures, buildings and other city elements in a range of sizes. Encourage them to cut these out and place them in a collage, experimenting with scale along the orthogonal lines before gluing the final composition. Have them try to create a sense of foreground, middle ground, and background through the scale of objects.  

Evaluation  
In a class "critique," have students discuss their unique urban views and explain how scale and perspective contribute to them. Evaluate students’ participation in class discussion and their creative work.
Glossary

**background** *(n)*  
the part of a painting or drawing representing the space behind the figures or objects close to the viewer (in the foreground)

**composition** *(n)*  
the arrangement of elements such as shape, space, and color in a work of art

**foreground** *(n)*  
the objects or figures situated in the front of a composition, intended to exist close to the viewer (as opposed to background)

**horizon line** *(n)*  
the horizontal line in a work of art that forms the apparent boundary between earth and sky

**middle ground** *(n)*  
the portion of picture space that is behind the foreground but in front of the background

**orthogonal line** *(n)*  
in linear perspective, a diagonal line drawn to a vanishing point

**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.

**scale** *(n)*  
the relative size of one object in relation to another object

**vanishing point** *(n)*  
in perspective, the point at which receding parallel lines appear to converge. The vanishing point is often on the horizon line

**Illinois Learning Standards**

Fine Arts: 25-26