

Lesson Plan: Send a Postcard

Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Suggested Grade Level: 2-3

Estimated Time: One class period

Introduction

The artist Claude Monet and his future wife, Camille Doncieux, spent the summer of 1868 in a small village outside Paris. There Monet began *On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt*, a scene depicting Camille sitting by the River Seine on a quiet summer day. One of Monet's finest oil sketches, this painting reveals many of the characteristics of Impressionism. They include:

- Broken, vibrating brushstrokes that depict the fluctuations of light and its reflection
- A high-keyed palette of blues, greens, and yellows, rapidly applied without shading or modeling
- Briefly described forms that suggest rush and movement
- Subject matter: a friend of the artist relaxing in an open air, waterside setting in the countryside near Paris

By examining this painting, students will gain an understanding of the Impressionist style and then learn how to write and address a postcard.

Lesson Objectives

- Learn to describe and analyze works of art
- Develop letter-writing skills and learn to address correspondence

Instructional Materials

- Blank index cards without lines
- Watercolors
- Pencils
- Postcard stamps

Procedures

Discussion

Examine *On the Bank of the Seine, Bennecourt* with students. Start discussion with the following questions:

- What do you see?
- What catches your attention first? Why?
- What might the lady in the painting be thinking?
- Where do you think the artist was when he painted this scene? Why?

Ask students to discuss Monet's painting technique:

- What kinds of brush strokes did the artist use in this painting?
- How do the brush strokes and use of color suggest movement in the water?
- How do they show light coming through the leaves?

Explain that this style is called Impressionism.

Activity

- 1) Have students design a picture postcard from the woman in the painting. Before students begin, ask them to consider the following questions:
 - What image would she choose to be on the front?
 - To whom would she send it?
 - What message would she write?
- 2) Have students imagine and paint a scene of the village for the front of the postcard and write a short note on the back.
- 3) Discuss the proper way to write a postal address and have students address their postcards to their homes. Explain the use of postcard stamps and help students mail the postcards to themselves.

Evaluation

Base students' evaluation on their participation in class discussion and creative and written work.

Illinois Learning Standards

Language Arts: 3

Fine Arts: 25, 26

Glossary

high-keyed (*adj*)

a term referring to bright colors free of gray, black, or dark hues; colors that approximate the range of colors seen on a sunny day

Impressionism/Impressionist (*adj, n*)

progressive art movement that originated in France in the late 19th century. Impressionist painters wanted to capture the rapidly changing modern world and the fleeting moods of nature. Impressionism relied on optical blending to depict the fluctuations of light and consisted largely of views of everyday middle-class life in the city and countryside of France.

palette (*n*)

the range of colors used by a particular artist or in a particular work

style (*n*)

a distinctive manner of expression (as in writing, speech, or art)