

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