



# Impressionism

## Self-guided group activity

Grades 7–12

Plan on spending time with 8–10 artworks.

Many of these questions are designed to prompt close looking and critical thinking. Read each artwork's label to find answers to fact-based questions. Artwork not on view? Don't worry: There are plenty of others to visit!

Start your exploration of Impressionism with an example of academic painting, like *The Carpet Merchant*. For discussion purposes, this tour also includes examples of American Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting.



Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Carpet Merchant* (detail), 70.40  
Gallery 357

### Before Impressionism

What comes to mind when you hear the term “academic”?

How would you describe this painting?

What is going on?

What do you see that makes you say that?





Claude Monet, *The Seashore at Sainte-Adresse* (detail), 53.13  
Gallery 355

## Early Impressionism

What words would you use to describe this painting?

How do you think Monet captured the “feel” of being on the seashore?

How does this compare to *The Carpet Merchant*?

Which artwork do you prefer? Why?



Jean-Frédéric Bazille, *Landscape by the Lez River* (detail), 69.23  
Gallery 355

What about this painting appears most real?

In what ways does it look more real than *The Carpet Merchant*?

Describe the brushstrokes in the sky. How do these differ from the brushstrokes in the leaves?



Claude Monet, *Still Life with Pheasants and Plovers* (detail), 84.140  
Gallery 355

## Impressionism

What’s going on in this painting?

What do you think happened before? What will happen next?

What appears impressionistic here?

How closely do you think Monet observed these birds?

What do you see that makes you think that?



Claude Monet, *Grainstack, Sun in the Mist* (detail), 93.20  
Gallery 355

Describe the range of color you see.

Some people think this is a realistic painting; others find it more decorative. What do you think? Why?

What events do you think led up to this moment?

What season do you think this depicts? Why?

What do you wonder about?





Berthe Morisot, *The Artist's Daughter, Julie, with her Nanny* (detail), 96.40  
Gallery 351

What do you think is going on here? What do you see that makes you say that?

What time of day do you think it is? How do you know?

Do you think the painting is finished or unfinished? Why?

What impressions do you see?



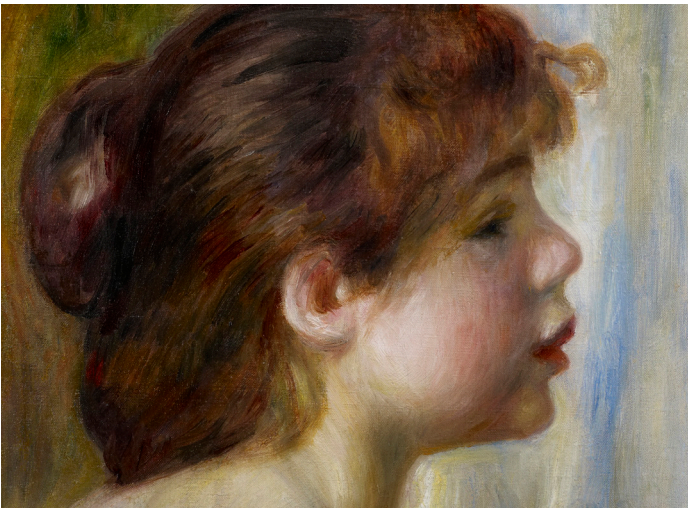
Camille Pissarro, *Place du Théâtre Français, Paris: Rain* (detail), 18.19  
Gallery 351

Where do you think the artist was when he painted this?

What time of year do you think it is? What do you see that makes you think that?

How has Pissarro presented an "impression" of the weather?

Is this a place you'd want to visit? Why or why not?



Pierre Auguste Renoir, *Head of a Young Woman* (detail), 61.15  
Gallery 351

Describe the range of colors in this young woman's skin and hair.

Where do you see Renoir's brushstrokes?

What do you think she's thinking? What about her face tells you that?

What do you think is going on around her? Why?



Edgar Degas, *Portrait of Mlle. Hortense Valpinçon* (detail), 48.1  
Gallery 351

What's going on in this painting?

What details did Degas paint to help you see that?

Does this painting remind you of a photograph? If so, in what ways?

What strikes you as unusual or remarkable about it?





Theodore Wendel, *The Butterfly Catchers* (detail), 2001.43  
Gallery 322

## American Impressionism

What's going here? What do you see that makes you say that?

How did the artist use different-size brushstrokes to show depth?

How—if at all—does this American painting differ from French Impressionism?



Richard E. Miller, *The Parasol* (detail), 2012.85.1  
Gallery 322

How did the artist show movement in this painting?

What did he do to create depth?

In what ways did he create a flat surface?

Would you consider this ordinary or extraordinary? Why?



Vincent van Gogh, *Olive Trees* (detail), 51.7  
Gallery 355

## Following Impressionism

Describe this painting. What do you notice first?

How has the artist expressed his feelings about nature?  
How would you describe those feelings?

How does this compare to Monet's *Grainstack* painting?

Which do you prefer? Why?