

# BUFFALO AKG ART MUSEUM

## Lesson: Impressionism



Claude Monet (French, 1840-1926). *Chemin de halage à Argenteuil (Towpath at Argenteuil, Winter)*, 1875-76. Oil on canvas, 23 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 39 $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (60 x 100 cm). Collection Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Gift of Charles Clifton, 1919 (1919:8).

### Conceptual Basis:

Conceptual Basis: Impressionism was an art movement defined by patchy brushwork and a pastel color scheme meant to capture the artist's "impression" of a moment. Impressionists were concerned with the effects of light on a scene. Claude Monet's *Chemin de halage à Argenteuil (Towpath at Argenteuil, Winter)*, 1875-76, gives the viewer an impression of a cold gray winter's day in a suburb of Paris. In this lesson, students will be inspired by Impressionism and create their own landscape painting based on Impressionist techniques.

## Vocabulary:

**Impressionism:** a nineteenth century art movement that was characterized by short brushstrokes intended to depict the visual impression of a moment, especially the effect of light on color

**plein-air painting:** the act of painting in the open air

**Optical mixing:** perception of color resulting from the combination of adjacent colors. It is the visual mixing of colors performed by the eye from a distance.

## Discussion Exercise

- What time of the year is Monet representing? What time of day?
- What is the mood of the painting? What contributes to that mood? Color? Texture? Subject matter?
- What colors can be found in the sky? Where else can students locate optical blending in this painting?
- How did Monet paint the figures in this painting? How many figures are in this painting?
- Try to imitate the body position of the closest figure. How might that person feel?

## Objectives

- Become familiar with the artist Claude Monet and the art movement of Impressionism
- Learn about the invention of the paint tube and its influence on art
- Increase awareness of the effects of light on color in a work of art
- Create a painting or a series of landscape paintings experimenting with an impressionistic painting style
- Support the understanding of basic art elements and principles.

## Materials

**Paint** (watercolor, tempera, or acrylic)

**Paintbrushes** (a variety of sizes)

**Water buckets** (or individual water cups for outdoor painting)

**Thick canvas paper**

**Sturdy board** (for outdoor painting option)

## Artmaking Activity

Depending on the age of your students and time available for classes, students can create an impressionistic landscape painting a few different ways.

1. Students may create a painting from a photograph of a landscape scene.
2. Students may create a landscape painting by viewing the scene outside of a classroom window.
3. Students may work outdoors by painting the landscape in their surroundings.

Encourage students to begin by blocking off areas of color in their landscape using a light wash of paint. This will help avoid exposed areas of canvas in their painting as well as lay out the different elements of their scene. Students should layer their dabs of paint starting with the background.

## Lesson Tips

- Challenge students to avoid using black in their paintings. Emphasize the blue, brown, green, and lavender colors Monet uses as shadows in his painting.
- If students become discouraged that their painting does not have realistic qualities to it, encourage them to view their painting from farther away. Note that the optical blending and areas of impression are seen in different ways when the viewer is closer or farther away from the artwork.

## Optional Reflections and Wrap-Up

- A review of Impressionism and the effects of light on color can be done with students when viewing additional Impressionist art. Ask students to identify the time of day or season in which the painting was created.
- A short writing assignment or reflection about their artmaking process can give teachers insight for the next time students do this lesson.
- Students can create a series by painting a landscape at their homes at different times of day. This activity could consist of one painting in the morning, one at midday, and one before nightfall.

## New York State Standards:

Anchor Standard 7 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

7.2

**Artistic Process:** RESPONDING

**Process Component:** ANALYZE

**Enduring Understanding:** Visual imagery influences understanding of and responses to the world.

**Essential Questions:** What is an Image? Where and how do we encounter images in our world? How do images influence our views of the world?

Grade	Code	Standard
<b>K</b>	VA:Re7.2.K	Describe what an image represents.
<b>1</b>	VA:Re7.2.1	Compare images that represent the same subject.
<b>2</b>	VA:Re7.2.2	Categorize images, based on expressive properties.
<b>3</b>	VA:Re7.2.3	Identify messages communicated by images.
<b>4</b>	VA:Re7.2.4	Analyze components of visual imagery that convey messages.
<b>5</b>	VA:Re7.2.5	Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery.
<b>6</b>	VA:Re7.2.6	Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions.
<b>7</b>	VA:Re7.2.7	Analyze multiple ways the images influence specific audiences.
<b>8</b>	VA:Re7.2.8	Compare and contrast contexts and media in which viewers encounter images that influence ideas, emotions, and actions.

Grade Level 9–12	Code	Standard
<b>Proficient</b>	VA: Re7.2.HSI	Analyze the reciprocal relationship between understanding the world and experiencing imagery.
<b>Accomplished</b>	VA: Re7.2.HSII	Identify commonalities within a group of artists or visual images attributed to a particular type of art, time frame, or culture.
<b>Advanced</b>	VA: Re7.2.HSIII	Evaluate the effectiveness of images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.

Teacher Example:

