

Artful Adventures

19th  
Century **France**

An interactive guide for families



Your  
French  
Adventure  
Awaits You!

*See inside for details*



# 19th Century France

Today we are going to travel to France, a country in Europe, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. We are going to focus our attention on paintings from the second half of the nineteenth century (1850–1900). At this time, France and French art were changing in many ways. While Paris, the capital of France, was a big city where people liked to take long walks and go window shopping, some French artists began to think differently about art and started saying “No, thank you!” to the way art was being made.

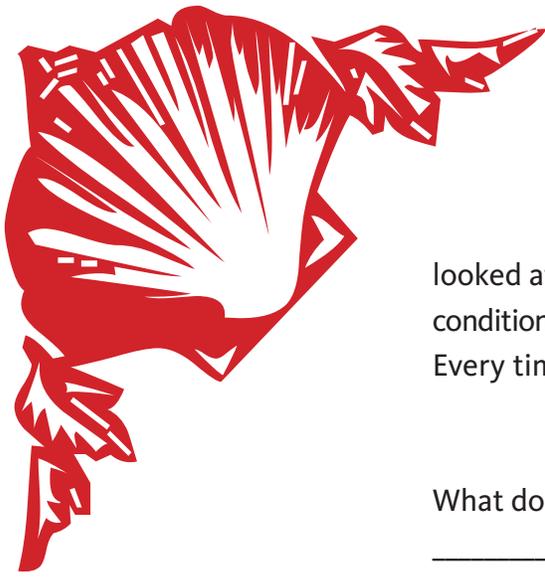
In the late nineteenth century, people liked paintings of historical subjects, religious themes, and portraits (formal paintings of posed people). They preferred the paintings to have no visible brushstrokes or evidence of the artist’s personality or emotions. Several brave French artists decided to make art about their own experiences, the people and things they saw in their everyday lives, and the beautiful nature that was all around them. They also used their paintbrushes in a whole new way! These daring artists were called the Impressionists.

Go up the stairs to the upper level of the Museum and turn left, into the gallery of European and American art from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As you enter the gallery you will see a painting called *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge* by a very important Impressionist artist named Claude Monet. Monet painted many landscapes, or pictures of a view of nature.



This is a painting of part of Monet’s garden at his home in Giverny, France. He loved his garden very much and often went there to paint. In fact, Monet made several paintings of this bridge! Like many Impressionists, Monet liked to work en plein air, which means he liked to paint outside in the open air. He was very interested in how the same scene

Claude Monet, French, 1840–1926: *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge*, 1899. Oil on canvas, 90.5 x 89.7 cm.; frame: 129.5 x 132.1 cm. From the Collection of William Church Osborn, Class of 1883, trustee of Princeton University (1914–1951), president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1941–1947); given by his family (y1972–15). Photo: Bruce M. White.



looked at different times of the day and in different seasons and weather conditions. Monet often worked on several paintings at the same time. Every time the light changed, he would change canvases.

What do you think the weather is like in this painting?

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Which season do you think it is? \_\_\_\_\_

In the space below, draw a picture of your favorite spot outside. What is the weather like in your picture? Is it sunny? Raining? Snowing? Cloudy?

Monet, and many other Impressionist painters, liked to use bright colors. Which bright colors can you find in *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge*?

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When you get home, don't forget to color your picture of your favorite spot using bright colors, like Claude Monet!

How would you describe Monet's brushstrokes?

Small and careful

Free and loose

Impressionists like Monet also liked to use different brushstrokes and textures. With your hands behind your back, step up to the painting and look at the little blobs on the canvas. Some of these little blobs of paint have more than one color in them. How many different colors do you see? Now take five big steps back and squint your eyes. Do the bridge and the flowers look any clearer?



**Write a letter from Monet!**

Pretend that you are Claude Monet and you are taking a break from painting this picture to write a letter to a friend.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

How are you? I am feeling \_\_\_\_\_,

Today is a \_\_\_\_\_ day,  
(weather) (season)

and I am painting my garden. Standing at my easel, I can see \_\_\_\_\_ and hear \_\_\_\_\_. Later, I am going to go \_\_\_\_\_. (activity)

Sincerely,

Although we will not explore them today, there are two other paintings by Claude Monet in this gallery. See if you can find them and figure out what the weather is like in each painting.

Painting 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

Painting 2: \_\_\_\_\_ Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

Next to these paintings are two paintings by another Impressionist artist, Alfred Sisley. Although his parents were English, he was born and lived in France. Can you find any similarities between Claude Monet's paintings and Alfred Sisley's paintings? (Hint: Is he painting outside en plein air? What kind of brushstrokes is he using? What kind of colors is he using?) \_\_\_\_\_

*My dearest friend,*





Now find a painting of a stagecoach called *Tarascon Diligence* by an artist named Vincent van Gogh. Van Gogh was a Dutch artist from the Netherlands, but he lived and painted in France. Van Gogh was a Post-impressionist artist. (“Post” means “after.”) Van Gogh was younger than Monet and had seen and liked Monet’s work. He wrote a letter to his brother, Theo, after he painted this painting. He told Theo that he was thinking about one of Monet’s paintings when he painted *Tarascon Diligence*. (Tarascon is a city in France and a diligence is a stagecoach.)



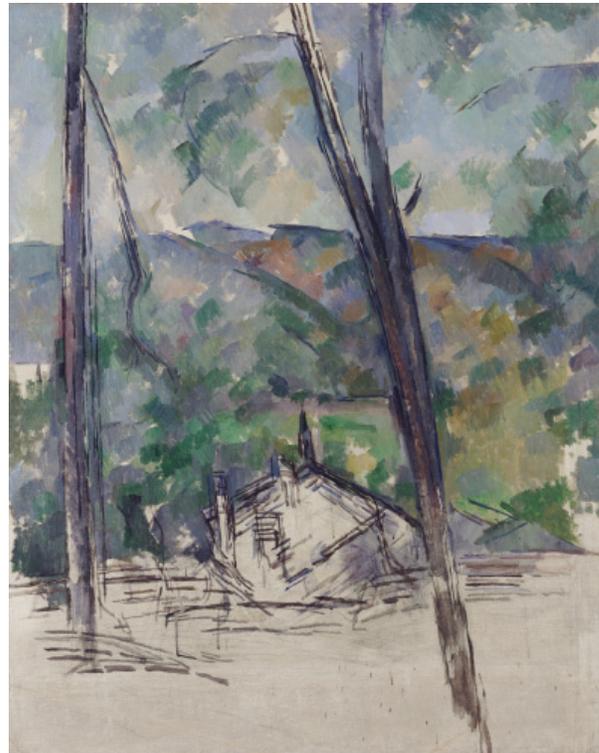
Vincent van Gogh, Dutch, 1853–1890: *Tarascon Diligence* (Tarascon Stage Coach), 1888. Oil on canvas, 71.4 x 92.5 cm.; frame: 99.5 x 119.0 x 10.5 cm. Lent by the Henry and Rose Pearlman Foundation. Photo: Bruce M. White.

What about Van Gogh’s painting is like Monet’s? What is different?  
(Hint: What is he painting? Is that like what Monet painted?) \_\_\_\_\_

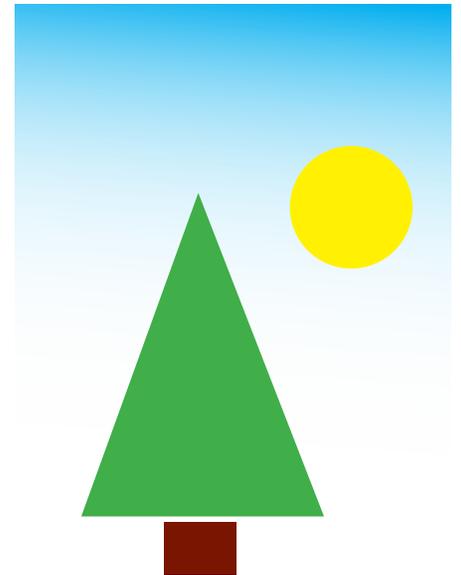
How did he paint it? Look at Van Gogh’s brushstrokes. Are they like Monet’s?  
Are the colors he used like Monet’s? \_\_\_\_\_



On the wall in the back of this gallery, find a painting called *Route to Le Tholonet*, by an artist named Paul Cézanne. Although Cézanne never finished this painting, it shows us how Cézanne liked to use layers of color (colors on top of each other) and geometric shapes (like triangles and rectangles) to show his experience of nature. He once said that he wanted to “treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere, the cone,” which means that he wanted to paint nature using shapes.



Paul Cézanne, French, 1839–1906: *La Route à Le Tholonet* (Route to Le Tholonet), 1900–1904. Oil on canvas, 101.6 x 81.3 cm.; frame: 124.9 x 106.2 x 10.0 cm. Lent by the Henry and Rose Pearlman Foundation. Photo: Bruce M. White.



Could Cézanne be describing a pine tree with a sun in the sky in this quote?

Even Cézanne’s brushstrokes look like the shape of a rectangle! How many of each shape can you find in this painting?



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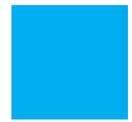
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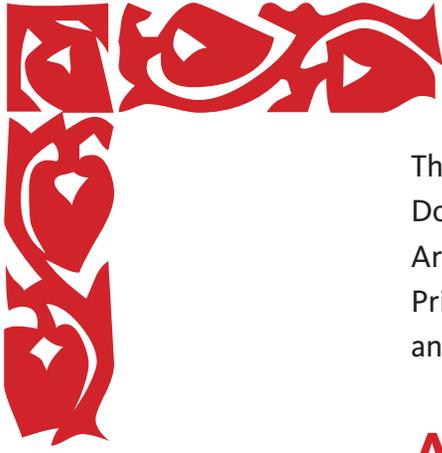
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Thank you for joining us today to explore the Impressionist art of France. Don't forget to stop by the information desk to collect a sticker for your Artful Adventures Passport. We hope that you enjoyed your visit to the Princeton University Art Museum and that you will come back soon for another Artful Adventure!

## ART PROJECT

Create a picture of the great outdoors using geometric shapes, like Paul Cézanne!

You will need:

Colored construction paper

Scissors

Plain white paper

A gluestick

A pencil

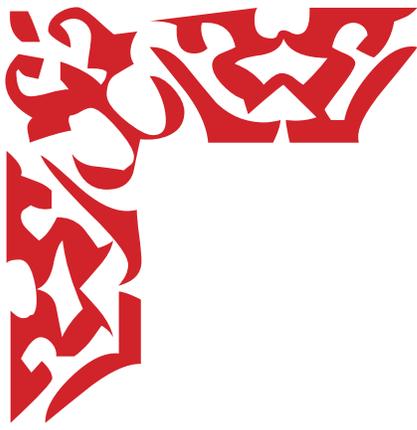
Adult supervision

Directions:

With your pencil and white paper, draw a picture of something in nature, like a tree, a flower, or a leaf.

Take your scissors and cut different shapes out of the colored construction paper. Be sure to use many different colors!

On the back of your paper, try to recreate your drawing using only the shapes that you cut out of the construction paper. The two pictures do not have to look the same. In fact, they will probably look very different!



## SUGGESTED READING

*Camille and the Sunflowers: A Story About Vincent van Gogh*,  
by Laurence Anholt

Despite the derision of their neighbors, a young French boy and his family befriend the lonely painter who comes to their town and begin to admire his unusual paintings. (Gr 2–4)

*Linnea in Monet's Garden*, by Christinam Bjork;  
illustrated by Lena Anderson

A little girl visits Claude Monet's home and garden in Giverny, France, and learns about the artist's paintings and his life. The illustrations include photographs of the painter and his family as well as examples of his work. (Gr 3–6)

**These books can be found in the children's section of the**

