
Art Masterpiece: *La Grande Jatte*, 1884-1886 by Georges Seurat

Keywords: Pointillism and Neo-Impressionism

Grade: 5th – 6th

Activity: Mosaics / Pointillism



Meet the Artist:

- Born in France in 1859 to a family that supported his desire to be an artist. Georges Seurat received art schooling in Paris.
- Initially rejected by the impressionist artists of the day, he decided to associate with other artists. He created a new style that was a “new” form of impressionism called Neo- Impressionism.
- Impressionists painted in a manner that the painting was the image you see if you simply take a quick look at it.
- **Neo- Impressionists** painted so that it was more orderly, more scientific.
- Eventually, his technique was given the title “**pointillism**” He never cared for this title. In pointillism, the artist uses dots or dashes to complete a picture. The paintings tend to look grainy, meaning up close one would only see “points” or small dashes, but from farther away, a picture emerges.
- **He believed that this form of painting would make colors appear more brilliant and powerful than standard brush strokes.**
- His paintings were very large and he painted only a handful of complete paintings in his lifetime and 60 smaller paintings. He sought to make

every inch of the canvas perfect. He sometimes took years to finish a painting.

- **La Grande Jatte took over 2 years for the artist to complete. The size of this piece is approximately 7' x 10'.**
 - The island of la Grande Jatte is located at the very gates of Paris, lying in the Seine between Neuilly and Levallois-Perret, a short distance from where currently stands La Défense business district. Although for many years it was an industrial site, it is today the site of a public garden and a housing development.
 - Seurat died at an early age in 1891 from what many believed to be diphtheria, a disease of the respiratory system that no longer affects us due to vaccinations.
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Definitions:

Neo-Impressionism is a term used to describe an art movement founded by Georges Seurat. Seurat's greatest masterpiece, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, marked the beginning of this movement.

Pointillism. A method of painting in which the white ground is covered with tiny dots of color. When viewed at a distance, the colors blend together to produce new and different colors. The viewer's eyes do the mixing.

Possible Questions:

- What would you name this painting?
- What colors do you see? Are they cool colors or warm colors?
- From far away can you tell anything special about the paint technique of this work of art?
- Now look at it closely.
- How did Seurat put the paint on the canvas? (tiny dots)
- Can you find colors that blend to become new colors? (Look at the shadowed areas.)
- This painting was done over 100 years ago. How can you tell? (the way people are dressed)
- Describe these people? What type of lifestyle did they live?
- How long did it take Seurat to complete this painting?

Activity: What's the Point? Mosaics in Pointillism

Materials needed: white 4 X 5 ½" cardstock or white paper, **Fresh** colored markers, black paper for mounting, glue sticks

Color Theory: (Discuss prior to beginning project.)

Artists often use warm and cool colors together to create depth or dimension in their artwork. Cool colors tend to recede; Warm colors seem to come forward. Artists may use one group in the foreground and the other in the background to create contrast and interest.

Process:

1. Cover *Color Theory* first. See above.
2. Brainstorming together as a class can be helpful. Write, their ideas on the board. Rainbows, cars, flowers, sunrises, palm tree, apple, sailboat, heart, simple sunset, etc.
3. Once students have decided their subject they should plan their colors. Suggest to students to use either warm colors or cool colors for the background and use the opposite color group for the object in the foreground. The contrast will help make the artwork "pop" away from the background.
4. Using a pencil, lightly sketch a simple object that will be filled in with dots. It works best to fill the main object first and then work on the background.
5. Using the markers they will begin to fill in the space by creating small dots on the paper. Direct students to use an up and down motion. They are not allowed to fill space with anything other than dots made with the tip of the marker.
6. **Under the doc-camera demonstrate how you can vary the density of the dots to create lights and dark areas. Leaving more space between each dot creates lighter areas. Placing dots close together will create a darker tone.**
7. Remind them that a combination of primary colors placed closely together can optically create secondary colors. Encourage students to try this for themselves. Red dots+ Yellow dots = area appears Orange
Blue + Red dots = Purple
Yellow + Blue dots = Green
8. **Stand back from their work. Do the colors blend together creating new colors? Ask if they better appreciate Georges Seurat and his efforts. ☺**

9. When students are done they should mount their artwork onto a black piece of paper.
10. Have them name and sign their masterpiece.

ARTGUIDES: Please go through all markers and make sure caps are back on tightly before returning to supply bin.

See Samples below.



Student samples.

Brief info about the artist:

Georges-Pierre Seurat (December 1859 –March 1891) was a French Post-Impressionist painter and draftsman.

He is noted for his innovative use of drawing media and for devising the painting techniques known as pointillism.

Brief info about the project: Today we created art in the style of Pointillism using tiny dots of color. Students learned to appreciate the efforts of Seurat whose works were often wall-size.



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