**Masterpiece: Le Pont Japonais a Giverny, by Claude Monet**
*Japanese Bridge*

Pronounced: Klodd Moe-Nay

Keywords: Impressionism

Grade: 3rd Grade

Month: December

Activity: Impressionist Sponge Painting

**Impressionism:**

A style of painting that became popular over 100 years ago mainly in France. It was a break away from painting realistically. It truly was about what an impression was. A painting by Monet, named "Impression: Sunrise" (which depicted sunlight dancing and shimmering on water) was the inspiration for the term Impressionism. Originally it was meant as an insult, but Monet embraced the name. The art institutes of the day thought that the paintings looked unfinished, or childlike. As a technique, impressionists used dabs of paint (often straight out of a paint tube) to recreate the impression they saw of the light and the effects the light had on color. Due to this, most Impressionistic artists painted in the "plein-air", French for open air. The emphasis was capturing the moment, the impression. Eventually, impressionism spawned many other styles of art, expressionism (an art style that focuses on feelings) to abstract art (a style that allows shapes and colors alone to tell the story the painter wants told). The movement lasted from around 1870 to 1910 and included artists such as Monet, Degas and Pissarro.

**Meet the Artist:**

- He was born in 1840 in Paris, France. His parents wanted him to grow up and work in their grocery store. He only wanted to paint, eventually going to art school.
- He was fascinated with what different light would do to colors. He noticed that the brighter the light, the more vibrant the color. He started to paint outdoors so that he could really see the vibrancy of the colors. At the time, artists exclusively painted indoors, in their studios.
- He married twice (his first wife died) and had several children.
- It took him until he was 50 to sell enough paintings to buy his first home. Much of his life, he lived near poverty. This house he bought was in Giverny (Zhee-vare-ney). It was there that he painted "Les Arceaux Fleuris" (Lays-Arko Flurees) in 1913.
- He loved painting water, since light reflected off of it. He had a pond made and filled with water lilies in his back yard in Giverny.
- He started going blind in 1908 due to cataracts. After having medication, he was able to regain much of his sight. Some of his most memorable paintings were at the end of his life, his water lily paintings. They actually started to border on abstract art. He died in 1926.
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**Possible Questions:**

- Is this painting realistic? Does it look real?
- Do you like this kind of art? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Monet liked to paint outside?
- Often, he painted the same thing over and over again. Why do you think he did that? (Different lighting, time of day, different seasons' colors)
- What does the painting look like close up? Far away?
- What time of day do you think it was painted?
- Have you seen this painting before?

**Activity:** Impressionist Sponge Painting

**Materials needed:** various size sponges on clothes pins, tempura paint (white, blue, yellow, green, pink), white construction paper, scissors, tag board & Easy-Tack repositionable adhesive spray

1. Have the students write their name and room number on the back of their paper.
2. Discuss sponge painting. Paint should not be dripping off the sponges.
3. To begin the project, have students cut the man made parts from tag paper and affix them to the paper to act like stencils. The tag board will already be sprayed with adhesive. This goes quicker if you pre-cut ¼” strips using the paper cutter.
4. When all the man made stuff is put in place, it is time to sponge paint around all the stencils. Start with the blue sky (mix the dark blue with lots of white to get sky blue) above the fence.
5. Now sponge yellow paint everywhere there will be grass, flowers, and trees. They can make shapes of evergreens (triangles) or deciduous tree tops (round). This also insures that the entire fence will be sponged around with the paint color for the garden.
6. Now sponge the green paint onto the yellow. Some of the yellow should show thru.
7. Next add shading on one side of the trees and shrubs using blue. They should use the corners of the sponges for this.
8. Carefully remove the tag board pieces.
9. They can make taller perennial flowering shrubs using the edge of cut rectangles of cardboard.
10. The flower painting is done with Q tips. They often make flowering vines growing on the arches and fences using Q tips too.

Note: see next page for step-by-step photos.
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Garden of Claude Monet at Giverny, Photo by Ariane Cauderlier

http://giverny.org/gardens/fcm/visitgb.htm