Masterpiece: *Monet Painting in His Garden, 1913*
by Pierre Auguste Renoir

Pronounced: REN WAUR

Keywords: Impressionism, Open Air Painting

Grade: 3rd Grade

Month: November

Activity: “Plein Air” Pastel Painting

TIME: 1 - 1.25 hours

Overview of the Impressionism Art Movement:

Impressionism was a style of painting that became popular over 100 years ago mainly in France. Up to this point in the art world, artists painted people and scenery in a realistic manner. A famous 1872 painting by Claude Monet named “Impression: Sunrise” was the inspiration for the name given to this new form of painting: “Impressionism” (See painting below) by an art critic. Originally the term was meant as an insult, but Monet embraced the name. The art institutes of the day thought that the paintings looked unfinished, or childlike.

Characteristics of Impressionist paintings include: visible brush strokes, open composition, light depicting the effects of the passage of time, ordinary subject matter, movement, and unusual visual angles. 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 important concept for 3rd grade lessons is the Impressionism movement was short lived but inspired other artists from all over, including America, to begin
using this new technique. Each of the artists throughout the lessons brought something new and a little different to advance the Impressionistic years. (i.e. Seurat with Neo-Impressionism and Toulouse-Lautrec with Post-Impressionism). The emphasis was capturing the moment, the impression as seen by a quick glance. Additionally, the Impressionist movement was a significant influence on future art techniques such as Fauvism (i.e. Matisse), Cubism (Picasso), 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).

Meet the Artist:

- Pierre Auguste Renoir was a French impressionist painter noted for his radiant, intimate paintings, particularly of women. Recognized by critics as one of the greatest and most independent painters of his period, Renoir is noted for the harmony of his lines, the brilliance of his color, and the intimate charm of his wide variety of subjects. Unlike other impressionists he was as much interested in painting the single human figure or family group portraits as he was in landscapes; unlike them, too, he did not subordinate composition and plasticity of form to attempts at rendering the effect of light.

- Renoir was born in Limoges on February 25, 1841. As a child he worked in a porcelain factory in Paris, painting designs on china; at 17 he copied paintings on fans, lamp shades, and blinds. He studied painting formally in 1862-63 at the academy of the Swiss painter Charles Gabriel Gleyre in Paris. Renoir’s early work was influenced by two French artists, Claude Monet in his treatment of light and the romantic painter Eugène Delacroix in his treatment of color.

- Renoir first exhibited his paintings in Paris in 1864, but he did not gain recognition until 1874, at the first exhibition of painters of the new impressionist school. One of the most famous of all impressionist works is Renoir’s Le Bal au Moulin de la Galette (1876, Musée du Louvre, Paris), an open-air scene of a café, in which his mastery in figure painting and in representing light is evident. Another famous and equally complex scene is The Luncheon of the Boating Party (1880-81) which confirmed him as a leading Impressionist painter. Outstanding examples of his talents as a portraitist are Madame Charpentier and Her Children (1878, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City) and Jeanne Samary.

- Renoir fully established his reputation with a solo exhibition held at the Durand-Ruel Gallery in Paris in 1883. In 1887 he completed a series of studies of a group of female figures known as The Bathers (Philadelphia Museum of Art). These reveal his extraordinary ability
to depict the lustrous, pearly color and texture of skin and to impart lyrical feeling and plasticity to a subject; they are unsurpassed in the history of modern painting in their representation of feminine grace. Many of his later paintings also treat the same theme in an increasingly bold rhythmic style.

- During the last 20 years of his life Renoir was crippled by arthritis; unable to move his hands freely, he continued to paint, however, by using a brush strapped to his arm. Renoir died at Cagnes, a village in the south of France, on December 3, 1919, at the age of 78.

Possible Questions:
- Who is Monet? He is well known as the father of the Impressionist movement (see information above).
- What is the first thing you notice in this painting?
- Can you see another figure in this painting?
- Where does your eye move from there?
- What is the light source? What time of day do you think it is?
- How did Renoir apply his paint to make it look as through the sun is shining? He applied colors in strokes next to each other, with white space or highlights in between.
- Do you see any outlines or hard edges?
- How did the artist create the edges of the buildings, fence, his friend Monet without using an outline or hard edge? By quick changes in color and small, light-colored highlight areas.
- Why do you think Renoir painted Monet in an outside setting?
- What does the painting look like close up? Far away?
- Is this painting realistic? Does it look real?
- Do you like this kind of art? Why or why not?

Activity: “PLEIN-AIR” Pastel Painting

Materials needed: clip board to be their “table” (ask teacher if you can use theirs for this activity), 9”x12” white paper, oil pastels

Explain Activity: The students will be doing a plein air (outdoor) painting using the oil pastels. They will need to find a nice space outdoors that will not disrupt other students, or away from other outdoor activities; however, they need to be within view of the art guide. If possible, find a tree, or flowers to sit by for inspiration. Have students imagine a garden or other landscape setting they would like in their backyard. Where is their vantage point? What season is it? What types of flowers or vegetation are in their garden? Colors? They can include a water source like a
pool, reflecting pond, lake or waterfall. Encourage them to imagine the time of day and how the light is affecting the colors. Have them experiment with different color combinations and use small strokes with the pastels. Make sure they give their masterpiece a title and sign it.