



Kindergarten Print
Madame Charpentier and Her Children, Georgette and Paul, 1878

By Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919)

(Pee-ehr Oh-goost Ren-wahr)

Technique: oil on canvas

Size: 60 ½" x 74 ⅞"

Collection: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Art Style and Genre: French Impressionist, portrait

OBJECTIVES:

- The students will examine the Impressionist painting style of Renoir.
- The students will describe Renoir's use of repeated colors (principles of balance and unity).
- The students will use oil pastels to create a family portrait.

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Pierre Auguste Renoir was born in Limoges, France on February 25, 1841 to a working class family. His father was a tailor and his mother was a seamstress. In 1844, the Renoir family moved to Paris. Renoir enrolled in Catholic school at the age of seven, and showed an early talent for drawing. Noting his interest in art, his parents found him a position as an apprentice in a porcelain-painting factory. There, he progressed from painting designs on plates to painting portraits on vases and teapots. At night, Renoir took courses at the *Ecole de dessin d'arts decoratifs*. When porcelain painting began to be reproduced mechanically, Renoir was out of work, and found a job at a fan and screen painter's studio. His religious paintings on fans and screens were sent to missionaries all over the world. Renoir eventually managed to save enough money to attend the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. A year later, disappointed with the classes, he left the school and began to paint outdoors in the Fontainebleau forest. His early paintings were rather traditional, with smooth brushstrokes and dark colors. From 1867 onward, Renoir began to sketch his subjects directly on raw canvases, and replaced his earth colors with blues. After meeting Monet, Renoir began to use separate, juxtaposed brushstrokes of color to capture the shimmering effects of light on water. Unlike Monet, who was preoccupied with depicting the effects of light, Renoir was interested in painting figures, especially women, and used flower girls, seamstresses and actresses he found in local cafes for his models.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK:

In 1875, after an exhibition and sale of Impressionist work, which received only scorn from the general public, Renoir began to receive commissions for family portraits from upper-level civil servants. *Madame Charpentier and Her Children* is one of these portraits. The portrait was painted in 1878 in the family's Japanese-style living room. Madame Charpentier held one of the most popular salons in Paris and introduced Renoir to well-known politicians, painters and writers like Emile Zola.

Renoir treated his subject with special interest; painting the scene exactly as it was, with furniture and objects left in place. The same delicate brushstroke was used over the entire surface of the painting. The diagonal sweep of the composition through the sleeping dog and the lines of the table, accentuated by pattern in the rug, gives the composition its special dynamic force.

The softness of the portrait is due in large part to Renoir's harmonious palette and to his use of repeating colors in the figures of the objects. Renoir conveys the opulent ease of his subject's loves, but made no attempt to capture their personalities. Far more elaborately detailed than his other works of the 1870's, this painting marks the beginning of his important shift away from the classic Impressionist style, with which he had made his reputation a few years earlier.

Renoir married in May, 1882. He had two children, one of whom, Jean Renoir, became a famous actor and film director.

*Note that there is a **Venezia Series biographical book on Renoir**. You may check it out from the library for use during your lesson. The book should NOT leave the Tarwater campus. You can read the book as a read aloud, but most likely you will only have enough time to use selected pages to enhance your lesson.

*Biographical text from: Thompson, C. (2000). *Art image early years* (2nd ed.). Champlain, N.Y.: Art Image Publications, Inc. (Original work published 1994)

QUESTIONS AND POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

Subject Matter

- Look at this painting for 30 seconds. Now I'm going to turn the poster over. What do you remember seeing in the painting? (2 girls that look like twins, a family dog, a mother, and other details)
- Turn the poster so the painting is facing the front again. This is a family portrait of the wife and daughters of a wealthy businessman. Give the title of the painting.
- What is a portrait? (A portrait is any work of art showing a person, several people, or an animal. Portraits usually emphasize just the face but can include part or all of the body.)
- Where do you think this portrait was painted? (In the family's Japanese-style living room) Do the family members look stiff and uncomfortably posed or do they look natural and relaxed? (The subjects are in a natural position, facing each other. One daughter even appears to be sitting on the dog.)
- Renoir wanted to fill his paintings with warmth and happiness.
- Renoir was an Impressionist painter. **Impressionism** is a painting style that shows the subject matter as it appears to the artist (not an exact copy, but an "impression" of the real thing). Impressionists painted with quick brushstrokes and dabs of bright colors, capturing the light and the mood of the moment.
- Where do you see the **repetition** of colors? (Blue/white in the girls' dresses and black/white in the dog, mother's dress, and the girls' socks and shoes)

Principles of Design

- **Balance** and **unity** are achieved with the repetition and placement of certain colors.

Evaluation

- What would it be like to be "inside" this painting?

PROJECT:

*The Photo Request letter is **optional**. Students at this age may have a hard time transferring what they see to a drawing. The students do not have to draw exactly what they see. The photo may be used as a reference to clothing details and body proportions. The art guide could also have someone stand up and they could point out details in the students' clothing and have a general discussion about body proportions.*

Have the students draw a family portrait. The family should be placed in a setting - a room, outdoors, etc. Remind the students to fill the page with their artwork- most students this age tend to draw small. Have the students try to repeat colors throughout the the drawing to achieve balance and unity (i.e. Dad and brother's pants are blue, Mom and sister wear purple shirts, room has blue and purple details).

Artwork may be displayed or placed in the student's art portfolios.

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ 9 x 12 white drawing paper
- ✓ Oil-pastels