FAMILY GUIDE

French Paintings at the National Gallery of Art

ages 6 and up
Welcome to the Gallery's Collection of French Art

Remember to explore paintings with your eyes only; do not touch. If you stand about three feet away from the art, you will have a perfect view.
Feel free to **write** and **draw** in this book and use it to start discussions about the art you find.

Ages 6 to 8 may need help from an adult.
Ages 9 and up may enjoy working independently.

Gallery numbers are located on wall plaques between rooms.
Artists like those who painted the wooded scenes in Gallery 93 went to the countryside to make art *en plein air* (“in the open air”). They brought portable equipment—easels, umbrellas, tubes of paint—to outdoor locations like the beach and the woods.

Many artists worked in the large forests surrounding Paris. Some of the trees there were hundreds of years old and so loved that people named them. At Fontainebleau, “Snow White” (*La Reine Blanche*) was a favorite among painters and photographers who stored their paints and equipment in her generous hollow trunk.

Find paintings in Gallery 93 with huge old trees. Choose the one you like best.

Title of painting: ________________________________

Artist: ________________________________

Describe your tree and imagine its personality. What does your tree’s trunk, bark, and leaves look like?

____________________________________

Can you see its roots? __________________________

Is it healthy or sick? Alive or dead? Look and explain.

____________________________________
Describe the land around your tree:

Color of the earth ________________________________

Water ________________________________

Rocks or boulders ________________________________

Ground cover ________________________________

Where is it?

___ Inside a forest
___ Beside a stream or lake
___ On a hill
___ In a field
___ Somewhere else: ________________________________

What is the weather like? ________________________________

________________________________________

Based on the information you have, describe your tree's personality:

- Strong and silent
- Dreary
- Friendly
- Big
- Broken
- Other: ________________________________

Now, name your tree! ________________________________
Modern Paris: Life in Motion

The artists in this room saw Paris change from a medieval town with narrow cobblestone streets into a modern city of wide, walkable boulevards, bridges, and parks. Many of them strolled outside, sketching and painting right in the middle of the fast-paced city life around them.

Find and check the characteristics of “modern Paris” you see in paintings in this room:

___ Wide, straight, and tree-lined streets
___ Tall buildings
___ Paved bridges
___ Public monuments and gardens
___ People walking around the city
___ Cafés
___ Nightlife
___ All kinds of people, from rags to riches

Choose a favorite painting in this room.

Title of painting: ____________________________

Look and listen.
Describe the sounds you hear in your painted scene:

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
Look for the ways young artists in Paris captured the jumble of city life. Circle when you find:

- Formal outings
- Daily activities
- Grand views
- Crowded streets
- Loneliness

Study a scene that attracts you.
Sketch a detail from it. Add color now or later.

Title of painting: ________________________________
Impressionism: The Colors of Light and Shadow

The artists in this room, called impressionists, captured the way light and shadow change minute to minute in nature. Up close, their paintings look like mosaics of squiggles, drags, and dabs of color. Stand back, and the scenes take shape!

The famous impressionist Claude Monet tells us colors and forms do not always match our expectations:

*When you go out to paint, try to forget what objects you have before you, a tree, a house . . . whatever. Merely think here is a little square of blue, here an oblong of pink . . . and paint it just as it looks to you.*

Test Monet’s advice. **Stand back** and **look** at the paintings around you.

**Choose** a favorite painting in Gallery 85. **Describe** what is happening in the painting:
Take a closer look.
Circle the colors you see in your painting:

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<table>
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<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Orange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Blue</td>
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Check the types of light you see:

- ___ Sparkles
- ___ Glares
- ___ Shadows
- ___ Sunshine
- ___ Ripples
- ___ Glints
- ___ Other: ____________________________

Now, take an even closer look!
Find an object in your painting made up of squiggles, drags, or dabs of color.

You can look at other paintings in the room if you don't see it on yours.

Describe the colors and paint strokes you see.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Are there any unexpected colors?  ___Yes  ___No

Explain:  ____________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Draw as You Dream

Artist Paul Gauguin wrote:

Don’t copy nature too literally… draw art as you dream in nature’s presence, and think more about the act of creation than about the final result.

Walk around Gallery 83 and look at works of art by Paul Gauguin, Edgar Degas, and Vincent van Gogh (read their biographies on page 12).

Look for the ways they combine dreamlike elements in otherwise realistic scenes. Find paintings or sculptures that have these qualities:

Curvy outlines

Title: ________________________________

Flattened spaces

Title: ________________________________

Electric colors

Title: ________________________________

Exaggerated textures

Title: ________________________________

Repeated patterns

Title: ________________________________
Make your own drawing here using the design elements you see in Gallery 83.
Paul Gauguin  
Born in Peru, raised in Paris, he was forever drawn to out-of-the-way places like Brittany, Martinique, and the islands of French Polynesia. In his art, he transformed ancient customs and gentle landscapes into vivid fantasies.

Edgar Degas  
The sophisticated Degas grew up in France’s capital, Paris, studying art at the city’s museums and art schools. He made its people (especially ballet dancers) and modern life his main subjects.

Vincent van Gogh  
Dutch–born, he never felt truly home regardless of where he lived. He read deeply, loved art, and tried to root himself in the south of France. His emotions can be seen in his brushstrokes.
Write your autobiography. Tell us about yourself: Where do you come from? What do you love to do? Did you find a favorite artist today?

Mary Cassatt
At age 22, she moved to Paris, where women had better chances of becoming professional artists. Today you probably saw many paintings of women, but not many by women. Cassatt was one of only four women to exhibit with the impressionist painters and the only American.

Camille Pissarro
Born on the Caribbean island paradise of Saint Thomas, Pissarro went to boarding school in France. Afterward he settled in the Parisian countryside with his love Julie Vellay. They had seven children. He became well known for paintings of village life and nature.
Many works of art here once had more interesting names. For example, Claude Monet’s *Woman with a Parasol*— *Madame Monet and Her Son* (Gallery 85) was poetically called *La Promenade* (*The Walk*).

As you can see, a good title is often short and suggestive rather than long and descriptive.

**Suggest** some new names for these paintings:

Edgar Degas, current title: *Woman Viewed from Behind* (Gallery 89)

Your **new** title: ________________________________

Berthe Morisot, current title: *The Mother and Sister of the Artist* (Gallery 86)

Your **new** title: ________________________________

Édouard Manet, current title: *The Dead Toreador* (Gallery 90)

Your **new** title: ________________________________
Captions

All images in this booklet are details from paintings in the National Gallery of Art collection, unless otherwise noted:

Cover
Paul Gauguin, *Self-Portrait*, 1889, Chester Dale Collection
Auguste Renoir, *Oarsmen at Chatou*, 1879, Gift of Sam A. Lewisohn

Page 4
Advertisement for E. Mary et Fils, Paris, in Salon de 1888, Catalogue illustré (Paris, 1881), 351, National Gallery of Art Library

Page 5
Horace Vernet, *Departure for the Hunt in the Pontine Marshes*, 1833, Chester Dale Fund
Constant Troyon, *The Approaching Storm*, 1849, Chester Dale Fund
Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Forest of Fontainebleau*, 1834, Chester Dale Collection

Page 6
Auguste Renoir, *Pont Neuf, Paris*, 1872, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection
Camille Pissarro, *Boulevard des Italiens, Morning, Sunlight*, 1897, Chester Dale Collection

Page 7
Edgar Degas, *Woman Ironing*, begun c. 1876, completed c. 1887, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
Édouard Manet, *Plum Brandy*, c. 1877, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
Édouard Manet, *Masked Ball at the Opéra*, 1873, Gift of Mrs. Horace Havemeyer in memory of her mother-in-law, Louise W. Havemeyer

Page 8
Claude Monet, *Woman with a Parasol—Madame Monet and Her Son*, 1875, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
Camille Pissarro, *The Artist’s Garden at Eragny*, 1898, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection
Auguste Renoir, *Oarsmen at Chatou*, 1879, Gift of Sam A. Lewisohn

Page 9
Edgar Degas, *Four Dancers*, c. 1899, Chester Dale Collection
Paul Gauguin, *Fatata te Miti (By the Sea)*, 1892, Chester Dale Collection
Vincent van Gogh, *La Mousmé*, 1888, Chester Dale Collection

Page 10
Edgar Degas, *Woman Viewed from Behind*, unknown date, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon
Berthe Morisot, *The Mother and Sister of the Artist*, 1869–1870, Chester Dale Collection
Édouard Manet, *The Dead Toreador*, probably 1864, Widener Collection

Back Cover
Photograph of Amedeo Modigliani, Courtesy Lebrecht Music and Art Photographs, London
Paul Cézanne, *Boy in a Red Waistcoat*, 1888–1890, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art

Page 13
Camille Pissarro, *Self-Portrait (Camille Pissarro, par lui-même)*, c. 1890, Rosenwald Collection

Page 14
Edgar Degas, *Woman Viewed from Behind*, unknown date, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon

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Pocket Pal

Many artists you looked at today influenced one another. Amedeo Modigliani, whose paintings hang in Gallery 80, kept a picture of Paul Cézanne’s *Boy in a Red Waistcoat* (in Gallery 84) in his pocket for inspiration. We include it here for you to take home, cut out, and keep close to your heart. We hope it inspires you to do great things!