

NYBG/125

IMPRESSIONISM: AMERICAN GARDENS ON CANVAS OBSERVE AND CREATE

Suggested Pre-/Post-Visit Activities for Grades 2–8

Overview

American Impressionism emerged as an artistic style in the United States in the late 19th century. Artists employed the brilliant palettes and broken brushstrokes hallmarked by their European counterparts, and similarly depicted scenes of leisurely pursuits of modern life. The careers of American Impressionists coincided with the growth of the nation's garden culture. The New York Botanical Garden, celebrating its 125th year, is one of the institutions founded during this period.

During your guided program, your students will consider how home and public gardens were important visual inspirations for art making during turn-of-the century American Impressionism.

Before your Visit

Materials:

1. A downloaded, printed, or projected copy of *In Miss Florence's Garden* by Edmund William Greacen and

Landscape: Shinnecock, Long Island by William Merritt Chase.

2. Paper and markers

Procedures:

1. Remember a time you spent in a garden. Write about it individually and then share as a group. Reinforce the memories students had as captured moments of their time in a garden.
2. Divide students into small groups. Distribute or display copies of *In Miss Florence's Garden* and *Landscape: Shinnecock, Long Island*.
3. Groups compare and contrast the paintings and brainstorm words that describe each.
4. Groups take turns sharing what they noticed in order to help form a more complete idea about the Impressionist art style and reoccurring themes of American Impressionism.

After your Visit

Overview:

The rise of Impressionism in the United States during the late 19th century coincided with the emergence of a new interest in the transformative effects of nature. Intimate outdoor scenes

in private gardens and public parks inspired many of the artists of the period. Their literary colleagues, who often gardened at the same art colonies as painters and sculptors, were similarly inspired by cultivated oases. Amy Lowell's poem "Reflections" demonstrates an appreciation for the natural world that permeated creative life during the Impressionist period.

Amy Lowell – "Reflections"

When I looked into your eyes,
I saw a garden
With peonies, and tinkling pagodas,
And round-arched bridges
Over still lakes.
A woman sat beside the water
In a rain-blue, silken garment.
She reached through the water
To pluck the crimson peonies
Beneath the surface,
But as she grasped the stems,
They jarred and broke into white-green ripples,
And as she drew out her hand,
The water-drops dripping from it
Stained her rain-blue dress like tears.

Procedure:

Think about the activities you noticed during your visit to the Garden and brainstorm words, phrases, or activities which reflect the spirit of your experiences and arrange them using a poetry style of your choosing.

Recommended Books for Children

Collins, Amy Fine. *American Impressionism*. New York: Smithmark Publishers Inc., 1990.
Knapp, R., & Lehmberg J. *Off the Wall Museum Guides for Kids: American Art.*, Davis Publications, 1998.
Knapp, R., & Lehmberg J. *Off the Wall Museum Guides for Kids: Impressionist Art.*, Davis Publications, 1998.

Recommended Teacher Resources

www.nybg.org/impressionism
Collins, Amy Fine. *American Impressionism*. New York: Smithmark Publishers Inc., 1990.
Gerdts, William H. *American Impressionism* (2nd edition). New York: Abbeville Press, 2001.
Marley, Anna O. *The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.