

# NYBG/125

## IMPRESSIONISM: AMERICAN GARDENS ON CANVAS POETRY WALK

### Suggested Pre-/Post-Visit Activities

#### Exhibition Overview

American Impressionism emerged as an artistic style in the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> 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 Garden, celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> year, is one of the institutions founded during this period.

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

#### Before Your Visit

Read a poem by the American Impressionist poet contemporary Amy Lowell, and think about its meaning and the historical context behind its inspiration by nature.

#### Materials:

1. A downloaded, printed, or projected copy of Amy Lowell's poem:

#### "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.

free verse.

2. Ask students to scan the poem and look for clues about what structural choices this poet makes.
3. Invite students to read the poem out loud to themselves or take turns reading to each other in small groups.
4. Have students write down, then turn and share, their first impression of the poem.
5. Analyze the poem further and discuss:
  - *What words related to nature or gardens do you recognize?*
  - *What feeling seems to be involved?*
  - *What do you visualize from the words?*

#### Procedure:

1. Review the structural elements of a poem: meter, rhythm, rhyme, and

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## After Your Visit

Discuss the impressions students had about what they noticed happening in the Botanical Garden and the experiences they engaged in during their visit in order to show them visually using an art medium.

### Materials:

1. A downloaded, printed, or projected copy of *In Miss Florence's Garden* by Edmund William Greacen and *Island* by William Merritt Chase
2. Paper and markers

*Landscape: Shinnecock, Long*

### Procedure:

1. Remember the time you spent at the Garden. Write about it individually and then share as a whole group. Reinforce the memories students had as captured moments of their experiences 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.

### Recommended Books for Children

Collins, Amy Fine. *American Impressionism*. New York: Smithmark Publishers Inc., 1990.

Knapp, R., & Lehmborg J. *Off the Wall Museum Guides for Kids: American Art.*, Davis Publications, 1998.

Knapp, R., & Lehmborg J. *Off the Wall Museum Guides for Kids: Impressionist Art.*, Davis Publications, 1998.

### Recommended Teacher Resources

[www.nybg.org/impressionism](http://www.nybg.org/impressionism)

Collins, Amy Fine. *American Impressionism*. New York: Smithmark Publishers Inc., 1990.

Gerds, William H. *American Impressionism* (2<sup>nd</sup> 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.