Take One…Picture
Teacher guidance notes

ASHMOLEAN

Camille Pissarro (1830 - 1903)
View from my Window, Éragny-sur-Epte
oil on canvas; 65 x 81 cm 1888
Gallery 65, Pissarro and the Impressionists

A zoomable image of this painting is available on our website to use in the classroom on an interactive whiteboard or projector
www.ashmolean.org/education/takeone

These notes are designed to help you use this painting as a focus for cross-curricular teaching and learning. A visit to the Ashmolean Museum to see the painting offers your class the perfect 'learning outside the classroom' opportunity.

Starting questions

Questions like these may be useful as a starting point to develop speaking and listening skills with your class.

- What is the first thing you see?
- What time of year do you think it might be?
- How many different animals can you see?
- If you could step into the scene what would you-feel/smell/hear?
- If you could talk to the lady in the painting what would you like to ask her? What do you think she is doing?
- Who else do you think might live here?
- What can you see from your window?
- If you could live anywhere in the world what do you wish you could see from your window and why?

Background Information

The Painting

This scene shows a view from the Pissarro's house at Eragny-sur Epte in Normandy, looking towards the village of Bazincourt. The tall building on the left was converted into Pissarro's studio when he bought the property in 1892. The lady in the garden is almost certainly Pissarro's wife, Julie. The composition, which the artist referred to as 'modern primitive', was finished in 1886 in the painstaking pointillist technique Pissarro used for only a few years. He retouched it in 1888 when he added the later date.

The Artist

Camille Pissarro was born in July 1830 on the island of St Thomas in the Danish West Indies (now the US Virgin Islands). When he was twelve he went to boarding school in France. On his return to St Thomas, he was encouraged to take up painting by the Danish artist, Fritz Melbye, who was living there at the time. They travelled together to Venezuela where they spent two years. Then Pissarro moved back to France and worked with Melbye's brother in Paris. He was inspired at first by Gustave Courbet and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. He later worked alongside Georges Seurat and Paul Signac.
In 1873 he helped to set up an exhibition society where Pissarro and his friends could show their work without the restrictions imposed by the official annual exhibitions. In 1874, they held the first Impressionist exhibition in Paris. Pissarro is the only artist to have shown his work at all eight Impressionist exhibitions, from 1874 to 1886. He was a pivotal figure for the Impressionists but also for four of the major Post-Impressionists: Georges Seurat, Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin.
Pissarro had seven children with Julie Vellay.
He had two daughters; Adèle and Jeanne. Sadly, Adèle died shortly after her birth and Jeanne died when she was only 9 years old.

Mme Pissarro sewing beside a Window; oil on canvas; 54 x 45 cm

This oil, painted in 1878 shortly after the death of Minette (Jeanne) shows Mme Pissarro sewing in front of a window in their home at Pontoise. She is absorbed in her task, calm and detached. On display in Gallery 65, Pissarro and the Impressionists.

Pissarro's five surviving children all painted. Lucien who settled in Engand, is the best known of his painter-sons.
In his early years, Camille Pissarro sold few of his paintings even though he began working at a time when the art market was booming and wealthy people were eager to invest in art. However, he also lived through turbulent political times. During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 Pissarro left France in September 1870 to live in London. When he returned to France in June 1871 he found that his house and many of his early paintings, had been destroyed by Prussian soldiers.
In older age Pissarro suffered from recurring eye infections that prevented him from working outdoors except in warm weather. So, he began painting outdoor scenes while sitting by the window of hotel rooms. He often chose rooms on upper levels to get a broader view.
Pissarro died in Eragny-sur-Epte on November 13, 1903 and was buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris.
The Ashmolean has one of the largest collections of Pissarro's drawings, prints and paintings thanks to gifts from his daughter-in-law, Esther and from other members of the Pissarro family.

Camille Pissarro (1830 - 1903) The Tuileries Gardens, Rainy Weather; oil on canvas; 65 x 92 cm. Signed and dated: C. Pissarro. 1899. This is one of sixteen canvases painted from the windows of the apartment Pissarro rented at 204 rue de Rivoli, Paris, from January 1899. The view looks over the Tuileries towards the Seine, with the spires of the church of Sainte Clothilde on the right. On display in Gallery 65, Pissarro and the Impressionists.

TAKE ONE...

Inspired by the National Gallery's Take One Picture programme

Ideas for creative planning across the KS1 & 2 curriculum

You can use this painting as the starting point for developing pupils' critical and creative thinking as well as their learning across the curriculum. You may want to consider possible 'lines of enquiry' as a first step in your cross-curricular planning. Choosing a line of enquiry area may help you to build strong links between curriculum areas.

After using strategies to encourage looking and engagement with the painting and by using questions to facilitate dialogue about the painting you can work with the children to develop lines of enquiry that will interest them.

Here are a few suggestions of possible 'lines of enquiry' using this painting:

- Farming
- Contrasting landscapes
- Land use
- France - including language
- Painting techniques
- The Impressionists

Using food as an example of a line of enquiry

Here are a few ideas of how you can develop a range of learning opportunities to engage pupils with this line of enquiry. Each activity can link with the others to build on pupils learning across the chosen theme.

France

Locate France on a globe and in an atlas. Then search for the location of the painting on a local map or online.

Draw your own simple plan of the scene in the painting. Draw plans of your school or another local building and compare

Use clues in the painting to figure out the season. What do you think the weather would be like?

Label as many items in the painting as possible in French. Learn songs and poems about the countryside in French. e.g. 'Dans la ferme a Mathurin?' *

Try out French recipes from the region sourcing ingredients close to where you live if possible.

Research changes in land use in this area. What food is still produced locally? Create a French Market in your classroom

Devise simple maps of the area and your local area including keys to identify physical and human geographical features

* Old MacDonald in French http://comptines.tv

Tips for introducing paintings to a class

• Reveal a painting section by section over a number of days. Each time a new detail is revealed the children can make predictions about what might be in the rest of the picture based on what they can see.

• Display a painting in the classroom for a number of days with a tape recorder or 'graffiti wall' for children to add comments or questions about the painting. Once the pupils' comments and questions have been gathered a class discussion can follow on.

• Introduce a painting to the whole class in a question and answer session designed to take the pupils into the paintings as outlined on page one.

• Show a painting to the class for a minute or so and then cover it up or take it away. Ask the children to remember what they could see.

• Show a painting to one or two willing volunteers. They should then describe what they have seen to the rest of the class. Pupils could draw what they have heard described to them and then see how well the versions match up.

• Play 'painting eye spy' using a painting.

"The training I received at the Ashmolean has really opened my eyes on how much learning can come from just one item. I'm really looking forward to applying what I've learned with my new class, developing their thinking and understanding in a cross-curricular and creative way. ."

Yr 3 ITE student, Oxford Brookes, after a recent TOP course.

This beautiful textile wall hanging inspired by Pissarro's 'View from my window' was created by children, staff and parents at the Oxfordshire Hospital School. A wide range of new skills were tried out including knitting, felt making and embroidery.

Take One…Inspires…

Take One…encourages teachers to use a painting or object imaginatively in the classroom, both as a stimulus for artwork, and for work in more unexpected curriculum areas. Work in many curriculum area can be inspired by using a single image as a starting point.

The challenge is for teachers to use the painting to develop culturally enriching, relelvant and practical learning opportunties across the curriculum.

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Please contact us or visit our website for more information about our programmes including training opportunities

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