

Grade Two
Session One
First Image



Edgar Degas (1834- 1917), "The Dance Class", 1874
Oil on canvas. 32 7/8 x 30 3/8 inches
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Project the image onto the SMARTboard and have the students take a few minutes to look at the image. Have the students create a short inventory (factual language) listing all the things they see in this composition. For example, standing man, the mirror, the seated women in the background, etc. Be sure to point to the items noted in the painting as there are many things to note in this work.

Next ask the students to discuss the relationship of the dancers in the work of art- some are standing, some are sitting, some are grouped together, some are all alone, some are working, some are resting. Ask the students why the artist might have captured all these different movements? Pretend there is a secret door and you could enter this picture- What sounds would you hear? What happened before this scene? What happened after this scene?

Tell the children this was painted by Edouard Degas. Degas was fascinated by ballerinas at work, rest, and play. He loved their repetition in movement and their changes in gesture. Discuss how artists often watch their subjects for hours and become acquainted with their subjects before they begin to paint. Degas attended the

trainings and the rehearsals at the Paris Opera House to learn more about his subjects before he attempted to paint his ballet scenes.

Degas painted after the advent of photography. How has he depicted the ballerinas? How has he captured a snapshot of this rehearsal? Invite the students to explore this further. (Hint: look at the figure with her hands near her mouth, those hiking up their tutus in the mirror). Like photographers, Degas tried to capture a moment in time. He also cropped his images and experimented with different perspective and angles.

NOTES FOR PARENTS/FACILITATORS ONLY

About The Artist

Degas was born in 1834, the scion of a wealthy banking family, and was educated in the classics, including Latin, Greek, and ancient history in Paris. His father recognized his son's artistic gifts early, and encouraged his efforts at drawing by taking him frequently to Paris museums. He began to paint scenes of such urban leisure activities as horse racing and, after about 1870, of café-concert singers and ballet dancers. (Excerpted from http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dgsp/hd_dgsp.htm)

In the 1860s he was introduced to Impressionism by Édouard Manet and gave up his academic aspirations, turning for his subject matter to the fast-moving city life of Paris, particularly the ballet, theatre, circus, racetrack, and cafés. Influenced by Japanese prints and the new medium of photography, he used displaced figure groupings and unfamiliar perspective to create figure groups seen informally and in movement, similar in effect to snapshots. His fascination with the ballet and the racetrack sprang from his interest in picturing people absorbed in the practiced movements of their occupations. (Excerpted from <http://www.rusart.ca/history/degas.html>)

About the Image

When this work and its variant in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, were painted in the mid-1870s, they constituted Degas's most ambitious figural compositions except for history paintings. Some twenty-four women, ballerinas and their mothers, wait while a dancer executes an "attitude" for her examination. Jules Perrot, one of the best-known dancers and ballet masters in Europe, conducts the class. The imaginary scene is set in a rehearsal room in the old Paris Opéra—a poster for Rossini's "Guillaume Tell" is on the wall beside the mirror—even though the building had just burned to the ground. The work was intended for the first Impressions Exhibition in Paris in 1874, but was not actually shown until two years later. (Source: SmartHistory)

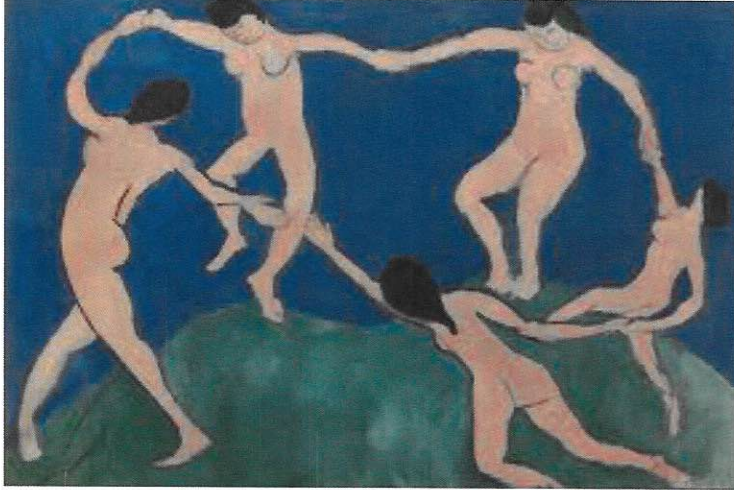
Degas regularly went to the Paris opera house, not only as a member of the audience, but as a visitor backstage and in the dance studio, where he introduced by a friend who played in the orchestra. From the 1870s until his death, Degas's favorite subjects were ballerinas at work, in rehearsal or at rest, and he tirelessly explored the theme with many variations in posture and gesture. More than the stage performance and the limelight, it was the training and rehearsals that interested him. Degas closely observed the most spontaneous, natural, ordinary gestures, the pauses when concentration is relaxed and the body slumps after the exhausting effort of practicing and the implacable rigor of the class. (Excerpted from http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search/commentaire/commentaire_id/the-ballet-class-3098.html)

Another informative interactive link for in class:

<http://www.metmuseum.org/metmedia/kids-zone/art-trek/the-dancers-and-degas>

Grade Two
Session One
Second Image

(NOTE: DO NOT SHARE IMAGE TITLE OR SOURCE YET)



Henri Matisse (1869 – 1954), Dance (I), 1909
Oil on canvas. 8 feet 6 ½ inches x 12 feet 9 ½ inches
Museum of Modern Art

Project the second dance image on the SMARTboard. Be prepared to get some giggles from the class from this image. If you do get a reaction from the class try not to react and just begin by asking the students to take a moment and to look at this work of art.

What do you see? What are these people doing? What type of music do you expect to be playing in this type of setting? What sounds do you hear?

Discuss the use of color (very few colors), visual flatness and lack of perspective in this composition. Ask the students: What can you tell me about the figures? Who can tell me why the artists might have made the figures in this manner or way? Hint: Matisse tried to eliminate perspective and figure foreshortening (the diminishing of certain dimensions of a figure in order to depict it in a correct spatial relationship) in order to make the figures in the same plane and more visible to the viewer. The dancers fill the dimensions of the canvas and are flat. The sky is a plane of blue.

You should now tell the students the name of the artist and the work. Matisse once said that dance meant life and rhythm. Have the students look at the type of lines the artist used to create this rhythm. Curved lines are associated with gracefulness and diagonal lines are associated with movement. Ask the students to point out examples of curved lines and then diagonal lines. How do the lines help tell a story about what is happening in this picture?

If there is time, have the students line up like the figures in the composition. Have them consider who is in the **foreground, middleground, and background** in both works of

art. Refer to the Elements of Art handout if you need help preparing for this discussion. The students may find this activity is difficult to do with the Matisse image due to the flat expanse of the one blue color and the limited green color.

NOTES FOR PARENTS/FACILITATORS ONLY

About the Artist

Henri Matisse was born on December 31, 1869, in Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France. He grew up in Bohain-en-Vermandois and studied law in Paris from 1887 to 1888. By 1891 he had abandoned law and started to paint. Like many avant-garde artists in Paris, Matisse was receptive to a broad range of influences. He was one of the first painters to take an interest in "primitive" art. Matisse abandoned the palette of the Impressionists and established his characteristic style, with its flat, brilliant color and fluid line. His subjects were primarily women, interiors, and still lifes.

From the early 1920s until 1939, Matisse divided his time primarily between the south of France and Paris. During this period, he worked on paintings, sculptures, lithographs, and etchings, as well as on murals, designs for tapestries, and set and costume designs for Léonide Massine's ballet *Rouge et noir*. While recuperating from two major operations in 1941 and 1942, Matisse concentrated on a technique he had devised earlier: *papiers découpés* (paper cutouts). *Jazz*, written and illustrated by Matisse, was published in 1947; the plates are stencil reproductions of paper cutouts.

Matisse continued to make large paper cutouts, the last of which was a design for the rose window at Union Church of Pocantico Hills, New York. He died on November 3, 1954, in Nice. (Excerpted from <http://www.guggenheim.org/newyork/collections/collection-online/artists/bios/919>)

About the Image

A monumental image of joy and energy, *Dance (I)* is also strikingly daring. Matisse made the painting while preparing a decorative commission for the Moscow collector Sergei Shchukin, whose final version of the scene, *Dance (II)*, was shown in Paris in 1910. Nearly identical in composition to this work, its simplifications of the human body were attacked as inept or willfully crude. Also noted was the work's radical visual flatness: the elimination of perspective and foreshortening that makes nearer and farther figures the same size, and the sky a plane of blue. This is true, as well, of the first version.

Here, the figure at the left moves purposefully; the strength of her body is emphasized by the sweeping unbroken contour from her rear foot up to her breast. The other dancers seem so light they nearly float. The woman at the far right is barely sketched in, her foot dissolving in runny paint as she reels backward. The arm of the dancer to her left literally stretches as it reaches toward the leader's hand, where momentum has broken the circle. The dancers' speed is barely contained by the edges of the canvas.

Dance (II) is more intense in color than this first version, and the dancers' bodies—there deep red—are more sinewy and energetic. In whatever canvas they appear, these are no ordinary dancers, but mythical creatures in a timeless landscape. Dance, Matisse once said, meant "life and rhythm."

When Matisse first painted this work, its early audiences weren't able to find the charm and grace at all. What they saw were five figures that did not seem to be capturing the essence of women but seemed almost to be more like paper dolls. One hundred years later, this painting and its companion called *Dance (II)* are very much seen as quintessential evocations of grace.

What matters to Matisse isn't some realistic description of what a ring of dancers would look like, but the way that this ring of dancers would fill the dimensions of this rectangular canvas, and thus you have things happening like the very long reach between the two dancers in the foreground at the far left and then at the bottom right, where you see their arms reaching and barely touching each other's and, in fact, the way in which the woman on the far left's right hand is painted, it almost looks like it's unfinished, but for Matisse, that was enough. Matisse painted it in a very quick amount of time, less than a week, and he did something that was so shocking, in a sense, in making a painting that's essentially a few colors.

Another radical thing is that the sky and the earth are not given any detail whatsoever. It's just a purely flat expanse of this one blue color and this one green color, painted in such a way that you realize that you're not in some kind of specific place that can be identified, but rather some kind of ideal place in the mind's eye. (excerpted from http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=79124)

2nd Grade – Session 1

Project: Movement activity

Brainstorm a list of activities that include motion (throwing a ball, dancing, skipping, karate, skateboarding, swimming, etc.). As you go through the list, have the children stand and pantomime doing that action. Say, “Freeze” and have them hold that action and look at others around the room to get ideas for their action sculptures.

Project: Foil sculptures in motion

Materials:

Aluminum foil (1-12 x 12” squares, 1-6 x 12” rectangle per student), 9x12” black construction paper for mounting (1 per student);

Hot glue gun and glue sticks, Scissors

Advance Preparation:

Pre cut foil. Each student should receive one 12 x 12” sheet of foil cut into 3-4x12” strips (these will form the body—you can cut foil on the paper cutter!) One 6 x 12” piece of foil (used for embellishment).

1. Squish the 4 x 12” strips into long “wires.” Try to keep them as long as possible—just compressing the width of the strip and not the length.
2. Take 2 of the wires, and fold one in half over the other. Twist below the horizontal wire. These pieces will form the legs and the torso and head.
3. Bend the horizontal wire up and twist at the fold just above the “legs.” You now should have the legs and the bottom of the torso. Place the 3rd wire horizontally on top of the sculpture just above the torso twist, and wrap it around the body bringing the arms back around to the front.
4. Twist the torso wire once just above the arms to form a neck. There should be just enough left of the torso to form a small circle for the head.
5. Pose the sculpture in an action pose. This does not have to be a dancer—it can be any action they choose. The only limitation is that it will need to have one side that can be glued down.
6. Use the remaining foil to embellish the figure. You may use the foil for something such as clothing or hair on the figure, or as a prop (such as a skateboard, ballet bar, etc.) that goes with your figure's action.
7. Glue the figure onto the construction paper; if there is time, children can decorate a background around the figure.

Grade Two
Session Two
First Image

(NOTE: DO NOT SHARE IMAGE TITLE OR SOURCE YET)



Marc Chagall (1887 – 1985), The Green Violinist. 1923-24
Oil on canvas. 78 x 42 ¾ inches
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Before you show any images, tell the children today you will be looking at works of art that related to music. Ask them to consider the sounds they might hear as they look at these different works of art. Project the image on the SMARTboard and ask the students to think about what they see.

Discuss the choices artists make in terms of what to depict and in choosing subject matter. The images shown in this work of art relate to the artist's early childhood memories of seeing these people and things in his village. (Note: the artist is celebrating his heritage and community. An integral part of his childhood was seeing the violinist dancing in his rustic village- the fiddler was a vital presence in religious ceremonies and festivals.)

Ask the students what they see in the composition (the violin, the rustic village, type of houses and figures, ladder, etc.). Do the things they notice seem realistic? After the students discuss this, tell them this artist was interested in blending the real and the unreal as a means of taking him back to celebrate an early time and place.

Tell the students this work was painted by Marc Chagall. Before you tell them the title, you may want to ask the students to suggest a name for this work of art. Once you have exhausted this discussion, you can tell them the name.

Next, you can tell the students Chagall traveled quiet a bit, and often longed for his homeland and his past childhood experiences and memories as a Jew in Eastern Europe. This painting evoked his homeland in Vitebsk, Byelorussia.

The students may comment on observations that seem unreal and may even call the fiddler an alien! This would be a good time to explain the difference between realism and abstraction.

- **Realism** is the representation of things as they appear in reality. They seem real.
- **Abstraction** does not highlight recognizable aspects of nature and things made by people. It transforms a visible form, idea or emotion into something other than its original version.

What parts of this image are more realistic? What parts of this image are more abstract? Why? Remind them that there are no wrong or right answers here. Have them provide examples from the composition to support their interpretation. Remember, "Chagall mixes the real with the ideal, the imaginary with the nostalgic."

Have the students think about a special time and place in their lives a week, a month or a year ago. What was that experience? What was happening? Who were they with? What were they doing? Did it involve music? Is there a song that reminds them of a special time with their family? If they had to draw a picture of that experience, what would they include to help tell the story and share the memory? If there is time, have them draw this picture. While they are drawing or getting ready to draw, you can play this clip of [Hasidic fiddler Daniel Ahavie!](#)

NOTES FOR PARENTS/FACILITATORS ONLY

About the Artist

Marc Chagall was born in Vitebsk, Byelorussia to a poor Hassidic family. With his mother's support, and despite his father's disapproval, Chagall pursued his interest in art, going to St. Petersburg in 1907 to study art. Influenced by contemporary Russian painting, Chagall's distinctive, child-like style, often centering on images from his childhood, began to emerge.

From 1910 to 1914, Chagall lived in Paris, and there absorbed the works of the leading cubist, surrealist, and fauvist painters. It was during this period that Chagall painted some of his most famous paintings of the Jewish shtetl or village, and developed the features that became recognizable trademarks of his art. Strong and often bright colors portray the world with a dreamlike, non-realistic simplicity, and the fusion of fantasy, religion, and nostalgia infuses his work with a joyous quality. Animals, workmen, lovers, and musicians populate his figures; the "fiddler on the roof" recurs frequently, often hovering within another scene. Chagall's work of this period displays the influence of contemporary French painting, but his style remains independent of any one school of art. He exhibited regularly in the Salon des Independants.

During World War I, Chagall resided in Russia, and in 1917, endorsing the revolution, he was appointed Commissar for Fine Arts in Vitebsk and then director of the newly established Free Academy of Art. The Bolshevik authorities, however, frowned upon Chagall's style of art as too modern, and in 1922, Chagall left Russia, settling in France one year later. He lived there permanently except for the years 1941—1948 when, fleeing France during World War II, he resided in the United States. Chagall's horror over the Nazi rise to power is expressed in works depicting Jewish martyrs and Jewish refugees.

In addition to images of the Hassidic world, Chagall's paintings are inspired by themes from the Bible. His fascination with the Bible culminated in a series of over 100 etchings illustrating the Bible, many of which incorporate elements from Jewish folklore and from religious life in Vitebsk.

Chagall painted with a variety of media, such as oils, watercolors, and gouaches. His work also expanded to other forms of art, including ceramics, mosaics, and stained glass. Among his most famous building decorations are the ceiling of the Opera House in Paris, murals at the New York Metropolitan Opera, a glass window at the United Nations, and decorations at the Vatican. Chagall died in 1985 in France at age 97. (excerpted from <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/chagall.html>)

About the Image

In *Green Violinist* Chagall evoked his homeland. The artist's nostalgia for his own work was another impetus in creating this painting, which is based on earlier versions of the same subject. His cultural and religious legacy is illuminated by the figure of the violinist dancing in a rustic village. The Chabad Hasidim of Chagall's childhood believed it possible to achieve communion with God through music and dance, and the fiddler was a vital presence in ceremonies and festivals.

(Excerpted from <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artwork/802>)

Chagall abandoned only on few occasions his personal iconographic universe, full of childhood memories: the clock on the wall of his home, his uncle's violin, the landscape of his natal village, the peasant scenes, the celebrations of the Jewish community and constant references to his loved ones and especially to Bella Rosenfeld, the Jewish girl of Vitebsk, whom he would marry in 1915. The great bulk of his works recall these familiar landscapes and persons. In all of his works, Chagall mixes the real with the ideal, the imaginary with the nostalgic. This is why in his early paintings, he shows what he actually was, and merging Russian, Jewish characteristics with what he has come to know of France and with his own feelings and thoughts.

(Excerpted from <http://niramartisrael.defesesfinearts.com/2012/05/chagall-a-lover-of-love/>)

Grade Two
Session Two
Second Image

(NOTE: DO NOT SHARE IMAGE TITLE OR SOURCE YET)



Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859 – 1937), “The Banjo Lesson”, 1893

Oil on canvas. 49 x 35 inches.

Collection of Hampton University Museum, Hampton, Virginia

Project the image onto the SMARTboard. Ask the students to take a couple of moments to look closely at the image but not to say anything, just look closely and carefully.

After a few minutes ask them:

What do you see in this image? What do you notice? What is going on in this picture?

First ask them for observations and not to make interpretations. Make sure they support their comments with specific details from the composition.

Pause between questions and give the students time to answer and provide supporting details. Sample questions include: Who are these people? What are they doing? The

artist painted this image with a tight emotional connection between the young boy and the older man. . Ask the students what they think might have happened just before this scene or after this scene? Hint: notice the remains of a meal just eaten on the table and in the background.

“The two figures form a tight compositional and emotional unit, thoroughly absorbed in their world” (excerpted from “About the painting” below). Discuss with the students how artists make choices about how they group figures in a composition and these groupings of figures all help tell a greater story about the people depicted

Share the title of the work and the name of the artist. The Banjo Lesson was inspired by Paul Lawrence Dunbar’s poem “A Banjo Song.” As a group, discuss the idea that people, places, things, and events inspire artists all the time. Play the recording of what a banjo sounds like. – [Sleepy Man Banjo Boys](#) or maybe more familiar (banjo plus orchestra), [The Rainbow Connection](#).

NOTES FOR PARENTS/FACILITATORS ONLY

About the Artist

One of the first African-American artists to achieve a reputation both in America and Europe, Henry Ossawa Tanner worked in the Naturalist and genre traditions of American art. Though his work grew increasingly mainstream and allegorical, his early depictions of humble folk about their daily lives are regarded as classic statements of African-American pride and dignity.

The son of an African Methodist Episcopal minister, Benjamin Tucker Tanner, and his wife Sarah, who had escaped on the Underground Railroad as a child, Henry Tanner's parents gave their son his middle name in honor of the Kansas town where the white militant Abolitionist John Brown had first launched his anti-slavery campaign. Tanner was raised primarily in Philadelphia and began to paint when he was thirteen. From 1879-1885 he studied with the dean of the American Naturalist school, Thomas Eakins before setting up his own Philadelphia studio. With patronage, Tanner traveled to Europe in 1891, settling in Paris, which would become his primary residence for the remainder of his life.

Not only did Tanner enjoy the relative freedom from prejudice he experienced in Paris, but he also found it refreshing to be judged solely on his artistic merits without any of the baggage associated with race and color. Before long the principal French salons and galleries accepted his work, where he continued to exhibit for the rest of his career. European acclaim brought with it recognition in America, too. In 1899 Booker T. Washington visited Tanner in Paris and published an article which helped to establish Tanner's artistic reputation in America--a reputation that continued to grow through his numerous exhibitions in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Chicago, Washington, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and other major art centers. By 1925 THE CRISIS, the historic African-American journal, featured Tanner on its cover along with W.E.B. Du Bois, Frederick Douglass, Samuel Taylor-Coleridge as models of African-American creative geniuses.

After graduating from the imitative style of his pre-Parisian works, Tanner found his idiom first in landscape and genre works notable not only for their compositional clarity and atmospheric effects, but also for the narrative sympathy he was able to engender. The most famous of these are THE BANJO LESSON (inspired by Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem, A BANJO SONG) and THE THANKFUL POOR, which stand alongside William Sidney Mount's paintings in the 19th century for the nobility and simplicity of portraiture of African-Americans. In them Tanner was able to encase deeply personal and poignant themes in the visual language of the great masters. In his later work Tanner, influenced by his travels to Tangiers and the Holy Land, focused on Biblical subjects using a subtle palette and lyrical luminism to portray psychologically modern interpretations of archetypal themes.

The very color-blindness Tanner aspired to in the judgement of his own work, he applied as a credo to his later opus. His protagonists-- black, white, Arab, Jewish-- and his Christian themes are compelling in their universal humanity.

(Excerpted from <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ihas/icon/tanner.html>)

About the Image

In 1893, Tanner painted this work while in Philadelphia, to which he had returned from Paris to recover from typhoid fever. *The Banjo Lesson* was one of two genre paintings Tanner produced at a time in which poor southern (African Americans), still scarred by slavery, are presented with unsentimental dignity. The reserve of Tanner's subjects departs from the traditional image of the gregarious (African American) performer. *The Banjo Lesson* was painted three years before the Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), during a period when whites were committing lynchings and other crimes of intimidation to reestablish racial separation in the South.

In this quiet scene a young boy is cradled in the arms of an older man who holds up the neck of the banjo—an instrument too large for the boy to support. The boy tentatively strums the banjo with his awkwardly cocked right hand, while his left hand struggles with fingering. The two figures form a tight compositional and emotional unit, thoroughly absorbed in their world. They are situated in a simple, scrubbed domestic interior, the remains of a meal just eaten visible on the table in the background. An internal radiance sets off the massive dark brow and head of the man and illuminates the face of the young boy, a study in concentration. Knees spread wide, the man frames the boy in a metaphor of protection, tradition, and the bond furnished by music as it is passed from generation to generation. Tanner may have drawn this subject on travels to North Carolina before returning to Paris. As the art historian Judith Wilson has pointed out, Tanner transforms the conventional view of blacks as innately musical by emphasizing the role of teaching the transmission of black cultural forms. The young boy's face is illuminated from the left, in a traditional metaphor of enlightenment. In their embrace of vernacular subjects, these works by Tanner look forward to twentieth-century African American artists who explored the place of tradition in African American cultural identity.

(Angela L. Miller, et al., *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity* (2008)

2nd Grade – Session 2

Project: Listening activity

Play clips of Hassidic fiddlers and the Banjo Boys so the children have the opportunity to hear what both instruments sound like (use clips available on YouTube via the smartboard)

Project: Drawing inspiration from music to create art

Discuss artists being inspired by how music makes you feel and creating artwork from that experience. Play YouTube version of Kermit the Frog singing “The Rainbow Connection,” which features a banjo. Ask the children to create a drawing based on their inspiration from the song.

Grade Two
Session Three
First Image

(NOTE: DO NOT SHARE IMAGE TITLE OR SOURCE YET)



NORMAN ROCKWELL (1894 – 1978)

“The Thanksgiving” or “Freedom from Want” from The Four Freedoms
1943

Oil on canvas

45 ¾ x 35 ½ inches

Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, MA

Before you show any images, brainstorm the meaning of the term **tradition** with the students. Ask the students: What are some special traditions in their families? Why are

these traditions special? Tell them that all the works of art that they are going to look at today explore different traditions.

Put the image on the SMARTboard and ask the students to take a few moments and to think about what they see. What is happening in this work of art? What are the people doing? What tradition has the artist chose to depict? What are the sounds? What are the smells you can imagine in this scene? Why would an artist want to paint a picture of this tradition?

At this point share the artist and title of the work of art with the students.

When creating a work of art, artists are inspired by historical events, people, places and ideas. Norman Rockwell wanted to help the war effort and was inspired by a speech on freedom by then-President President Franklin D. He painted four paintings to help people better understand the four basic freedoms (freedom of speech, freedom to worship, freedom from war, freedom from want, freedom from fear) the president thought everyone in the world should have. Have the students consider: What they think about the title of the work of art- The Thanksgiving or Freedom from Want? What does the word want mean? What is the difference between the words want and need?

Rockwell used many family and friends in this painting. The woman serving was Rockwell's family cook. Rockwell and his wife Mary are also included in the composition. Have the students try to locate Mary and Rockwell based on this photograph.



Discuss the following with the students: cropping of figures, the perspective (leads eyes

to standing figures/turkey) and use of cool colors in the composition.

What do you think Rockwell meant by the following, “ This was one of the few times I’ve ever eaten the model.” The turkey depicted in this work of art was actually the Rockwell family’s Thanksgiving turkey.

In forty-seven years three hundred and twenty one of Rockwell’s paintings appeared on the cover of a magazine called the The Saturday Evening Post. *The Thanksgiving* appeared on the cover of this magazine in 1943. Tell the students that they can design their own cover for The Saturday Evening Post celebrating a special tradition in their lives.

About the artist:

Born in New York City in 1894, Norman Rockwell always wanted to be an artist. At age 14, Rockwell enrolled in art classes at The New York School of Art (formerly The Chase School of Art). Two years later, in 1910, he left high school to study art at The National Academy of Design. He soon transferred to The Art Students League.

Rockwell found success early. He painted his first commission of four Christmas cards before his sixteenth birthday. While still in his teens, he was hired as art director of *Boys’ Life*, the official publication of the Boy Scouts of America, and began a successful freelance career illustrating a variety of young people’s publications.

At age 21, Rockwell’s family moved to New Rochelle, New York. There, Rockwell set up a studio and produced work for such magazines as *Life*, *Literary Digest*, and *Country Gentleman*. In 1916, the 22-year-old Rockwell painted his first cover for *The Saturday Evening Post*, the magazine considered by Rockwell to be the “greatest show window in America.” Over the next 47 years, another 321 Rockwell covers would appear on the cover of the *Post*, many of them reflecting small-town American life.

In 1973, Rockwell established a trust to preserve his artistic legacy by placing his works in the custodianship of the Old Corner House Stockbridge Historical Society, later to become Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge. The trust now forms the core of the Museum’s permanent collections. In 1976, in failing health, Rockwell became concerned about the future of his studio. He arranged to have his studio and its contents added to the trust. In 1977, Rockwell received the nation’s highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2008, Rockwell was named the official state artist of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, thanks to a dedicated effort from students in Berkshire County, where Rockwell lived for the last 25 years of his life. (Excerpted from <http://www.nrm.org/about-2/about-norman-rockwell/>)

About the image:

In 1943, inspired by President Franklin Roosevelt's address to Congress, Rockwell created the *Four Freedoms* paintings. They were reproduced in four consecutive issues of *The Saturday Evening Post* and were accompanied by essays by contemporary writers. Rockwell's interpretations of *Freedom of Speech*, *Freedom to Worship*, *Freedom from Want*, and *Freedom from Fear* were derived from the perspective of his own hometown experiences using everyday, simple scenes. As such, they proved to be enormously popular. The works toured sixteen cities in the United States in an exhibition that was jointly sponsored by the *Post* and the U.S. Treasury Department and, through the sale of war bonds, raised more than \$130 million for the war effort.

The Four Freedoms are now part of the permanent collection of Norman Rockwell Museum and reside in their own specially designed gallery space, inviting visitors to reflect on their inspiring message. (Excerpted from <http://www.nrm.org/2013/08/norman-rockwells-four-freedoms/>)

Grade Two
Session Three
Second Image

(NOTE: DO NOT SHARE IMAGE TITLE OR SOURCE YET)



PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER (ca. 1525/30–1569)

Peasant Wedding

1567

Oil on panel
49 x 65 inches

Collection: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria

Tell the students that this is an example of another work of art that explores the theme of tradition but very differently compared to the Rockwell image. Put the image on the SMARTboard and ask the students to take a few moments and to think about what they see. Keep the tradition discussion notes up with you and remind the children to refer to the list if that helps them generate observations. What is happening in this work of art? What are the characters doing? What are the sounds and smells they can imagine in this scene? Create an inventory list of all the things the students see in the composition. Once they have described the image in great detail, summarize their observations.

Share that this type of painting is called a **genre** (everyday life) scene. The artist has chosen to tell a story about the life of a group of people and a special tradition. Have the students explore the following: The simple clothing the figures are wearing. Who wears this simple type of clothing? People who work off the land. The peasants have gathered here to celebrate a wedding. Who is the bride in this painting? The bride is sitting in front of the old blanket hanging on the wall. How has the artist depicted the bride? Relaxed, calm, excited, happy or sad? (Note: We see the bride's full face and she seems to be one of the only few figure in the composition not eating.) The artist has not made it as easy to tell who the groom is in this composition. Who is the groom? Why do you think that is him? Is it the man in black? Is it the young man taking dishes from the door? It seem as if the artist is more interested in the people eating than the spiritual joining of the bride and groom in marriage.

Share the artist and title. This work of art was painted by an artist named Pieter Bruegel, the Elder and it is called *Peasant Wedding*. Bruegel painted so many everyday people that he got the nickname Peasant Bruegel.

Have the students consider the following: Describe the setting (the area) where this scene takes place. What details has the artist included to help tell a story about these people, their class level and wealth, etc.? Notice the old blanket on the wall, the used wooden tables and chairs, and the old door serving as a banqueting tray. The scene takes place in a barn in the springtime. The two ears of corn on the wall and the rake are reminders of the hard life to which peasants are born. The bread, porridge and soup are also an indication of the class level of these individuals. Two pipers are playing the pijpzak. How might the setting or scene be different if people other than peasants were getting married?

Explore the use of color in the work. What colors do you see repeated in this work of art? Why do you think the artist used these colors so often? Bruegel repeated the green and red as a means of moving our eyes around the composition. Describe the colors. Are they warm or cool?

Keeping the image on the SMARTboard, have the students draw a portrait of the bride and one of the groom using the provided crayons and paper.

About the Artist:

Pieter Bruegel the Elder was the most accomplished and famous Flemish artist of the Northern Renaissance that took place during the 16th and 17th centuries in Northern Europe (particularly in Flanders and Belgium). It is believed that he was born in or near Breda around 1525. He is known as "the Elder" to distinguish him apart from his son Pieter, who also becomes a painter. Bruegel the Elder is known for his highly detailed genre paintings of common peasants and their daily lives, tribulations, and celebrations. This interest earned him the name "Peasant Bruegel" as he was believed to have dressed as a peasant so that he could interact directly with them thus providing him with information and insight for his paintings. He settled in Antwerp as a young man but also traveled to Italy and France. In 1551 he was accepted as a master in the Painter's Guild in Antwerp. Shortly after he travelled again to Italy, returning to live in Antwerp for another decade. He then moved to Brussels where he died September 9, 1569.

About the Image:

Among the greatest genre paintings of the Northern Renaissance, and the most famous of all Flemish illustrations of peasant life, the work exemplifies the artist's late-style, with its use of monumental Italianate figures. It was pictures of this type which gave rise to his nickname 'Peasant' Bruegel, although research makes clear that he was an active member in humanist intelligentsia circles in Antwerp, which was an important center for Northern Renaissance artists in Flanders. While some of its content remains obscure, like nearly all Bruegel's paintings, *The Peasant Wedding* contains numerous symbolic references as well as a clear moralistic undertone.

The wedding banquet is shown taking place in a barn in springtime. The furnishings are a parody of a rich landowner's hall. In place of a finely woven tapestry, an old blanket hangs from the wall behind the bride. The wooden tables and chairs are roughly fashioned, while an old door has been taken off its hinges to serve as a banqueting tray. The main foods on offer appear to be bread, porridge and soup. Two ears of corn on the wall, together with a rake, are conspicuous reminders of the hard grind to which peasants are born. On the left, two pipers are playing the pijpzak, while on the right the most distinguished-looking guest is sitting on an upturned tub.

According to Karel van Mander's *Lives of the Netherlandish Painters* (Het Schilderboek, 1604), Bruegel would often mingle with the crowd at a rural fair or village wedding, making drawings of the people and their way of life, which he would later use in his landscape painting and religious art, as well as his genre works. And indeed, this picture has traditionally been regarded as a straightforward portrayal of peasant life. However, Bruegel injects the scene with an unmistakable moral judgment - highlighting the fact that the marriage celebration has deteriorated into gluttony and self-indulgence.

The painting is dominated by the consumption of food and drink. Almost every guest - with the exception of the bride, her parents and their two special guests - seems to be focused on eating: even one of the two musicians stares in anticipation in the direction of the food servers. Certainly no one appears to be interested in the *spiritual* nature of the occasion - a point which is perhaps being made by the Franciscan monk to the distinguished gentleman on the far right: or is he merely recounting the wearisome details of previous weddings he has attended, to a patient local landowner? In the left foreground, a man is refilling a seemingly endless number of wine jugs - a motif often seen in representations of the *Wedding at Cana* - and a child is shown sucking its finger, a traditional symbol of hunger. The latter may have been a veiled reference to a famine which had occurred recently in Flanders.

Debate continues about the identity and whereabouts of the bridegroom. One candidate is the man in the foreground, neatly dressed in black, calling for more wine. This would fit if the bride were marrying a townsman, a theory that would also explain the presence of a few smart urban guests. Alternatively, taking into account the fact that traditionally the groom was expected to serve the bride and her family, it might be the modest young man who takes dishes from the door carried by the two burly servants.

2nd Grade – Session 3

Project: Make your own “Saturday Evening Post” cover

Materials:

Blank Saturday Evening Post covers (see following page to print and copy) – enough for each child in the class plus a few extras

Colored pencils, markers, crayons

Directions:

Ask the students to design their own cover for the “Saturday Evening Post” depicting a special tradition in their own lives.

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST



Grade Two
Session Four
First Image

(NOTE: DO NOT SHARE IMAGE TITLE OR SOURCE YET)



DIEGO RIVERA (1886-1957)

Flower Festival – Feast of Santa Anita

1931

Encaustic on canvas

78 1/2 inches x 64 inches

Collection: Museum of Modern Art, New York

Before you show any images, discuss the meaning of the term tradition with the students. At this point they should be clearly able to define the term and provide examples. Put the image on the SMARTboard and ask the students to take a few moments and to think about what they see. What is happening in this work of art? What are the characters doing? What are smells in this particular scene?

As a group, discuss how artists often like to depict special events or tell stories about

their heritage or community. This artist had a great deal of pride for his homeland and the traditions that occurred there. He wanted his art to serve the people of his country.

Ask the students: What do they see in the composition (three peasants kneel before a bearer of white calla lilies, along with women carrying bundles of red flowers)? Who are these people? What do you think they are doing? Why?

The artist, Diego Rivera had a strong sense of nationalism for his homeland Mexico. Discuss with the students what the word nationalism means (patriotic feelings). He was inspired by the colors, shapes, and forms that he saw in his beloved Mexico. Everywhere he looked from the markets to the festivals to the workers in the fields he saw something he could record. This work of art depicts a flower festival held on Good Friday in a town then called Santa Anita.

Have the students consider the following: What is happening with the colors and the figures in this composition? The flowers and the figures are bold and take up the entire canvas. How does this make you feel? There is a sense of unity and endless bounty due to the fact that the figures and flowers take up the entire space of the canvas.

About the artist:

Diego Rivera was born in 1886 in Guanajuato, Mexico. When he was ten years old, he enrolled in the Academia de San Carlos in Mexico City, where the artists Jose Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros also studied. In 1907 he earned a scholarship to attend the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, in Madrid, Spain, and moved to Paris a year later, where he exhibited and worked in the milieu of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. During this time Rivera, Orozco and Siqueiros and other Mexican artists became committed to the development of a new art for their nation, which involved the revitalization of the mural informed by Mexican indigenous art practices and contemporary events. To this end, they founded the Sindicato Revolucionario de Obreros, Tecnicos y Plasticos (Union of Revolutionary Painters, Sculptors and Graphic Artists), launching the great age of Mexican mural painting. In 1929, Rivera married the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Rivera joined the Mexican Communist Party in 1922, but was temporarily expelled for sympathizing with exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, who lived in his and Kahlo's home for a couple of years in the late 1930's. During the 1920's, Rivera had received numerous commissions from Mexico, the United States and even the Soviet Union for his highly sought-after murals. However, his strong political beliefs often permeated his work beyond his patrons' tolerance, as was the case, for example, with his Rockefeller Center murals, which were ultimately destroyed because of their Communist references. Rivera died in 1957 in Mexico City. (Excerpted from http://www.moma.org/pdfs/moma_learning/docs/LAA_Full.pdf)

About the Image:

Rivera spent the tumultuous years of the Mexican Revolution (1910–20) painting and traveling abroad in Europe. Upon returning to his native country in 1921, he exalted indigenous Mexican people and traditions, making them a central subject of his work. As he later recalled, "My homecoming aroused an aesthetic rejoicing in me which is impossible to describe Everywhere I saw a potential masterpiece—in the crowds, the markets, the festivals, the marching battalions, the workers in the workshops, the fields—in every shining face, every radiant child." This painting, depicting a flower festival held on Good Friday in a town then called Santa Anita, was included in a solo exhibition of Rivera's work at MoMA in 1931. Only the second artist (after Henri Matisse) to receive this honor, Rivera was, at the time, an international celebrity: the *New York Sun* hailed him as "the most talked about artist on this side of the Atlantic." (Excerpted from http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=78492)

In "Flower Festival: Feast of Santa Anita", three peasants kneel before a bearer of white calla lilies accompanied by women carrying bundles of red flowers. The peasants and flowers fill the canvas with their bold color, suggesting a sense of endless bounty. Rivera took inspiration from the Catholic feast day traditions on the Santa Anita Canal, as well as the popular use of calla lilies in funerals. The stylized facial features of the bronze figures reflect Rivera's fascination with Pre-Columbian sculpture, of which he was an avid collector. (Excerpted from http://www.moma.org/pdfs/moma_learning/docs/LAA_Full.pdf)

Grade Two
Session Four
Second Image

(NOTE: DO NOT SHARE IMAGE TITLE OR SOURCE YET)



JOHN BIGGERS (1924-2001)

Jubilee: Ghana Harvest Festival
1959-63

Tempera and acrylic on canvas
38 3/8 x 98 inches

Collection: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Put the image on the SMARTboard and ask the students to take a few moments and to think about what they see. Have the students create a short inventory (factual language) listing all the things they see in the composition. What is happening in this work of art? What are the characters doing? What are the sounds in this particular scene? What are they doing? Where are they going?

Have the students look closely at the different groups of figures. Look at the arms and legs of the figures. What kinds of movements are they making? What are the expressions on their faces? What is the artist trying to show?

What happens to the figures in the **foreground**, **middleground**, and **background** of this composition? (See Elements of Arts cards for help with these terms). The figures in the foreground are larger and direct the viewer into the composition. Which direction are the figures moving? What does the earth colored road do to the composition? It helps join the figures.

At this point share the title- John Biggers, Ghana Harvest Festival

Tell the students that this work of art depicts a durbar (harvest festival in Ghana, West Africa in which women's societies dance as groups.) The women are gathering

together and dancing to celebrate the passage of the seasons and the harvest. "The cyclical passage of the seasons is echoed in the swaying rhythms of the singing and dancing women."

Discuss with the students how artists often study and look back at their heritage when creating works of art. It is also important for an artist to experience his subject matter firsthand. The artist John Biggers grew up in North Carolina but traveled to Ghana region of West Africa to visit his culture and learn about his heritage. As a child his father would tell creative stories based on African folklore. He always dreamed of traveling to Africa. Biggers worked on location in Africa making several drawings. He observed people doing daily activities such as fishing, drumming, dancing, and preparing food. This work of art is a mural (large picture painted directly on a wall) was based on his drawings from his Africa trip.

Have the students look at the repetition of forms in this composition and the use of pattern and texture. What colors has the artist repeated? Why? How do these colors help create the swaying rhythms of the moving women?

If time allows, ask the students to write a couple of sentences about a tradition that has meaning to them. While the students write, you can play the link to African Music. It could be a national tradition, a religious tradition or even a family tradition. Ask the students to share their traditions with the class.

Be sure to spend a couple of moments at the end of the session to bring your experience of working with the students this year full circle. Thank them for being such great art detectives and for looking critically at all the different works of art throughout the course of the year. Remind them that by exploring different works of art, they can learn about other people, places, and ideas.

About the artist:

Dr. John Biggers was an African-American painter, printmaker and sculptor known for his meticulous depictions of African-American life. He was born into a poor family in North Carolina in 1924, the youngest of seven children. studied in Virginia at Hampton University and Pennsylvania, at Penn State University where he received a doctorate in art education. In 1949 Biggers moved to Houston, Texas to establish a fine arts department at Texas State University for Negroes, now Texas Southern University. In 1957, Biggers received a fellowship from UNESCO, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, to study traditional cultures in West Africa.

Mr. Biggers's art, often in the form of public murals, was grounded in the humanistic spirit and social realist narrative style of the 1930's and 40's. Over the years it grew increasingly emblematic, with figures and architectural forms arranged in intricate patterns that suggested quilts, African textiles and modernist geometric abstraction. After his trip to Africa (he was one of the first African-American artists to visit Africa), African design motifs and scenes of African life became important parts of his work. (excerpted from <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/30/arts/john-biggers-76-painter-who-explored-african-life.html>)

John Biggers has said of his work:

The role of art is to express the triumph of the human spirit over the mundane and the material...My motivation is to portray the very rare and unseen spirituality of the Afro-American that is universal for all mankind. (excerpted from <http://prv.mfah.org/twa/main.asp?target=lessonplan&iid=26&par1=1>)

About the Image:

This painting depicts a festival, or *durbar*, held annually in Ghana to celebrate the passage of the seasons and the harvest. The cyclical passage of the seasons is echoed in the swaying rhythms of the singing and dancing women. It is based on a series of drawings John Biggers made while in the Ghana region of West Africa in 1957.

During the 1940s, Biggers forged a new painting style that was rooted both in the Mexican mural movement and in the 1930s murals commissioned by the U.S. government as part of the Federal Arts Project. Biggers arrived in Houston in 1949 to head the art department at the newly opened Texas Southern University. Embracing mural painting as a means of expressing his heritage, he became the region's most eloquent chronicler of the changing identity of African Americans. In 1957 Biggers was a pioneer in traveling to Africa to learn more about his cultural roots. Out of his experiences he developed a unique synthesis of African, European, and American art that influenced numerous younger artists. (Excerpted from <http://www.mfah.org/art/detail/jubilee-ghana-harvest-festival/>)

2nd Grade – Session 4

Project: Community Traditions Activity

Materials

Create a blank tradition sheet (list one tradition per sheet and distribute one sheet per table) – you may create the sheets at home using the ideas listed below or come up with your own.

Mural-size/extra large sheets of paper, one per table (this is available on the paper rolls outside of the art room; please tear off the color and size you need). One large sheet per table is necessary. Be sure to not cut the paper too large or else it won't fit on the table.

Crayons, markers, craypas, watercolors, tempera (volunteers can use their discretion as to the type of media used)

Directions:

Give the students a few minutes to brainstorm their own creative tradition together as a table using the fill-in-the-blank sentence as inspiration. Next, ask them to work together to illustrate their creative. If there is time, have the students share their traditions with the class.

Examples of traditions ideas for each table:

You are best friends that love to _____ each year.

You are members of an elite sports team and every year you meet and _____.

You are all first place winners in the biggest art show on Earth. Each year you get together and _____.

You all love dogs and own your own dogs. Every month you meet together to _____.

You all love adventures and your favorite thing is to travel to exciting places. Each summer you meet and _____.

***Please note that the activities listed here are slightly modified from those described in the paragraphs of the discussion materials*