



Mary Cassatt

Picture Study

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Children on the Shore

Mary Cassatt, 1884



The Boating Party
Mary Cassatt, 1893-94



Nurse Reading to a Little Girl

Mary Cassatt, 1895



Young Mother Sewing

Mary Cassatt, 1900



Breakfast In Bed

Mary Cassatt, 1897



Summertime

Mary Cassatt, 1894



Mary Cassatt

ARTIST BIO NOTES

The American painter Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) was born to well-to-do parents in western Pennsylvania. As with most wealthy young ladies of her era, her education included travel abroad. She spent five years in Europe and gained much exposure to the fine arts in the capital cities there. At age 15, despite her parents' reservations about Mary making art her career, she entered the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. She was very frustrated there by the limitations placed on female artists, and she eventually withdrew from the Academy and moved to Paris, again over her father's objections. When he reluctantly gave his consent, Mary and her mother settled in Paris in 1866, where she began private art lessons. She spent much time at the Louvre, copying famous paintings and selling them to finance her studies. When the Franco-Prussian War began in 1870, she returned home. Her father, still resistant to her chosen profession, paid her living expenses, but would not finance her art supplies. During her short stay in America, she went to Chicago seeking work, and there she lost several of her works in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Receiving a commission from the Archbishop of Pittsburgh to make copies of two paintings by Corregio in Italy, she returned to Europe in the fall of 1871. Finally settling in Paris in 1877, Mary Cassatt became close friends with Edgar Degas, and was heavily influenced by the Impressionists. Mary Cassatt's signature style included a strong emphasis on the mother and child relationship.

ARTIST BIO NOTES

These notes are provided to aid the teacher's own background research on the artist and his or her works. This is not meant to be presented to students as a list of facts and dates. When you first introduce the artist, tell students where the artist fits into the timeline of history, and where the artist lived and worked. Add a few more details with each new picture, but the information you share should be short and simple unless your students ask questions or wish to know more. Keep the main focus of your Picture Study time on observation and narration of the details of the picture.

Note: if a footnote appears with a fact that is not a direct quote, the fact comes from ONE source only.

LIFE AND CHARACTER

- ◆ 1844, born to wealthy parents near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- ◆ For five years during the 1850s, she lived in Europe with her family.
- ◆ After this sojourn in Europe, her family moved back to Pennsylvania.
- ◆ Around 1866, Mary traveled alone to Europe.
- ◆ 1874, settled in Paris permanently.
- ◆ 1877, her parents and sister came to live with her in Paris
- ◆ 1882, her sister Lydia, who often modeled for Mary's paintings, died.
- ◆ 1895, her mother died.
- ◆ 1898, visited family and friends in America for the first time in over twenty years
- ◆ 1900, her eyesight began to fail
- ◆ 1910 or 1911, traveled through Egypt with her brother, who contracted an illness and died shortly after the trip.
- ◆ 1926, having lost her family and her ability to paint due to virtual blindness, Mary died a heartbroken woman.

TRAINING AND CAREER

- ◆ For four years in the early 1860s, she studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.
- ◆ Around 1866, Cassatt returned to Europe (France and Italy) where she continued her studies by working with prominent artists, visiting museums, copying artworks, and sketching.
- ◆ 1868, her first piece of art was accepted by the Paris Salon.
- ◆ 1872, first official exhibit with the Paris Salon.

- ◆ 1877, Edgar Degas invited her to join the Impressionists.
- ◆ 1879, exhibited for the first time with the Impressionists.
- ◆ 1886, exhibited for the last time with the Impressionists.
- ◆ 1888, as each Impressionist branched off into his or her own style, Mary turned towards mother-and-child artworks
- ◆ 1891, first solo exhibition in Paris.
- ◆ 1893, painted a mural called *Modern Woman* for an art exhibition in Chicago.
- ◆ 1914, stopped painting due to her failing eyesight.

ART STYLE AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- ◆ Mediums: oils, pastels, drawings, prints.
- ◆ Most known for her mother-and-child paintings.
- ◆ The only American to join the Impressionists.
- ◆ Influences: The art of her impressionist friends Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas greatly influenced her style. As with other Impressionists, Mary was influenced by Japanese prints. The influence of the Old Master art she studied throughout Europe was never lost. Her later works reflect a shift from Impressionism back to Old Master art.
- ◆ Helped her friends the Havemeyers collect art. The Havemeyer art collection, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, had nearly 4,500 important pieces, including works by Cassatt. Cassatt was therefore influential in bringing Impressionist art into America.

ARTWORKS

- ◆ *Children Playing on the Shore*: Cassatt included this piece in her last exhibition with the Impressionists in 1886. This piece is not located in the National Gallery of Art.

- ◆ *The Boating Party*: the large figures and odd shapes and angles display the influence of Japanese art on Cassatt's style. This piece is also on display at the National Gallery of Art.
- ◆ *Young Mother Sewing*: Cassatt's good friends the Havemeyers acquired this piece. It is now on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as part of the Havemeyer collection.

HOW CAN I BE A PAINTER LIKE CASSATT?

- ◆ Create a painting or drawing reflecting the mother-and-child relationship. What do moms and kids do together? What's your favorite thing your mom does with you? Capture one of these moments in an artwork.
- ◆ Make a Japanese print like Cassatt. You can do this by using stamps or by creating your own stamps out of Styrofoam, pieces of fruit, or whatever your imagination thinks up!

ARTIST BIO LINKS

http://www.metmuseum.org/TOAH/HD/cast/hd_cast.htm (medium length, informative)

<http://www.nmwa.org/explore/artist-profiles/mary-cassatt> (short, covers important details)

http://www.wetcanvas.com/Museum/Artists/c/Mary_Cassatt/ (long, informative)

http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/artist-info.1107.html?artobj_artistId=1107&pageNumber=1 (very short)

http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/pharos/sections/making_art/index_japan.html (how Japanese prints are made)

<http://printkat.blogspot.com/2011/04/styrofoam-printmaking-tutorial.html> (printmaking idea for kids using Styrofoam)

PICTURE SOURCES

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cassatt_Mary_Children_on_the_Beach_1884_.jpg

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mary_Cassatt_002.jpg

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cassatt_Mary_Nurse_Reading_to_a_Little_Girl_1895.jpg

<http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/mary-cassatt/young-mother-sewing-1900>

<http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/mary-cassatt/breakfast-in-bed-1897>

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