



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2001 Volume II: Art as Evidence: The Interpretation of Objects

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## **Impressionism: Reflections of a Culture**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 01.02.02  
by Karen de Fur

Through this curriculum unit students will approach Impressionist paintings with a method of analysis that will open them to French culture and history of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Through the analysis of paintings students will note comparisons and contrasts, similarities and differences between the Realism of Gustave Courbet, the Impressionist style of Claude Monet and Mary Cassatt and the Post-Impressionist work produced by Vincent Van Gogh. In relation to the paintings reviewed, students will be encouraged to ask what was happening in France at the time this work of art was produced? What evidence of historical events do we see in the artist's work and conversely what lack of evidence of historical events is shown by the artist's work?

This curriculum unit was created to complement the French curriculum in the New Haven Public High Schools. The study of a foreign language however goes beyond language itself. It includes the study and appreciation of a country's culture and history. My aim in writing this unit to use with my students is to increase their awareness and appreciation of art and to make the study of history more interesting and meaningful. My objectives are:

1. Students will have an understanding of Impressionism.
2. Students will know the names of selected Impressionist artists and their paintings.
3. Students will be able to use Prown's method of object analysis to see culture through art.
4. Students will be familiar with the history of the latter half of 19th century France.
5. Students will create their own Impressionist work of art.

The content of this unit also lends itself to an art or history class. The interdisciplinary nature of the unit would work well in a team approach across disciplines. The content could also be revised to work with younger students in a junior high or middle school program. The unit meets the following National Standards for Foreign Language Learning:

Standard 1.1: Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 3.1: Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

(Recommended for French, History, and Art, grades 9-12.)

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