

12-B Allies Day, May 1917, 1917

Childe Hassam (1859–1935)



12-B Childe Hassam (1859–1935), *Allies Day, May 1917, 1917*. Oil on canvas, 36 ½ x 30 ¼ in. (92.7 x 76.8 cm.). Gift of Ethelyn McKinney in memory of her brother, Glenn Ford McKinney. Image © 2006 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The Art

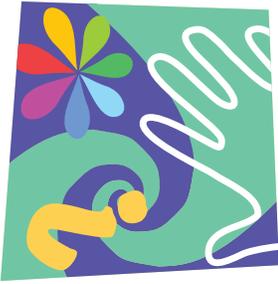
In this oil painting, flags are everywhere, but they cluster on the right and bottom edges of the canvas, making a colorful frame for the buildings that line the west side of New York City's Fifth Avenue. The flags are from three countries—the United States, France, and the United Kingdom—that became partners, or formed an alliance, during World War I. The flags show that these nations were friends and fought together, as allies, for democracy. All the flags are red, white, and blue, and the artist, Childe Hassam, placed the United States flag above all the others in the picture. It is also the only flag that hangs completely clear of other flags and flagpoles. It is set apart, at the top of the painting, against a cloudless sky. Many areas of the picture seem to be created with soft, feathery strokes or dots of color, a result of the influence of French Impressionism on Hassam.

The Artist

Hassam, an American who studied and worked in Paris, France, was very proud of the new military alliance with France, Great Britain, and the United States. He began a series of paintings in 1916, when thousands of Americans showed support for the Allied cause by marching up Fifth Avenue in a parade. Because Hassam was influenced by the French Impressionist artists, he was drawn to sun-struck images of colorful celebrations. Hassam was very patriotic and painted about 30 other flag paintings. This painting became famous, though, because color copies of it were sold to make money to support the war.

The Historical Perspective

One month after the United States officially entered World War I, New York decorated Fifth Avenue with flags. As a welcoming act to the British and French, the American flag hung alongside the flags of these countries. Four days after a peace agreement was announced in November 1918, Hassam's 30 flag paintings were shown together for the first time. Together, they told the story of America's involvement in World War I and they celebrated victory.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look closely at this painting—the objects, the background, the colors used. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the artwork.

Describing



- ✓ What is a painting? How would you know something is a painting?
- ✓ Have children point to the flags. Some are higher; some are lower. Different flags represent different countries. Can you identify the American flag?
- ✓ What do you notice about the colors of the different flags? They are the same colors but they have different patterns. What colors do you see on the flags?
- ✓ Help children see that for much of the painting, the strokes are like feather strokes.
- ✓ Look at the people. What do you see as they get further and further away from the front of the painting? They almost disappear into dots of color.
- ✓ What do you think about the way the building is painted? (It looks more like an illusion than a real building.) What makes you say this?
- ✓ Why do you think the artist made the painting this way?
- ✓ Do you see horizontal or vertical lines in the painting? Where do you see horizontal lines? Horizontal means the line goes across the paper, like a horizon. Where do you see vertical lines? Vertical lines go up and down (the buildings). Do you see any diagonal lines? Diagonal lines slant at an angle.

- ✓ What shapes do you see? Flags are rectangles. Some windows and buildings are rectangles. Some windows are squares.
- ✓ Ask children if they see any curved lines in this painting.
- ✓ Where is the blue in the painting? Blue is repeated in the flags, the buildings, the people, and the sky.

Analyzing and Interpreting

Ask the follow questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- The name of this painting is *Allies Day*. Why do you think the artist named it that?
- Why do you think the artist painted this picture the way he did, with the feathery strokes on the buildings and flags, and the people in the distance, painted like little dots?
- Have students pretend or imagine they are in the crowd of people in the distance. How would you feel if you were there? Do you think they are talking to each other? What might they be saying?
- What do you think the people are doing? (They are marching in a parade.) Did you ever march in a parade? Did you ever watch one? Did you watch it in person or on TV?
- How is this painting like a photo or other pictures? (It has people and

buildings, and the sky is very blue.)

- Are there other things you would like to tell me about this painting? Children might say: I read a book about a parade or flags; I like seeing all the different people and how the people in the front look different from the people in the distance; I think it was hard to paint; I want to paint a picture of a parade.
- Would you like our class to have a parade? How would we do it? Where should we have it?



Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

allies
band
diagonal
feathery strokes
high/higher/highest
horizontal
impressionist
instrument
low/lower/lowest
march
shadows
short/shorter/shortest
small/smaller/smallest
tall/taller/tallest
vertical



Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can

- ✓ look up different flags that represent countries of friends or family members and compare those flags with the American flag.
- ✓ talk about their participation in a parade and draw a picture of the experience.

Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ This picture represents a time way before you were born. Things that happened a long time ago are called history. What can you tell me about your history? Do you know when and where you were born? Do you have older brothers and sisters who were born before you? Do you have younger brothers and sisters who were born after you? Do you remember things that happened when you were younger? Did your family take trips together? Do you remember some time when you were really having fun? When was that? Do you remember someone reading books you liked when you were younger? Those things are all YOUR history. Can you draw a picture or do a journal about YOUR history?
- ✓ Have the children find out how much they weighed and how long they were. Have each child fill a heavy duty plastic



Books

Curious George at the Parade by Margret Rey (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999)
George is excited to be in the city—it's the day of the big parade! But when the parade is delayed, George is distracted and another mischievous adventure begins.

Did You Carry the Flag Today, Charlie? by Rebecca Caudill (Random House Children's Books, 1988)
An enthusiastic [Appalachian] mountain boy achieves the honor of carrying the school flag.

Eloise and the Big Parade by Lisa McClatchy (Simon and Schuster Children's Publishing, 2007)
It is the fourth of July and Eloise and Nanny are excited about the holiday parade.

Meet Our Flag, Old Glory by April Jones Prince (Little Brown, 2004)
Rhyming text explains the history of the American flag. Guidance on the proper display of the flag is also included.

My Flag Book by Sarah L. Thomson (Collins, 2007)
Basic questions posed in this book reveal facts about the American flag.

bag with sand so that the plastic bag weighs the same as the child did when he or she was born. Talk about when they were babies. Ask them to compare what they can do now that they could not do when they were first born. What has changed as they've gotten older?

- ✓ Children can march in a parade or around the playground. They can play instruments while marching. Ask the children to use their journals to draw how they felt when they participated in the parade. What kinds of parades have they seen and where? What were the parades designed to celebrate?
- ✓ Ask the children to count the flags; recognize and learn about different shapes and patterns; compare heights of flags or size of people on the ground. (Note the difference between those who are close to the front of the picture and those who are in the distance.)
- ✓ Have children move one arm so it is

horizontal (side to side, straight out from shoulder), vertical (up or down), and diagonal, (at an angle). Now have them move the other arm so it is horizontal, vertical, and diagonal.

- ✓ If you have children with families from countries outside the United States, explore those countries. Do they have celebrations that include parades? Invite parents to share their cultures and celebrations with the class. Can you find pictures of their country's flags?

The ideas listed are just a few of the many activities that could be used to introduce or extend children's learning. Your knowledge of your children and families supports your ability to ensure positive learning experiences and outcomes for students. As an educator, you probably have ideas for books, songs, finger plays, and activities that you have thought of when introducing or extending children's learning related to the "A Head Start on Picturing America" artworks. We encourage you to confer with your colleagues, visit the local library or bookstore, and share your ideas with others.