

14-A The Boating Party, 1893/1894

Mary Cassatt (1844–1926)



14-A Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), *The Boating Party*, 1893/1894. Oil on canvas, 35 7/16 x 46 1/8 in. (90 x 117.3 cm.). Chester Dale Collection. Image © 2006 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The Art

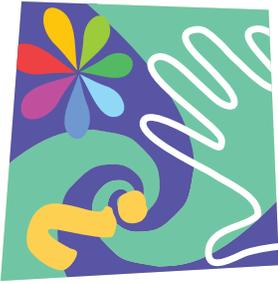
The Boating Party, which pictures a woman, baby, and man in a sailboat, was done in the late 19th century. The painting has large areas of bright colors, including blue and yellow. Like Japanese art, the horizon line is at the very top of the painting. The yellow benches and the support across the middle of the boat are similar to the horizontal line of the far-off shoreline. The sail on the left side of the boat echoes the boat's curve. The sail also balances the large, dark figure of the boatman. Without the sail, the picture would look off balance. Another balancing feature of the painting is the difference in colors. The sail, woman, and baby are painted in soft, light shades that reflect the sun, while the boatman is dressed in heavy, dark colors from his hat to his shoes.

The Artist

Mary Cassatt knew she wanted to be an artist since she was a teenager. At a time when few women were artists, Cassatt got her wish and studied art. Because she was a woman, she was not allowed to do many of the things men could do, like enrolling in the art school she wanted. Instead, Cassatt found private teachers. At first, Cassatt was an Impressionist artist, painting with feathery brushwork and pastel colors. Cassatt primarily painted mothers and children. Later, after looking at Japanese prints, she changed her style of painting and used bold patterns with large areas of bright colors. *The Boating Party* is an example of Cassatt's newer style of painting.

The Historical Perspective

Cassatt created this painting on the southern coast of France. It may have been inspired by the brilliant light and colors of the Mediterranean Sea. Cassatt was greatly influenced by an artist named Edgar Degas. Degas lived in Paris, France, but his mother was American. Cassatt credits Degas with welcoming her into the Paris circle of Impressionist artists.



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, and what’s going on in the scene. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the painting.

Describing



- ✓ What do you see in this painting? Where do you think this scene is?
- ✓ Have children find the sail of the boat, the buildings that are far away or in the background, and the man’s shoe.
- ✓ Ask children to find horizontal lines. The horizontal lines are on the shoreline, the yellow boat seats, and the supports. Relate horizontal to the horizon.
- ✓ Taking turns, have the children find curved lines, point to them, and follow them with their fingers. There are curved lines on the sail, on the sides of the boat, and in the hats of the man, woman, and child.
- ✓ How do you know this picture is a painting? Where is the center of the painting? How do you know it’s the middle? What do you see in the center or the middle? Children might say the boat, oars, arms, the child, the mother.
- ✓ Explore colors in this painting. Ask children how many different colors they can identify. Where is the yellow in the painting? (Yellow is repeated in the boat, oars, and the woman’s hat.) Where is the blue in this painting? (Large parts of water, the inside of the boat, and the man’s belt are blue.)

Analyzing and Interpreting



Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- The name of this painting is *The Boating Party*. Why do you think the artist named it that?
- Why do you think the man has his foot on the boat? Children might say for balance, to hold on, he’s going to use the oars, or he’s going to row. (He needs to push against that piece of wood to provide resistance.)
- Let’s demonstrate how the man might row. What if the boat rocks while you are rowing?
- Pretend or imagine the man and woman are talking to each other. What do they think the man and woman are saying or talking about?
- How is this painting like a photograph or other pictures we’ve seen? Children may say it has people, a boat, water, a baby, the color blue, etc.
- What season do you think it is? What clues are there?
- Are there other things you would like to tell me about this painting? Children might say: I saw it in a book; I like the water best; I think it was hard to paint; I want to go in or row a boat too.



Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

balance	horizontal	sail
bonnet	oars	shoreline
curved	perspective	straight
horizon	rowboat	village



Connecting and Extending continued...

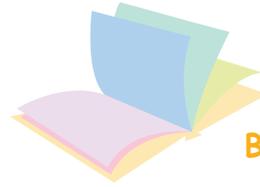
Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can:

- ✓ sing the song "Going on a Picnic" while waiting in lines or on a long drive.
- ✓ play with boats during bath time.
- ✓ eat a snack outside or walk to a park and have a picnic.

Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ Have the children plan a real (if possible) or pretend picnic. What do they want to eat? Where do they want to go? What do they need? Will there be places to sit? Will they need a large blanket or tarps? How could they get there? Make a list of what they need and check off what they have and what they still need to get or make.
- ✓ Discuss differences between real and make-believe or pretend.



Books

Mary Cassatt by Mike Venezia (Children's Press, 1991)

This book introduces the painter Mary Cassatt, known especially for her paintings of mothers with their children.

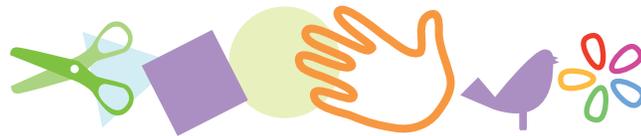
Mary Cassatt: Family Pictures by Jane O'Connor (Grosset and Dunlap, 2003)
Mary Cassatt is most famous for her paintings of mothers and babies, and that's what first attracts Claire, who has a new baby sister. Through research for her class report, Claire learns many surprising facts about Mary.

Suzette and the Puppy: A Story About Mary Cassatt by Joan Sweeney (Barron's Educational Series, 2000)

This picture book introduces children to a well-known painting, Little Girl in a Blue Armchair.

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak (HarperCollins, 1963)

In his bedroom, young Max conjures up a fantasy world of forest and sea, and sails to a land where he becomes king of the wild things.



- ✓ Talk about different kinds of water (oceans, lakes, rivers, coves, etc.) and the different kinds of boats they might see on different bodies of water: ocean liners and freighters on the ocean or on a river that takes them to the ocean; tugboats that take big ocean liners and freighters out of narrow channels to the ocean; sailboats and motorboats on lakes or near the ocean shore; sailboats, motorboats, rowboats, canoes, and kayaks on rivers or lakes, etc. Use a book with some of these boats pictured.

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.