

Edgar Degas

Born July 19, 1834 in Paris Father- wealthy French banker Mother- young woman from New Orleans, LA USA

Oldest of five siblings

Described as ill tempered, sensitive, because he was so unsure of himself, his talents and intelligence. He was also very lonely, probably because he wasn't very nice to those around him.

Very intelligent went to very prestigious boarding school (like a college, you don't sleep at home only home on weekends)

Studied hard, very good student, went on to law school to fulfill his father's orders.

Didn't like studying law, went to Italy to study art. Father saw his talent and encouraged him to continue. He was 21 when he took his first art class.

He studied art from a long time ago, a period called the Renaissance, he thought that to be a good painter today you had to first learn the fundamentals or the basics. Just like learning the alphabet before you learn to read. He studied lines, shapes and colors.

He participated in his first art show when he was 31. He had been practicing and learning for 10 years before he was comfortable with his art and able to show it to others.

He is best known for his paintings of racehorses and dancers.

When Degas planned to paint a new picture he would begin by attending horseraces, operas and ballets. He would not always attend the big event, but would instead go to rehearsals or practices. He would sketch the horses and dancers many many times, then return to his studio to paint. He was quoted once as saying, "To copy what we see is fine, but it is much better to paint what we remember." *What he is saying is sort of like the memory of the event (perhaps a party, a day at the park, or a vacation) is better than photograph. Have you ever looked at photographs and enjoyed stories told about the photo better than the photo itself?*

From his sketches he would create beautiful paintings. But something made his work different from the others: movement. He always wanted to give the viewer hints as to what had just happened and what would happen next in his picture.

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As Degas got older he became blind, but that didn't stop his art career, he began sculpting. Degas died, very famous and wealthy, when he was 83.

Fellow artists called him demanding, difficult and exacting; he was feared for his sharp tongue.