

Claude Monet
1840 - 1926

When you walked inside school this morning, how was the weather? What did the sky look like? Was it bright? Foggy? Hazy? Warm? Cold?
Did you see any flowers? How about bushes? Trees? Leaves on the ground?

Close your eyes and imagine exactly that same scene you saw this morning, only imagine that your leaving school going out the door that you came in. Does it look different later in the day? How about in the evening after dinner? Have you ever been to school late at night? It almost gives you a different feeling just by the time of day. How about in the summer or winter? What is different? (Light changes colors, textures and shadows).

What we are discussing is your **IMPRESSION** of what the scene around your school looks like at different times.

If you were to paint a picture of that scene, would your pictures all look the same? Why not? (Each would portray his/her own **IMPRESSIONS**, ideas or feelings about the scenes.)

In fact, if you only took a quick look, and then painted it quickly, almost like a sketch in color, your picture would give the viewer a quick **IMPRESSION** of your idea of the subject.

There is a name for a special group of painters that did these kinds of **IMPRESSION** paintings about 100 years ago. If these artists were painting their quick ideas or impressions of what they saw, they usually painted very quickly and outside. Can you guess what people might have named their kind of art?

IMPRESSIONISM

The artist who we will be discussing is a Frenchman. His name is Oscar-Claude Monet (**MO-net**). He was born on November 14, 1840. He grew up near the sea.

His dad was a grocer and his mother stayed home with him.

Claude did not like school very much. In grade school he started drawing funny pictures called caricatures of his teachers and classmates. In fact an artists' supply shop put the pictures in the windows and would change them regularly.

A famous landscape painter saw them and invited Monet to join him on the beach to paint. In those days it was strange to paint or draw outside. Most drew inside in a studio.

When he was 17 his mother died and his aunt looked after him because his father was always working. She was an artist so guess what she wanted him to be? Guess what his dad wanted him to do? (be a grocer). At age 18 he went to where to study art _____ (Paris)

His dad was mad.

His friends gave him a nickname (Dandy) because even though he was broke he always wore fancy shirts with ruffled cuffs.

They were interested in how light changed things. They would go on trips around Paris and paint. They were all broke. They were painting a certain way – they painted what they saw on the spot. Even on cold days he would be outside painting.

In those days there was a big painting show in Paris at the Salon. If you were accepted in the Salon, your art was shown and hopefully sold. But it had to look a certain way to the people at the Salon to be accepted – they thought things should be pretty. The people did not like Monet's painting and so he did not make money.

Monet married his friend Camille. They had a baby boy named Jean and lived with another famous artist for a while. His name was Renoir.

In 1863 (Monet was 23) Monet and his friend had a show. It was not at the Salon because they were all being rejected. Their show was named Salon des Refuses (The Rejects Show). People who saw it made fun of it. In 1874, they did another show and Monet named it Impression: Sunrise. That was where the name Impressionism came from.

Monet loved to paint his impressions of colors and textures in different light and often painted one thing again and again and again on different canvases at different times of day.

Unfortunately Camille died a year after their second son Michael was born. Camille was only 32. After a few years he did get married again to a friend of theirs – her name was Alice.

He did not have real success until age 50, about the same time as he bought property at Giverny (jee-vair-Nee), a village outside Paris. He made a water garden that included water lilies and a Japanese bridge. The latter part of his life was devoted to paintings made in his water garden. His kids liked to swim, catch frogs, fish and row boats.

It is ironic that he loved water lilies. The flower opened in the morning light just to stay open during the daytime. Then in the evening it would close up to look like a different flower. To catch its beauty, you had to paint quickly. The lily pond was the focus of Monet's garden, which was full of flowers. He had difficulty setting that garden because the other farmers worried that the plants might poison the water to make the animals sick or even that they could not wash their laundry in the water. They were wrong and Monet was right – it was no problem and only caused beauty.

Toward the end of his life his eyesight became poor, but he continued to paint until his death. He had painted 22 paintings of Water Lillies. In his life he painted almost 2000 paintings that sold for a lot of money.