



***La Promenade*, Pierre-Auguste Renoir**

La Promenade

Pierre-Auguste Renoir
French, Paris, 1870
Oil on canvas
32 x 25 1/2 in.
89.PA.41



Questions for Teaching

What do you see here?

What are the subjects doing? How do you know?

What else do you notice about each character?

What is the setting of the painting? Identify areas in the painting with shadows and light.

Look closely at the visible brushstrokes that make up this painting. What do you notice about the movement and energy of each stroke?

Background Information

What Pierre-Auguste Renoir titled this painting is unknown, but the title *La Promenade* is in part an homage to earlier artists that he greatly admired. Renoir had spent the previous summer painting outdoors with Claude Monet, who encouraged him to move toward a lighter, more luminous palette and to indulge his penchant for luscious, feathery brushwork. Here Renoir retained something of Gustave Courbet's green-and-brown palette while choosing his subject from the sensual, lighthearted garden jaunts of eighteenth-century painters such as Jean-Antoine Watteau and Jean-Honoré Fragonard, whose works he had studied in the Louvre.

Unlike the images of seduction created by his predecessors, Renoir's painting is a fleeting moment caught by chance—middle-class Parisians immersed in nature, possibly a local park. The dappled light filtering through the foliage would become a trademark of Renoir's finest Impressionist works of the 1870s and 1880s. He used a thin, oily paint mix; here his glazes float into each other to create depth and texture.

***La Promenade*, Pierre-Auguste Renoir**

About the Artist

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, (French, 1841—1919)

“The artist who uses the least of what is called imagination will be the greatest.”

—Pierre-Auguste Renoir

Along with Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir helped found the artistic movement known as Impressionism. One result was that painting was freed from having to tell a story; artists could simply capture what they saw.

The son of a tailor in Limoges, Renoir saved the money he earned from painting china, fans, and window shades to move to Paris. Gustave Courbet and the Old Masters in the Louvre were his first major influences. In the late 1860s, influenced by Impressionism, Renoir began using broken brushstrokes, his color became lighter, and he composed his canvases in patches of colored light. Unlike Monet, Renoir was interested in the figure. He stopped exhibiting with the Impressionists after 1877, when his portraits were accepted by the Salon, whose wide audience helped him market his work. With success as a portrait painter, Renoir traveled widely. In 1881, having "wrung Impressionism dry," he went to Italy. Under the Renaissance masters' influence, he aimed at classic form while retaining the Impressionist palette's luminosity. In later years, crippled with arthritis and wheelchair-bound, he painted with a brush strapped to his hand. He also created sculptures, dictating to an assistant who worked the clay.