

Intermediate-Level Activity

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- compare and contrast the celebrations portrayed in two late-nineteenth-century paintings and explore the use of **satire** to communicate a critical viewpoint;
- describe the effects of the **Industrial Revolution** on society and economy;
- examine an artist's critique of his society through painting;
- create an original painting of a favorite celebration employing artistic techniques learned from two works of art.

Materials

- Reproduction of *A Centennial of Independence* by Henri Rousseau
- Reproduction of *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* by James Ensor
- Background Information and Questions for Teaching about the paintings
- Student Handout: *Comparing Celebrations*
- Student Handout: *Comparing Depictions of the Farandole*
- Student Handout: *Symbolism in "A Centennial of Independence"*
- Heavy watercolor paper
- Acrylic paint
- Water containers
- Synthetic paintbrushes (such as Golden Taklon or white nylon)
- Rags

Lesson Steps

1. Create a Venn diagram on the board. Distribute the *Comparing Celebrations* handout to each pair of students. Ask students to work in pairs to compare and contrast *A Centennial of Independence* and *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*. Allow students five minutes to observe each image and direct them to simply inventory all the things they notice in the paintings. Ask students to share findings and sort their observations on the class Venn diagram. Summarize students' findings to reinforce what they have just learned.
2. Point out that both paintings depict different types of celebrations. One canvas portrays a commemorative celebratory scene through vibrant color; the other expresses a critical view of a celebration through satire. Explain that both pictures are rooted in specific places during a particular time. Tell students that they will look closely at the paintings to discover how each reflects the time and place in which it was made.
3. Display a reproduction of *A Centennial of Independence*. Ask students what they notice about the scene. What do the colors tell us about the mood? Explain to students that the artist created this painting in celebration of the centennial of the founding of the **First Republic of France** (1792). What do the figures' poses reveal about what they are doing? Tell students that the painting depicts a traditional dance from southern France. The two female figures holding flags in the center of the circle personify the First Republic and **Third Republic of France**. Ask students what

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they notice about the rest of the painting. Chart students' responses using your favorite graphic organizer to categorize elements from the painting (such as **symbols** and colors).

4. Explain to students that Rousseau based his painting on an illustration of a **provincial** dance he found in a magazine. Distribute the handout *Comparing Depictions of the Farandole*. Ask students to list the similarities and differences between the painting and the engraving by Fortuné Méaulle. Ask students why they think Rousseau added or deleted particular elements to the image.
5. Pass out the handout *Symbolism in "A Centennial of Independence"*. Students may do additional research to identify French national symbols (see "Emblems and symbols of the French Republic" on the France in Australia Web site (www.ambafrance-au.org/spip.php?article=468)). Refer back to students' responses on the handout *Comparing Depictions of the Farandole*. In what ways did Rousseau make an image of farandole dancers more meaningful to French audiences?
6. Display a reproduction of *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*. Have students take time to look closely at the painting. Then discuss the following questions:
 - What is happening in this scene? (*Chaos, celebration, Mardi Gras parade, etc.*) How do you know? (*Flags, banners, people on balconies, people marching in the street, etc.*)
 - Identify the types of characters in the **foreground** of the painting. (*Figures from church and the military, **merchants**, people in costume, politicians, etc.*).
 - Identify the types of characters in the **middle ground** of the painting. (*Figures from the military, members of a marching band, and clowns.*)
 - How do you know who the characters are? (*We can guess who the figures in the crowd are by looking at their clothing and accessories.*)
 - What do you notice about the characters? (*They are brightly colored, heavily painted, with cartoonish, exaggerated facial expressions and masks.*)
 - What are the characters doing? (*They are talking, playing music, and engaging in other activities and are not noticing Christ entering Brussels.*)
7. Explore the meaning of satire as a class. Ask students to identify contemporary examples of satire in popular culture. Examples include television shows such as *The Simpsons* and *South Park* and films such as *Scary Movie* and *Shrek*. Point out particular moments in these examples that criticize or comment on social ills or public figures. (See "Satirical Techniques Definitions" on the ReadWriteThink Web site for various ways satire can be used to criticize a subject or character [www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson936/SatiricalTechniques.pdf].) Ask students to identify further examples of satirical techniques like exaggeration and **parody** that are used in these shows.
8. Tell students that Ensor used satirical techniques over one hundred years ago in *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*. Share age-appropriate information about the painting and the time period in which it was made. Tell students that the decade of the 1880s was a time of great change in Brussels, Belgium. Brussels's economy, like that of many European cities, changed from agriculture to industry as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Due to new machinery, goods were mass-produced in factories instead of being made in homes. People began to move to cities to look for work, and cities changed dramatically. In Belgium, King **Leopold II** converted the sleepy town of Brussels into a modern city by building grand boulevards and new parks, monuments, and civic buildings.



9. Direct students to look again at *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889*. Discuss with students how they think Ensor felt about the city of Brussels and contemporary society in general. What do they see that makes them say so? How is Ensor using satire to comment on society? (*Many people in the crowd are actual public or historical figures who are painted in a cartoonish way, with exaggerated facial expressions, humorous masks, etc.*) Instruct students to identify examples of characters who are being criticized or made fun of in this painting. How can they tell?
10. Point out to students that the Industrial Revolution spread to the United States after the **American Civil War** in the 1860s. Instruct them to research how the U.S. economy and society changed after the Industrial Revolution. Tell students that they must list five changes by reviewing the "Wake Up, America" section of the PBS Web site *Freedom: A History of US* (www.pbs.org/wnet/historyofus/web04/index.html). Have students share their findings with the class.
11. Tell students to imagine that they are living in the United States in the late nineteenth century. Based on their research, students will create a scene of celebration inspired by Rousseau's or Ensor's painting. Students can decide what celebration they would like to depict (the grand opening of the National Road or the Erie Canal, Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin, etc.). Allow students time to choose what celebration they will depict and to begin sketching their ideas.
12. Discuss the differences in the vocational backgrounds of Rousseau, a self-taught artist, and Ensor, an academically trained artist. Point out the creative choices that each made in his **composition**. Indicate the theatrical formula often used by painters from this period: Ensor pushed a dramatic scene into the foreground and exaggerated scale by using life-size or larger-than-life figures in the foreground to contrast with the relatively smaller figures in the **background**. If students choose to create a scene based on Ensor's painting, they must incorporate this theatrical formula and one satirical technique such as exaggeration or parody. If students choose to model their painting after Rousseau, they must incorporate symbols and make color choices to evoke a particular mood.
13. Pass out paper, paint, water containers, brushes, and rags, and allow students one hour to complete their paintings.

Assessment

Review students' completed handouts (*Comparing Celebrations* and *Comparing Depictions of the Farandole*). Assess the handouts based on whether students were able to find elements of each picture that are similar and different. Also assess students on their ability to paint a celebratory scene inspired by either Rousseau or Ensor. If students choose to model their painting after Rousseau, they must incorporate symbols and make color choices that evoke a particular mood. If students choose to create a scene based on Ensor's painting, they must incorporate an exaggerated foreground and one satirical technique.

Extension

Display a transparency of Ensor's *Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889* to introduce **one-point perspective** to students. Inform them that artists use perspective to convey the appearance of distance or depth on two-dimensional works of art. Using a dry-erase marker, mark on the transparency where two implied lines on either end of the throng of paraders converge at one point (the area below the "Vive La Sociale" banner between the S and the O). Instruct students to create a drawing utilizing one-point perspective.