

Beginning-Level Activity

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- compare and contrast the clothing, facial expressions, body language, setting, and color in two nineteenth-century paintings depicting women;
- write **narratives** about a woman in a painting;
- discuss the disparity between the **wages** of garment workers and the prices of the goods they make;
- create and decorate a paper hat.

Materials

- Reproduction of *Portrait of the Marquise de Miramon, née Thérèse Feuillant* by Jacques Joseph Tissot
- Reproduction of *The Milliners* by Edgar Germain Hilaire Degas
- Background Information and Questions for Teaching about the paintings
- Student Handout: *What Hat Is That?*
- World map
- Instructions for making a paper hat (see "Paper Sandwich Hats and Helmets" on the Kids Art Web site [www.kidsart.com/q82700.html])
- 12 x 18 inch sheets of colored construction paper
- Glue
- Ribbon and pieces of fabric
- Crayons

Lesson Steps

1. Display a reproduction of *Portrait of the Marquise de Miramon* and instruct students to take time to look at the painting. Ask students the following questions:
 - What is the first thing you notice about this woman?
 - What do you notice about her clothing? What does the clothing tell us about her?
 - What else do you notice?
 - Where do you think the woman is? What does the setting tell us about her?
 - Mimic the pose of the woman. What does the pose tell us about what she is doing?
 - What does her facial expression reveal about her thoughts or feelings?
 - Which color do you see first? Where do you see this color in the painting?
2. Instruct students to look closely at *Portrait of the Marquise de Miramon*. Ask them to speculate about what the woman is thinking. If this person could speak, what would she say? Ask for volunteers to role-play, pretending they are the woman in the painting and saying aloud what she is thinking.

HISTORICAL WITNESS

★ SOCIAL MESSAGING ★

3. Display a reproduction of *The Milliners* and have students take time to look closely at the work. Ask students the following questions:
 - What is the first thing you notice about this painting?
 - What are the women doing? How do you know?
 - Where do you think the women are? What do you see that makes you say that?
 - Mimic the poses of each of the women. What do their poses reveal about them? What are they doing with their hands?
 - What do their facial expressions reveal about their thoughts or feelings?
 - Which colors do you see first? Where do you see these colors in the painting?
 - How does color help tell the story?
 - Why do you think the ribbons are the brightest colors in the painting?
4. Have students look closely at the woman on the left in *The Milliners*. If this person could speak, what would she say? Tell students to discuss different possibilities with a partner. Ask for volunteers to role-play, pretending they are the woman in the painting and saying aloud what she is thinking.
5. Tell students they will write a narrative about a woman in one of the paintings. Inform them that the scenes depicted in each painting tell the middle of a story, and they will use their imagination to describe what happened before and after the painting. Invite students to choose one painting, and remind them to use details from the paintings to help tell their story. When the narratives are complete, ask for volunteers to read their stories aloud.
6. Have students work with a partner to compare and contrast the two paintings. You may wish to have students create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the artworks. Have students share their observations with the whole class. Point out that *Portrait of the Marquise de Miramon* is a formal, posed **portrait**—like the yearbook photographs student pose for annually—while *The Milliners* shows women in the middle of working.
7. Point out that the women in *The Milliners* are not wearing hats but are making them. Explain to students that the job of a **milliner** is to design, make, and sell hats. Point out that the women depicted in the painting would not be able to afford the hats they are making. Ask students if they think the **Marquise** de Miramon would be able to purchase the hats the milliners are making. Why or why not? Tell students that the painting was made around 1882. Today, many individuals around the world spend their work hours making goods they cannot afford to buy themselves.
8. Pass out the *What Hat Is That?* handout and tell students that they will be writing about a hat found at home. (You may wish to provide images of hats on the Internet for any student who does not have a hat at home.) Instruct students to ask an adult relative for help in choosing a hat and completing the worksheet.



9. In class, have students take out their completed *What Hat Is That?* handout. Invite students to describe their hats to the rest of the class and point out on a map where their hats were made. (You may wish to divide the class into small groups so that students can locate the countries in which each hat in their group was made.) Ask students why they think so many of the hats were made so far from the United States. Invite students to share their answers with the whole class. (Depending on your students' grade level, you could inform them that in June 2006, workers earned an average of \$19.29 per hour in the United States [U.S. Department of Labor 2007]. Wages are often lower in other countries. In China, for example, most garment workers make the minimum wage, which is the equivalent of roughly \$0.30 to \$0.60 per hour.)
10. Ask students to share what their hats cost. Ask them how many hours it would take for an average worker in China to make enough money to afford the price. (Depending on your class level, you may wish to have students individually compute how many hours of work would be necessary.)
11. Next, tell students that, since the milliners in the painting are not able to afford the hats they are making, students will design a hat for one of them. Pass out large sheets of colored construction paper and model how to create a simple hat. (For instructions on making a paper hat, see "Paper Sandwich Hats and Helments" on the Kids Art Web site [www.kidsart.com/q82700.html].) Pass out glue, ribbon, pieces of fabric, and crayons. Allow students time to create their own decorations for their original hat, then ask them to write two to three sentences about their experience making a hat. How long did it take? What did they like best about making the hat? What did they like least?
12. After students complete their hats, point out how long it took to make one hat. Explain that most of the hats bought at stores are **mass-produced**, which means many hats are made quickly on **assembly lines** with the help of machines. In contrast, one hat that is knit by hand, for instance, could take two to three hours to make. Moreover, a straw hat takes two days to make because it needs to be coated with a fixative and left to dry overnight before it can be molded into shape. Ask students to discuss the differences between hats made on an assembly line versus hats that are handmade and individually decorated. What kind of hat would they like better? Why?

Assessment

Assess students' narratives based on the following criteria: complete sentences, correct grammar and punctuation, the inclusion of details from either the Tissot portrait or the Degas painting, and the inclusion of a beginning, middle, and end.

Extensions

1. Discuss how different kinds of headgear are used in different jobs. Share such examples as a fireman's helmet, a chef's hat, and a baseball cap. Discuss which hats are necessary because of the duties of the job (i.e., for safety reasons).
2. Read aloud the book *Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later)* by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard, and discuss the beginning, middle, and end of the story.