

Intermediate-Level Activity

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- compare and contrast the use of **space** and color in two paintings depicting women;
- research the nature of women's work during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe and the United States and compare this to women's roles today;
- examine how works of art can provide insight into trends and influential events of a particular time;
- create a mixed-media work depicting a modern-day fashionable celebrity and a woman from the working class;
- discuss how judgments about clothing can lead to bias, generalizations, or prejudice about individuals.

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
- An assortment of fashion and celebrity news magazines
- Scissors
- Pencils
- Scratch paper
- Glue
- Drawing paper
- Oil **pastels**
- Ink-jet transparencies (available at most office supply stores)

Lesson Steps

1. Ask students to imagine that an artist will create a painting of them. How would they want to be depicted? Would they want to be shown in the middle of some kind of action, and, if so, what action? Or would they prefer to be posed? If so, how and why?
2. Refer to grade-appropriate discussion questions posed about Tissot's and Degas' paintings in steps 1–4 of the Beginning-Level Activity. Instruct students to contrast the way Tissot and Degas painted their subjects. Discuss the following:
 - In addition to the women depicted in the paintings, what else do you see? By looking at the objects, what can be said about the time period? What can be said about the women's social status and likes and dislikes?
 - Compare the use of space in the **composition** of each painting. Where are the objects placed in relation to the women? What do the objects in the Tissot painting tell you about the Marquise de Miramon? How would you describe the space in relation to her? What is the effect of this use of space? In the Degas painting, how would you describe the space relative to each figure? What is the effect of this use of space? Why do you think Degas painted the hats and hat stands so that they partially cover the woman on the left?

HISTORICAL WITNESS

★ SOCIAL MESSAGING ★

- Compare the colors used in each painting. Which colors are used the most? Where do you see the brightest colors in each painting? The darkest? How does color affect the mood of each painting?
3. Provide students with Background Information on Tissot's and Degas' paintings. Point out that Chinese and Japanese imports had been popular in Europe since the 1600s. Every fashionable home was furnished with **porcelain**, **lacquer**, silk, and other materials previously little known in Europe. **Missionaries** and **merchants** were vital to the boom in trade and travel between Europe and the Far East. Ask students whether the Background Information gives them any further ideas about the Marquise de Miramon. Why do they think she would choose to include objects such as the Japanese folding screen and ceramics in her **portrait**? How do Tissot and Degas use fashion to communicate something about women's work (or lack thereof)?
 4. Have students work in small groups and conduct research about women's work in Europe and the United States in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. What jobs were available to women? How did society regard women's work at the time? In particular, how did society perceive a woman who engaged in needlework as a hobby differently than a woman who made hats and dresses for a living? The following resources may be helpful:
 - "Life in the 1880's: Women's Roles in the Late 19th Century" on the Conner Prairie Museum Web site (www.connerprairie.org/historyonline/1880wom.html)
 - *Women's History in America* on the Women's International Center Web site (www.wic.org/misc/history.htm)
 - "Timeline: Through the Centuries" on the Encyclopedia Britannica Web site *300 Women Who Changed the World* (search.eb.com/women/timeline?toclid=9404138)
 - *All Sewn Up: Millinery, Dressmaking, Clothing and Costume* on the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections Web site (digicoll.library.wisc.edu/HumanEcol/subcollections/MillineryBooksAbout.html)

Students will write down ten things they learned about women's work during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

5. Have students share their findings. Ask students what has changed in women's roles since the time of Tissot's and Degas' paintings. What has remained the same? Ask students how a woman of the Marquise de Miramon's social status and inherited wealth would be depicted in a portrait today. What luxury objects signify the height of fashion by twenty-first-century standards?
6. Pass out an assortment of fashion and celebrity news magazines. Instruct students to choose one modern-day celebrity who they would like to include in an artwork. Students will be charged with the task of adding clothing, decor, and a setting that indicate that the celebrity—like the Marquise de Miramon—has fashionable tastes. Pass out scissors, pencils, and scratch paper to students. Have students cut out the face of a celebrity and use scratch paper and pencils to brainstorm different outfits, decor, and settings for the celebrity. Remind students to play with the space around the figure to create different effects. Once students complete a draft composition they are pleased with, pass out glue, drawing paper, and oil pastels. Instruct students to glue the face of the celebrity onto the drawing paper and fill in the rest of the composition with oil pastels. Instruct students to think about how they can use color to draw attention to elements of the portrait they want to emphasize.



7. After the portraits are completed, tell students that they will create another work of art. Inform students that Degas painted and repainted *The Milliners* over a span of almost twenty years. X-rays of the work reveal that the woman on the left was originally a middle-class customer wearing a hat. Just as Degas revised his painting of a woman of means, students will convert their portrait of a fashionable celebrity into a working-class woman. Pass out ink-jet transparencies and instruct students to place a transparency over their original drawing. Students will complete a drawing with oil pastels on top of the first drawing, using the original shapes and composition as a guide. Students can completely revise their drawing, but they should be reminded that parts of the original drawing will show through the transparency. The new drawing should utilize a different **color palette** to convey a different mood (just as Degas' color palette differs from Tissot's).
8. Lead a discussion about the phrase, "You can't judge a book by its cover." In what ways is this statement true? In what ways is it false? Discuss the following as a class:
 - What does clothing reveal about a person? What does clothing not reveal about a person? What could clothing reveal or not reveal about a person's job, in particular?
 - In what ways can judgments about clothing lead to uninformed opinions about others?
 - In what ways could an artist show bias or **stereotypes** when depicting people?
 - Examine your own artwork. In what ways could your artwork show bias or stereotypes about wealthy celebrities or working-class women?
 - How could your artwork be altered a third time to show more about the individual personality of the person being depicted?

Assessment

Assess students' reports based on the following criteria: organization, mechanics, evidence of research, and relevance to subject matter of women's work during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Students' artworks should be assessed based on their use of color and space to create emphasis and convey a particular mood. Also assess students' ability to incorporate their original drawings into a revised version.

Extension

Analyze how women of different classes are depicted in other works of art in the Getty Museum's collection (see Related Works of Art).