

When Impressionism Was a Dirty WordInformation and Questions for Teaching**Sunrise (Marine), Claude Monet****Sunrise (Marine)**

Claude Monet

French, Giverny, March or April 1873

Oil on canvas

19 1/4 x 23 1/2 in.

98.PA.164

**Questions for Teaching**

Describe what you see in this painting.

What colors do you see in this painting?

Now that you've noticed the colors, what can you see reflected in the water? What colors can you find that show the reflections? What colors does the artist use to show the water? To show the light?

Describe all the areas where you can find the complementary colors orange and blue.

Look closely at the visible brushstrokes that make up this painting. Describe the kinds of marks the artist made with his paintbrush to create the water. Describe the kinds of marks he made to create the sky. Where in the painting do you notice the different kinds of marks? Show me with your hands the kinds of movements you would make to paint these marks.

We know that Monet was painting this view outside, at sunrise. Where do you find evidence of the sun rising in the painting?

Background Information

In the muted palette of the emerging dawn, Claude Monet portrayed the industrial port of Le Havre on the northern coast of France. The brilliant orange of the rising sun glimmers amid the damp air and dances on the gentle rippling water, lighting up its iridescent blues and greens. Barely discernible through a cool haze, pack boats on the left billow smoke from their stacks. *Sunrise (Marine)* exemplifies Monet's *plein air*, or "outdoor," approach to painting. The informal and spontaneous brushstrokes establish this picture as one of the first works, along with the famous *Impression: Sunrise* at the Marmottan Museum in Paris, painted in the Impressionist style that was to make him famous. The ephemeral play of light, water, and air would remain Monet's subject for the rest of his career.

Although Impressionist painters like Claude Monet never officially linked their artistic movement to the science of their time, certain scientific discoveries did resonate with their beliefs about the use of color in painting. Scientists were interested in the connections between white light, the

Sunrise (Marine), Claude Monet

color spectrum (like the rainbow), and its effects on the human eye. Impressionist painters used a new, bold range of artificially synthesized colors to reproduce the world as they saw it. In the mid-nineteenth century, chemist Michel-Eugène Chevreul published his “law of simultaneous color” documenting the powerful optical effects created when complementary colors (those opposite one another on the color wheel) are placed next to each other. Chevreul also designed a color circle to show the precise relationships between colors. Colors on the blue side are termed “cool” colors and appear to recede in space; colors on the red side are “warm” colors and seem to advance. Monet often used complementary colors, applied in short, visible slashes of paint, to create vibrant visual effects that mimicked the impressions of light and atmosphere he observed in nature.

About the Artist

Claude Monet, (French, 1840—1926)

“Merely think, here is a little square of blue, here an oblong of pink, here a streak of yellow, and paint it just as it looks to you.”

—Claude Monet

Claude Monet was a successful caricaturist in his native Le Havre, but after studying *plein air* landscape painting, he moved to Paris in 1859. He soon met future Impressionists Camille Pissarro and Pierre-Auguste Renoir. Renoir and Monet began painting outdoors together in the late 1860s, laying the foundations of Impressionism. In 1874, with Pissarro and Edgar Degas, Monet helped organize the Société Anonyme des Artistes, Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs, etc., the formal name of the Impressionists' group.

During the 1870s Monet developed his technique for rendering atmospheric outdoor light, using broken, rhythmic brushwork. He received little but abuse from the public and critics alike, who complained that the paintings were formless, unfinished, and ugly. He and his family endured abject poverty. By the 1880s, however, his paintings started selling. Pissarro accused him of commercialism, and younger painters called him *passé*, for he remained loyal to the Impressionists' early goal of capturing the transitory effects of nature through direct observation. In 1890 Monet began creating paintings in series, depicting the same subject under various conditions and at different times of the day. His late pictures, made when he was half-blind, are shimmering pools of color almost totally devoid of form.

