

**Language through Art: An ESL Enrichment Curriculum (Beginning) Information for Teaching**

***Jeanne Kéfer***

Fernand Khnopff (Belgian, 1858–1921)  
1885  
Oil on canvas  
31 1/2 x 31 1/2 in.  
97.PA.35



**Background Information**

Fernand Khnopff painted this portrait of the daughter of a composer friend on a porch before a closed door, with her tiny thumb catching the edge of her bow as she reaches into her coat. With this small gesture, Khnopff captured the child's vulnerability and uncertainty in facing the outside world. To further evoke a child's perception of a world scaled for grown-ups, he framed Jeanne Kéfer's tiny body against the adult-sized door and tilted the floor ever so slightly.

**About the Artist**

Fernand Khnopff (Belgian, 1858–1921)

A wealthy magistrate's son, Khnopff abandoned law school and entered the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1876, studying under Realist artists. After twice traveling to Paris, Khnopff left the Académie for Paris in 1879. There he trained under French Realist painters and studied Paris's artistic masterpieces. Khnopff first exhibited publicly in 1881 in Brussels.

Khnopff became a popular society portrait painter in the 1880s, using elements that served him well as an avant-garde Symbolist painter: visual realism and a mood of silence, isolation, and reverie. He frequently posed his models leaning against a closed door, flattening the space and resulting in a meditative, hermetically sealed image.