Step 1 - Introducing the Edgar Degas Slideshow Guide

MOTIVATION

BEGIN READING HERE

I've brought my camera today and I want to take some photographs (PANTOMIME ACTION). I need a model (or models) to pose for me. For your first photo I want a formal, posed picture, with everything balanced. Good, I'll snap your photo. Next, please arrange yourself so the picture will not be balanced, and it looks very casual and unposed. Does it look like you don't know your picture is being taken? (YES)

Thank you! Now I want you to think about those two pictures I just took. Which one do you think will be more interesting when it's developed? (UNPOSED) Do you prefer the formal, posed, balanced pictures? Or do you prefer the casual, unposed, unbalanced picture? (ANSWERS WILL VARY)

If you chose the casual, unposed picture then you are like artist Edgar Degas. He took many ideas from the art of photography, which was new in his time. He liked to paint scenes that looked as if the people in them were unaware they were being watched. So when we see his paintings, we feel as though we just happened to look in at an unexpected moment. Before we peek in on some of those scenes, let's peek in on Edgar Degas and see what he looked like.

Click Start Lesson To Begin

1. SELF-PORTRAIT

From this self-portrait by Degas, can you tell what kind of person the artist was, friendly, easygoing, modest? (NO - UNFRIENDLY, SHY, CONCEITED) By the age of twenty-three, Degas had developed a reputation for being difficult and stuck-up. A fellow artist invited Degas to dinner one evening, and this was his response:

Click Audio

"Listen, you must prepare a special dish without butter, and dinner has to be at seven sharp. I know you won't have your cat around, and don't allow anyone to bring a dog. No flowers, and if there must be women, I hope they won't come reeking of perfume. How horrible all these odors are when there are so many things that smell good, like toast!"

End Of Audio – Continue Reading

Does he sound like a pleasant guest with whom to spend an evening? (NO)

Degas was born into a wealthy family in Paris, France, who encouraged him in his art career. He didn't need to make a living as an artist because of his family wealth. So he really didn't want to sell his paintings and only did so when he had to.
He invested in a large collection of art done by other artists such as Vincent van Gogh. After Degas’ death it took two days to sell this collection at an auction. He had no wife or children to inherit his paintings, because he lived alone throughout his life and devoted himself to his art.

2. THE JOCKEYS

Have you ever been to a horse race? If you had your camera along, could you have taken a photograph that looks like this painting? \[\text{(YES)}\] Degas loved to go to the racetrack. He wasn’t interested in who won the races, but he loved to sketch the animals and riders in all kinds of situations.

How does Degas show that the horses are moving? \[\text{(POSITIONS OF HORSES, JOCKEYS)}\] Are the horses and jockeys OVERLAPPING each other? \[\text{(YES)}\] Overlapping is one way to make a painting have a sense of space. We can tell which horse is closest to us. PERSPECTIVE is the art word for the effect of space. Can you find one more way Degas created PERSPECTIVE in this painting, besides OVERLAPPING? \[\text{(SIZE, COLOR, CLARITY, DETAIL)}\]

I want you to picture a fast racehorse and a ballerina twirling on her toes. What do a racehorse and a ballerina have in common? \[\text{(MOVEMENT)}\] That’s very good thinking! Movement interested Degas so much that he devoted many hours of study to it. How did he study?

3. BALLET GIRL IN BRONZE

In order to make the finest paintings of ballerinas, he made model SCULPTURES like you see here. To create the sculpture he had to study the ballerina from all angles. Do you think sculpture helped Degas in his study of ballerinas? \[\text{(YES)}\] This sculpture by Degas was made for study only. He never intended it for display as a work of art. It is a very small sculpture, only about three feet high. Today it is Degas’ most famous piece of sculpture.

Another reason Degas began sculpting was because his eyesight was failing. Wouldn’t that be a tragic thing to happen? \[\text{(YES)}\] Why would sculpture be a better medium for an artist with poor eyesight? \[\text{(USE SENSE OF TOUCH)}\]

Have you ever taken ballet lessons? If you have, you know that different standing positions are important. She is standing in 4th position. Take a careful, last look at the position of this ballerina, and try to find that same position in our next painting.
4. THE DANCING CLASS

Did you find the ballerina in 4th position? **(DANCER ON RIGHT AT BAR WITH BACK TO US)** Do you think Degas might have used the sculpture to help paint this ballerina? **(PERHAPS)**

I want you to think of a title for this painting. Take a careful look at what is happening, and see how many different things you can discover going on. Can you give me a title? **(ANSWERS WILL VARY)** The real title is *The Dancing Class*. Notice how everyone is thinking of something different and paying very little attention to what others are doing. Does it seem as if someone snuck in and took a quick photograph? **(YES)**

Can you find the “ghost” ballerina? **(IN THE MIRROR)** Point her out if you find her. Degas painted the image of two dancers in the small mirror. The girl on the right, with the black ribbon around her neck, is about ready to dance across the floor. The ballerina on the left would be a dancer in the bottom right of the room. But Degas only painted part of the class, so we don’t get to see the dancers. Is it more fun to see a “ghost” image in the mirror than the actual girl? **(YES)**

Degas was born into a wealthy family in Paris, France, who encouraged him in his art career. He didn’t need to make a living as an artist because of his family wealth. So he really didn’t want to sell his paintings.

He invested in a large collection of art done by other artists such as Vincent van Gogh. After Degas’ death it took two days to sell this collection at an auction. He had no wife or children to inherit his paintings, because he lived alone throughout his life and devoted himself to his art.

Remember how you posed in an unbalanced picture? I want you to look at the composition or arrangement of this painting. Are things arranged evenly? **(NO)** Is one thing on the left side balanced by another thing on the right side? **(NO)** This uneven arrangement is called ASYMMETRICAL. An evenly arranged painting is called SYMMETRICAL.

Try this with me. Let’s pretend our fingers are ballerinas in a Degas painting. First, let’s use both hands and make a symmetrical balance. **(HOLD UP THE SAME NUMBER OF FINGERS ON BOTH HANDS.)** Now let’s make an asymmetrical balance. **(HOLD UP AN UNEVEN NUMBER OF FINGERS ON TWO HANDS.)**

Now let me see if you know these art words. You answer symmetrical or asymmetrical as I hold up my “people.” **(TRY SEVERAL DIFFERENT COMBINATIONS WITH YOUR FINGERS.)** That’s excellent!
5. WOMAN WITH CHRYSANTHEMUMS

Can you tell me whether this is a symmetrical or asymmetrical arrangement? (ASYMMETRICAL) Very good! Another way to judge is to cover up one half of the painting, and see if the other half looks nearly the same.

Listen to Degas' words, and tell me what he thought of painting outdoors.

Click Audio

"You know what I think of painters who work in the open. If I were the government I would have a company of police watching out for men who paint landscapes from nature. Oh, I don't wish for anybody’s death, I would be quite content with a little buckshot to begin with." (1909)

End Of Audio – Continue Reading

What were his feelings about painting outdoors? (HATED IT) Degas always painted inside his studio, sometimes from the sketches he made at the racetrack or at the ballet.

I want you to close your eyes. When I tell you to open them, you'll see a new painting. I want you to tell me in what direction your eyes travel as you look at the painting.

Click Next To Change Slide

6. DANCERS IN REHEARSAL ROOM

Now open your eyes. Point in the direction your eyes traveled. (TO THE RIGHT, TO THE BACK OF THE ROOM) Why? (THE LIGHT, LINE ON THE WALL, LINE OF BALLERINAS) Degas made you feel the space and depth of this room, didn’t he? What is our art word for showing space? (PERSPECTIVE)

What part of the painting looks empty? (FLOOR, WALL) The empty space in a painting is called the NEGATIVE space. The negative space in this painting draws our attention, too. So it is important and seems to balance the girls.

Next you will notice a big change in Degas’ artwork.

Click Next To Change Slide

7. DANCING PEASANT GIRLS

As Degas’ eyesight became worse, he was forced to give up oil painting and work more with PASTELS and charcoal. Oil paints are good for painting detail, but pastels are not. Degas found that with pastels he could leave out the details that he could no longer see. Is this very different from his other dancing scenes? (YES) Look how close to the
dancers he has brought us instead of looking at them from afar in a deep room. Are their faces blurred? (YES)

Let's compare the pastel faces we see here to the oil painting faces in *The Dancing Class.*

Click Back Three Times

4. THE DANCING CLASS

Which is more detailed, clearer, and sharper? (*THE DANCING CLASS*)

Click Next Four Times To Finish Lesson

REVIEW GAME

Remember how you started today posing as a model(s)? Let's do it again. But since you now know so much more about art, I'll use our vocabulary words to tell you how to pose.

Strike a pose to show what the word “symmetrical” means? (*CONTINUE WITH OTHER VOCABULARY WORDS: “ASYMMETRICAL,” “OVERLAPPING,” “NEGATIVE SPACE.”*)

I am very proud of you, as I'm sure Edgar Degas would be, too! You have done a great job of discovering and remembering how Degas made his masterpieces so special and unique.

Click Next To Finish Lesson

to exit this unit click Back To Units
Step 2 - Learning From: Edgar Degas

Drawing Warm Ups

Here are some drawing warm ups to get you ready for the Degas art project. Use a pencil to draw each picture into the empty box below.
Drawing Practice

In order to simplify drawing, Degas used “guide lines” to divide the drawing into sections. The sections are made of fewer lines and are therefore easier to draw. Below are sections from some of Degas’ drawings. Copy the sections into the boxes beneath them.

Mirror Imaging Exercise

Drawing mirror images is good practice. Draw the mirror image of each line below to make a shape that is the same on both sides. Try tracing it with finger first.
Save for your art activity
Save for your art activity
ARTIST PROFILE SLIPS

The last few pages of this section contain the Art Activity for Edgar Degas. This step-by-step outline will be a guide for instructing your child(ren) through the activity. The parent/instructor should review all steps necessary to complete this project before beginning any work.

Cut out the Artist Profile Slip below and attach it to the back of the completed art project.

Edgar Degas
(deh-GAH)- French 1834-1917

Degas’ drawing secrets were investigated in masterpieces. He very beautifully exemplified techniques of perspective and composition. He is most famous for his paintings of ballet and horse racing scenes.

ART ACTIVITY EMPHASIS: Right brain drawings
MEDIA: Drawing Pencils, Chalk
Step 3 - Working With: Art Activity Instructions

**ARTIST**
Edgar Degas (*deh-GAH*)
(1834-1917) French

**ART ELEMENT**
Line

**MEDIA**
Pencil, fine line marker, colored chalk

**VISUAL**
Print: *The Dancing Class*

**TECHNIQUE**
Line drawing and pastel stain

**EMPHASIS**
Right brain drawing

**VOCABULARY**
Right brain drawing, stain

**SUGGESTED MUSIC**
Music to inspire artists

**MATERIALS FOR INSTRUCTOR AND CHILDREN**
- One 8." x 11" pale pastel copy paper with grid lines
- One 9" x 12" sheet of black construction paper for mounting
- One 5." x 8." scrap piece of paper
- Tissue
- Artist Profile Slip
- Jockey or ballerina line drawing
- Black pencil
- Colored chalk
- Pencil with an eraser
- Scissors
- Glue
- Completed Learning Packet

**PREPARATION**
Construct an example to become familiar with this drawing technique. Place the Degas print where it can be easily seen. Place a pastel paper with grid lines, a ballerina line drawing and a jockey on horseback line drawing on your workspace. Have black pencil, tissue, chalk and scrap paper nearby.

**SET-UP** [ 5 minutes ]
Distribute the following materials to each child:
- **SUPPLIES:** Black pencil, chalk
- **PAPER:** One 8." x 11" sheet of pastel paper with grid lines, one 9" x 12" sheet of black construction paper, one scrap piece of paper, tissue, and artist profile slip. Child may choose one copy of either the ballerina or the jockey on horseback line drawing.
ORIENTATION [ 5 minutes ]

You learned some of Degas’ drawing secrets in your Learning Packets. You completed a mirror imaging exercise. This exercise is also known as a right brain exercise, because it is believed that in order to do it, you must turn off the left side of your brain. Today we will try the method of drawing called RIGHT BRAIN DRAWING.

Degas painted his works of art from sketches he made. His sketchbook was small, but his paintings were large. So he drew a grid on the sketch, and one just like it on his larger canvas. Then it was much easier to copy the sketch on the canvas. Today you will use Degas’ method of grid lines to draw a ballerina or a horse and jockey. Let’s get organized so we can begin!

DEMONSTRATION AND ACTIVITY

ORGANIZE YOUR WORK AREA [ 2 minutes ]

1. Place chalk, scrap paper, tissue, pencil/eraser and black pencil at the top corner of your workspace.
2. Place your black mounting paper and artist profile slip at the other top corner of your workspace.
3. Arrange your pastel grid paper vertically (DEMONSTRATE) on your workspace under the hand with which you write.
4. Put your ballerina or jockey line drawing on the other side.

RIGHT BRAIN DRAWING [ 20 to 25 minutes ]

Do this with me… Put your finger on your nose and draw an imaginary line (demonstrate), up to the top of your head and down to your neck, dividing your brain in two pieces. Did you know that each side of your brain is good at different things? Today we will use the right side (point) to do our drawings. We will be drawing upside down to fool the left side of our brain. We will look at just a few lines at a time. This method forces our eyes to look hard at the lines we are drawing, and not just draw what “we think” we see. It improves our drawing immensely as we learn that drawing well with our hand is truly learning to see with our eyes. In order to draw using the right brain method, it is important to turn off as many left brain jobs as possible. Therefore let’s draw quietly without talking, as talking uses which side of our brain? (The Left!)

1. (Point out corner “A” below) This corner from your line drawing would be here (point out corner “B” below) on your pastel grid paper.
2. This point (“C”) would be here (“D”) on your pastel grid paper. (Instructor will use a marker for visibility while students use a pencil. Demonstrate several corresponding points. Use both drawings, ballerina and jockey, if your students have selected both drawings.)
3. Many artists prefer to mask or cover part of the line drawing and work only one rectangle or a row of rectangles at a time. If you like, use your scrap paper to cover the bottom three
rows of the picture, and move the cover down as you finish each row. Be sure to look carefully where the lines touch the edge of each rectangle grid box. Sometimes it is easier to make pencil dots where the lines touch the edge and then connect those dots.

4. When I start the music, we will all “turn off” the talking, and “turn on” the drawing. If you have any questions, please ask them now before we begin.

THE RIGHT BRAIN ACTIVITY [ 25 minutes ]

(Have the students draw for 25 minutes, then stop the music and demonstrate the last few steps.)

USING THE BLACK PENCILS [ about 3 minutes ]

1. When you finish your drawing, turn it right side up.
2. Draw over your pencil lines with the black pencil.

THE CHALK STAIN [ 5 to 7 minutes ]

1. To add a STAIN to your drawing with the colored chalk, pick up a piece of chalk and firmly rub it back and forth on the scrap piece of paper until you see chalk dust forming on the paper (demonstrate).
2. Wrap the tissue around the tip of your pointer finger and gently scoop up some of the chalk dust with the tissue.
3. Use the tissue to blend the chalk onto a part of your ballerina or jockey drawing to make a soft stain of that color.
4. To add highlights: In art, a highlight is the light area made when light hits it. Mark an upper corner to mark your light source. (Draw a large arrow pointing out the direction on your demonstration page or an extra line drawing.) Think about light coming from that point and hitting the ballerina or jockey. Where would the light hit them? Carefully go over those areas with a light-colored chalk. (Demonstrate. Show a highlight on the face with a line just inside the contour of the face. Show highlights on the skirt.)
5. To add shadow: Use darker chalk, horizontally, to show a shadow on the floor.
6. Now that you know what you have to do, make your lines black, and add some color, highlights, and shadow to your drawing.
MOUNTING YOUR ARTWORK [ 2 minutes ]
Cut around the outer frame of your ballerina or jockey. Using a small amount of glue on the back of each corner of your stained drawing, mount your artwork centered onto the black construction paper.

MOUNTING THE ARTIST PROFILE SLIP [ 2 minutes ]
(Profile slips for each artist are provided. They give a brief description of the artist, the technique, and the media used in the art activity. They should be mounted on the back of each art project after it is completed.)
1. Write your name on the front of the artist profile slip.
2. Using glue, mount the profile slip on the back of your artwork.
3. Encourage students to discuss their artwork with others using this artist slip of information.

CONCLUSION
Who was our master artist who spent his life drawing and painting ballerinas and horses? (EDGAR DEGAS) He was careful to study and draw what he saw, as you have today in your art activity. That would be very pleasing to Mr. Degas!

GUIDANCE
Make sure drawings are kept upside down! Students may wish to cover all but one section with scrap paper… working on one section at a time seems less confusing.

THIS CONCLUDES THE EDGAR DEGAS UNIT.