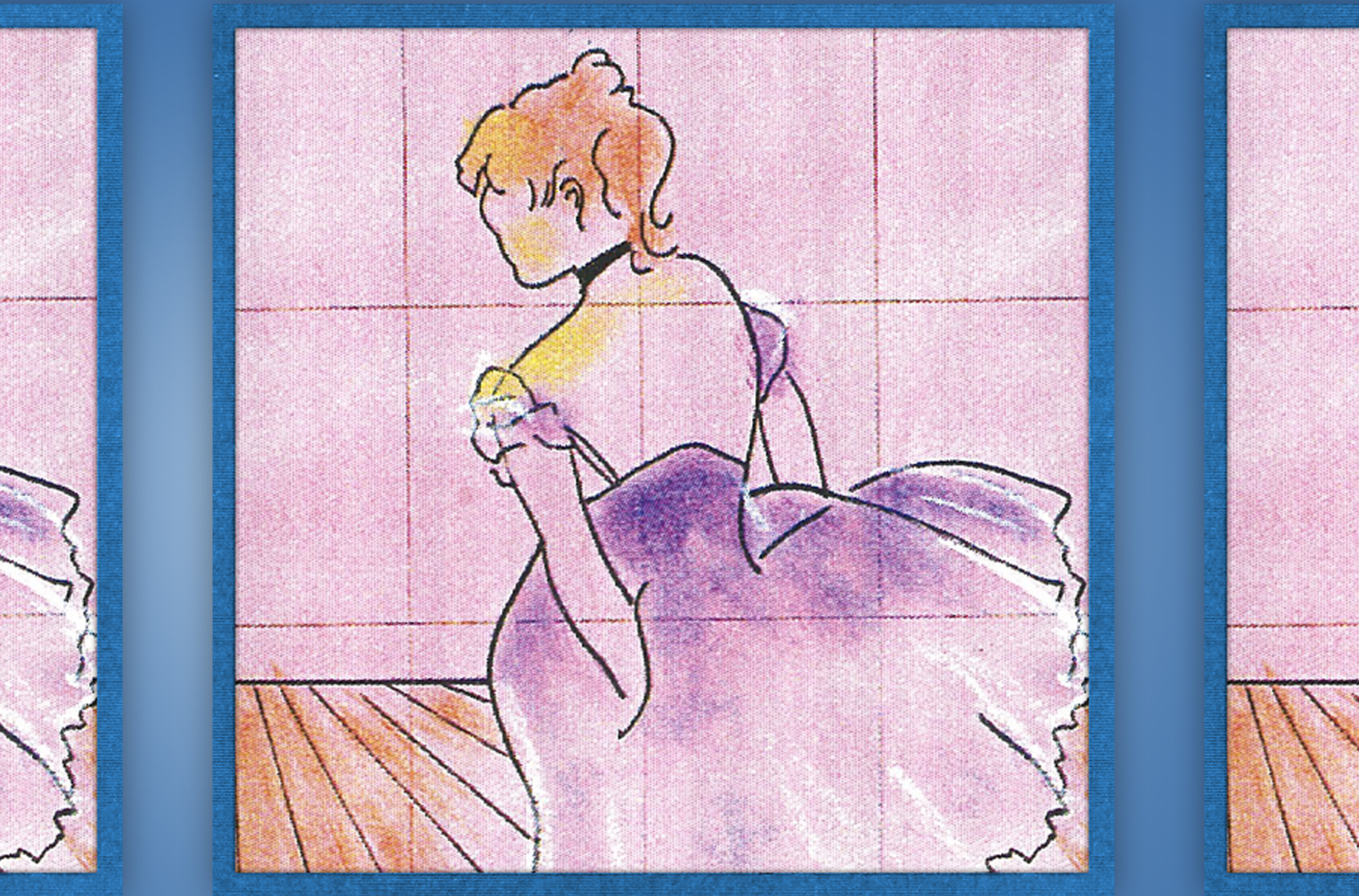


EDGAR DEGAS

Lesson For Ages 10 - Adult



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!"

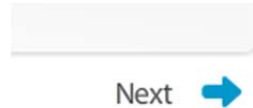
[End Of Audio - Continue Reading](#)

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 needed 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.

Click Next To Change Slide



2. THE JOCKEYS

Have you ever been to a horse race? One day a friend of Degas' invited him to go to the races. He wasn't very interested, but he went anyway and brought his sketchbook along. Soon horse racing became one of his favorite activities. But his reasons for going were very different from others. He cared little about who won. He loved the moments between the races when he had a chance to sketch the animals and riders in very informal activities.

He also loved to capture the motion involved in horse racing, as you see in this painting. Look carefully at what is happening in this picture. Can you think of a title? **(ANSWERS WILL VARY)** The title Degas gave was, *The Jockeys*.

Degas compared everyday conversation to his artwork. He said that conversations overlap each other. How can you relate that to what you see in this picture? **(HORSES AND FIGURES OVERLAPPING)** Good! You will see that Degas used that technique in most of his work. OVERLAPPING is one reason his paintings look casual. It makes his paintings look as if a candid photo had just been snapped with a camera.

I want you to picture a fast horse race, and a ballerina twirling on her toes. What do both racehorses and ballerinas have in common? **(MOVEMENT)** Movement interested Degas so much that he devoted many hours of study to it.

Click Next To Change Slide

3. BALLET GIRL IN BRONZE

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. He made it to study movement and the ballerina's body. Today it is Degas' most famous piece of sculpture.

His model was Marie, a fourteen-year-old girl from a poor family, who auditioned and made it into the Paris Ballet Company. Becoming a ballerina was a good way for young girls from poor families to earn a living. This is the only sculpture he ever showed in public, and people were shocked it was "dressed" in real clothing.

He created over 100 small sculptures, and he kept them hidden in his studio. He used them for “models” for his paintings. No one ever saw them until after he died.

Another reason Degas took up sculpting was because he began to lose his eyesight. Wouldn't that be a tragic event? **(YES)** How would sculpture be a better medium for an artist with failing eyesight? **(USE SENSE OF TOUCH)**

Have you ever taken ballet lessons? If you have, you know there are a number of positions taught that are basic to all ballet. Take a careful last look at the position of this ballerina's feet. She is standing in 4th position. Find that same 4th position in our next painting.

Click Next To Change Slide

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)** Can you find the “ghost” ballerina? Point her out if you find her. **(IN THE MIRROR)** 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 took such precise care with each detail of a painting. He would sketch ballerinas in all kinds of positions, turning, leaning over, stretching, fixing a strap. He felt drawing was extremely important. He would take his sketches back to his studio, and experiment with placing dancers in several different locations on his canvas. Then he would just paint a room for the dancers from memory. This made him quite different from his fellow IMPRESSIONIST artists. Most Impressionists liked to paint outdoors. Listen to Degas' strong opinions about 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

Does he sound quite sure of himself and opinionated? **(YES)**

I want you to think of a title for this painting. There are many different and separate activities happening at the same time, but can you give it one title? **(ANSWERS WILL VARY)** The real title is, *The Dancing Class*. Notice how they all are involved in their own

thoughts or activity and are paying no attention to what others are doing. Does it seem as if someone popped in and took a candid photograph? **(YES)**

What part of the painting looks empty? **(THE FLOOR, WALL)** The empty space in a painting is called the **NEGATIVE** space. The negative space in this painting draws our attention, too. It is equal to and carries the same visual weight as the figures. It makes it balanced.

Remember how Degas compared everyday conversation to painting? He went on to say...

Click Next To Change Slide

5. WOMAN WITH CHRYSANTHEMUMS

“Conversation in real life is full of half-finished sentences and overlapping talk. Why shouldn’t painting be, too?” Can you compare half-finished conversations to something in this painting? **(WOMAN IS CUT OFF IN PICTURE -- SHE’S HALF-FINISHED)**

The art term for placing the frame to “cut off” something in the picture is **CROPPED**. You will see much use of cropping in Degas’ work. Does cropping make a painting seem formal or casual? **(CASUAL)** What can you compare to overlapping talk? **(WOMAN OVERLAPPING FLOWERS)**

There is one other technique that Degas used in this painting that others at the time found to be very strange. If you were to cover up one side of the painting, would the other side look the same? **(NO)** When one side is not like the other we say it is **ASYMMETRICAL**, which means “not symmetrical.”

Pretend you were an artist of that time who thought Degas’ methods were strange. How would you make this painting **SYMMETRICAL**? **(MOVE WOMAN IN FRONT OF FLOWERS, PUT FLOWERS ON BOTH SIDES OF HER)**

I want you to close your eyes. When I tell you to open them, you’ll be looking at a new painting. Tell me in what direction your eyes travel as you look at it.

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? **(YES)** He used **PERSPECTIVE** to show us that depth. Degas was a master at showing perspective in an interesting way.

Let's see how well you remember all the techniques Degas used in his paintings.

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Do you see NEGATIVE SPACE? | YES |
| 2. Was CROPPING used in this painting? | YES |
| 3. Is this painting SYMMETRICAL? | NO |
| 4. Did Degas use PERSPECTIVE? | YES |

That is excellent use of art vocabulary! 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. Degas found that with pastels he could leave out the details that he could no longer see. This picture was done in pastels. What is different in this dancing scene than in the others we've seen? (**NOT BALLET, CLOSE-UP VIEW, BLURRY**)

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 Three Times

7. DANCING PEASANT GIRLS

By the year 1907, at the age of seventy-three, Degas became totally blind and had to give up his art. He felt extremely lonely and empty with this void in his life. By that time his work had become very popular. He had achieved success but could not rejoice because of his lost eyesight. He became increasingly lonely as one after another of his artist friends died. When he died in Paris, in 1917, the world hardly noticed his death.

Click Next 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.

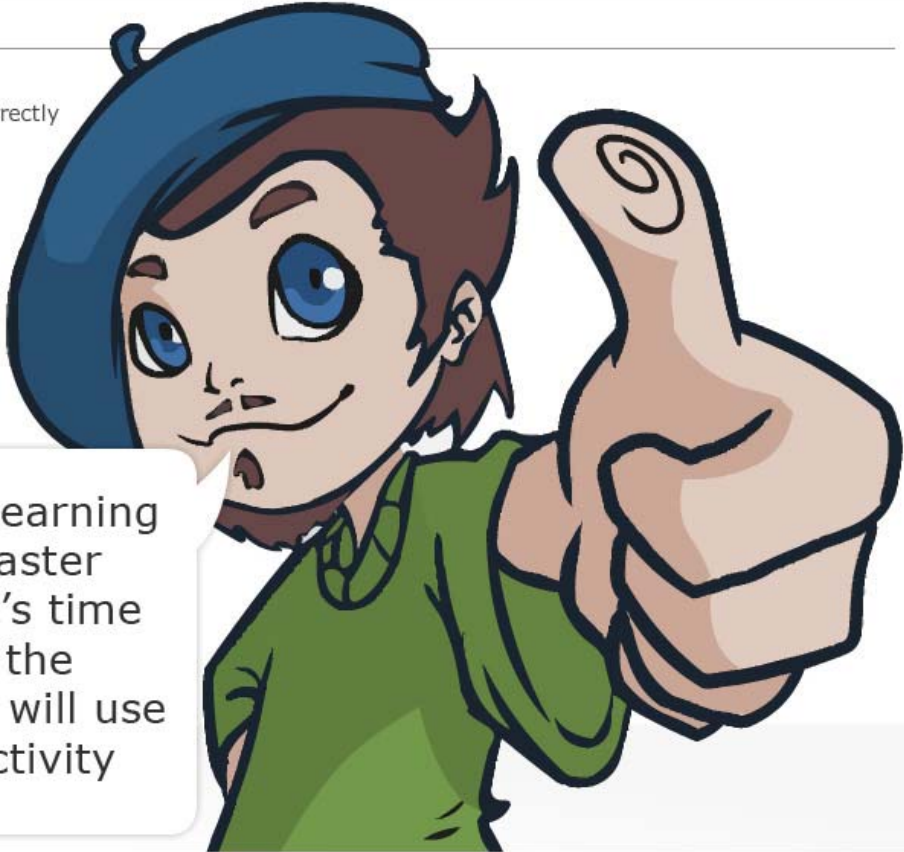
Strike a pose to show what the word “symmetrical” means? **(CONTINUE WITH OTHER VOCABULARY WORDS: “ASYMMETRICAL,” “OVERLAPPING,” “NEGATIVE SPACE.”)**

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

Lesson Finished

You have answered
10 out of **10** questions correctly



Did you enjoy learning about our Master Artist? Now it’s time to practice the techniques you will use in your art activity



 [Back To Units](#)

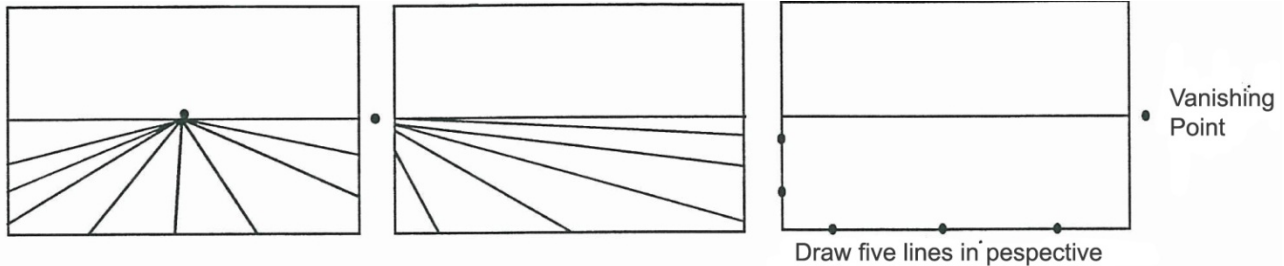
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Step 2 - Learning From: Edgar Degas

Perspective

Lines meeting at a common point called a vanishing point create perspective.



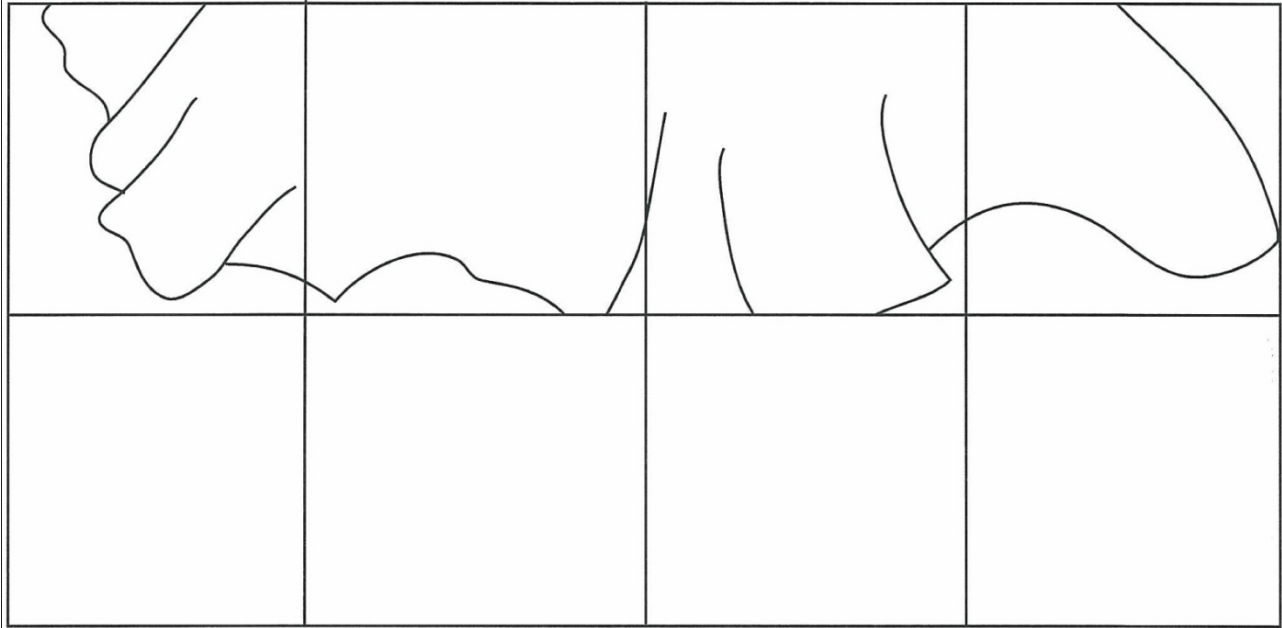
To add perspective to this drawing, follow these steps:



1. Notice the vanishing point and the dots near the lower edges of the frame.
2. Draw straight perspective lines to connect each dot with the vanishing point. Don't draw through the ballerina.
3. Use a straight edge or ruler
4. Stop at the floor line.

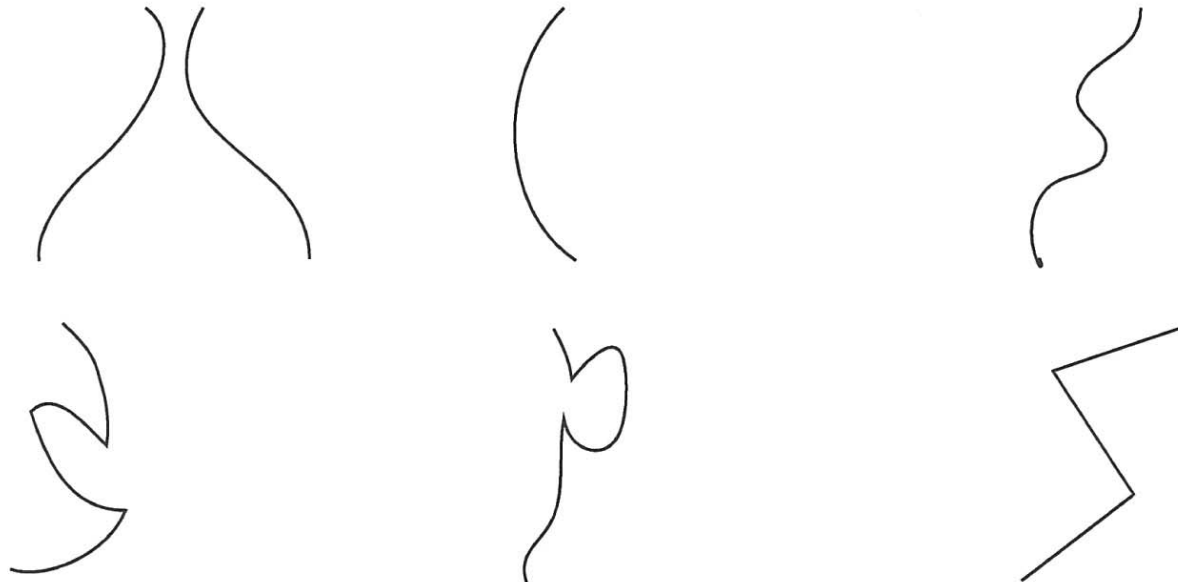
Drawing Practice

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.

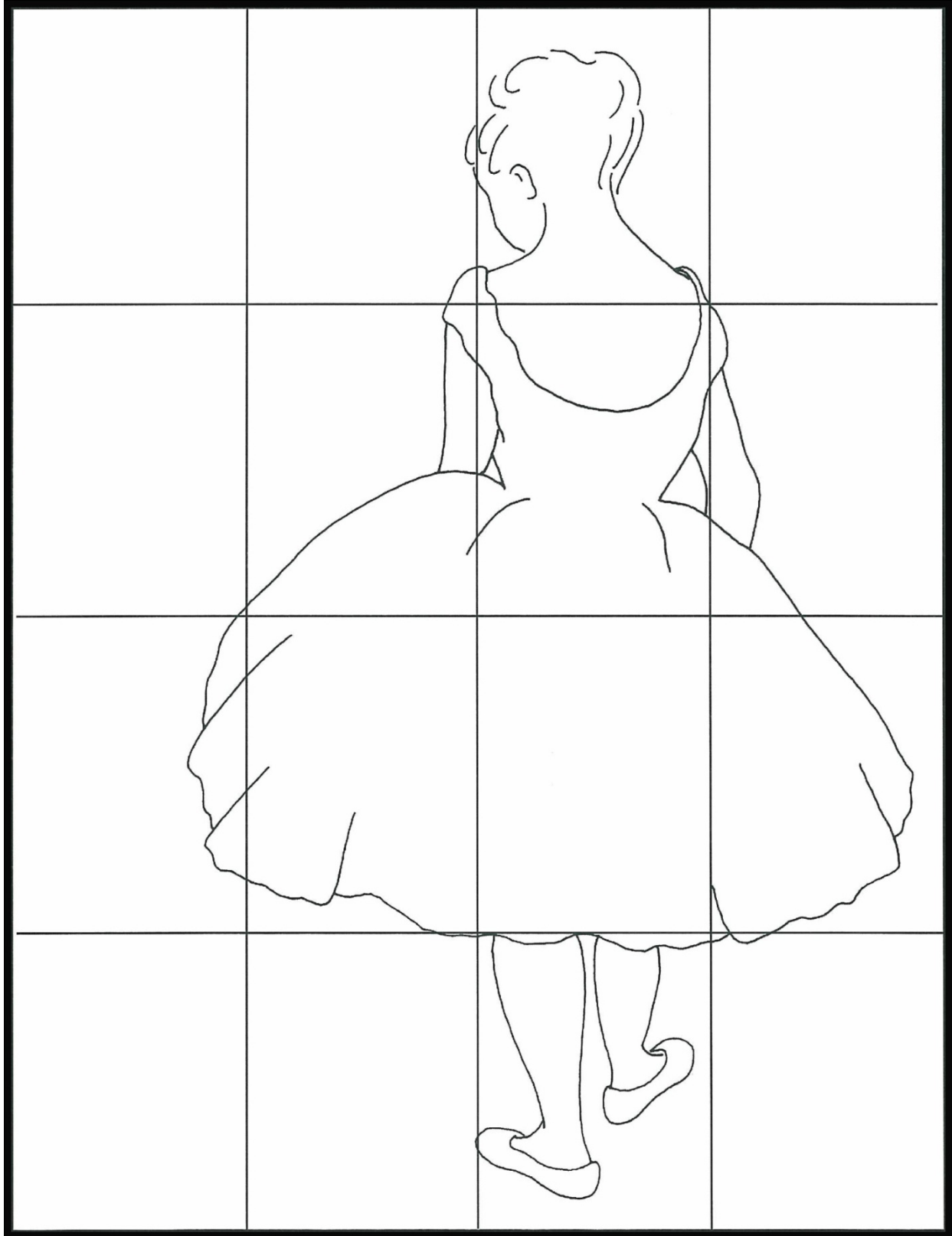


Mirror Imaging Exercise

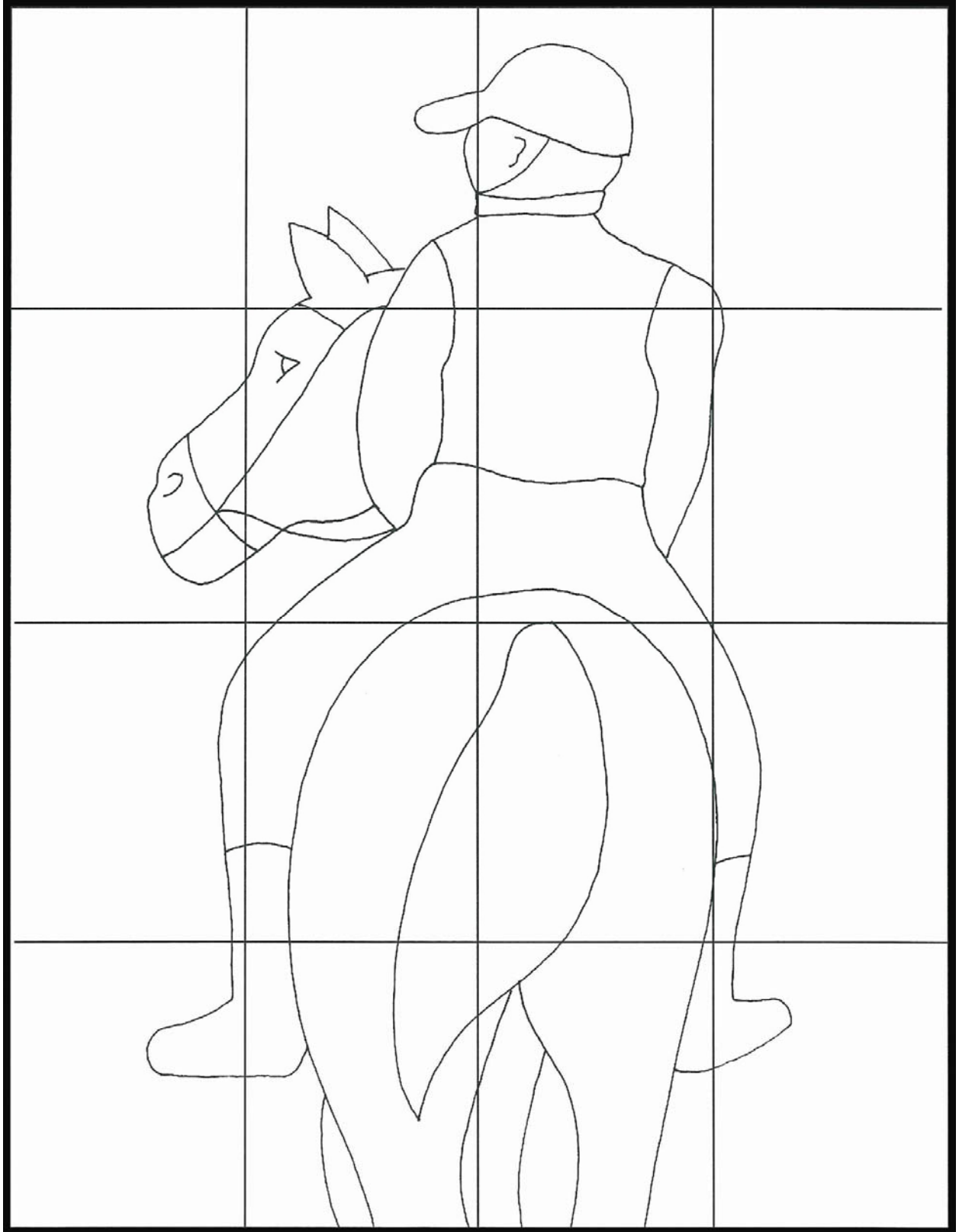
Drawing mirror images is good practice. Draw the mirror image of each line below to make a shape that is the same on both sides. Try tracing it with finger first.



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

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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.

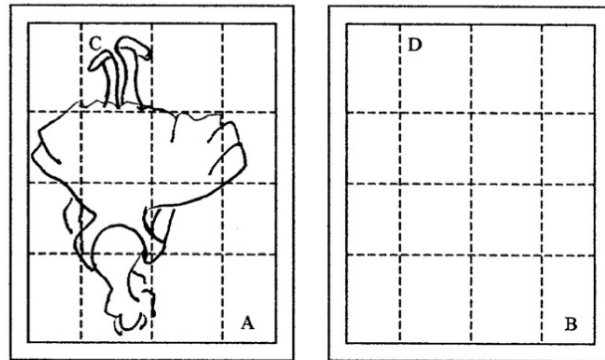
RIGHT BRAIN DRAWING [20 to 25 minutes]

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.

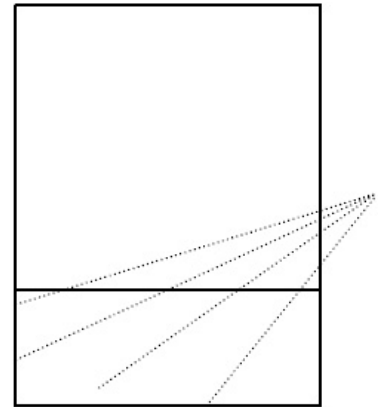
4. When I start the music, we will all “turn off” the talking, and “turn on” the drawing. If you have any questions, please ask them now before we begin.



ADD PERSPECTIVE LINES [5 minutes]

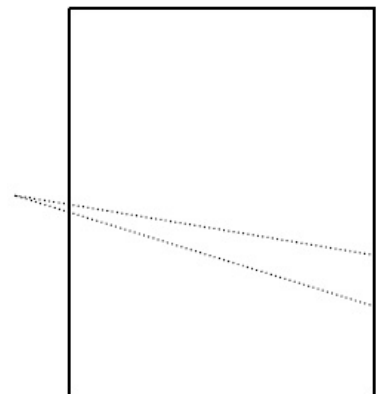
The Ballerina Floor:

1. Draw a horizontal line in the lower third of the paper behind (but not through) the ballerina, for the back of the floor.
2. Make a dot near the middle of one side of the grid paper for a vanishing point.
3. Make several (3 to 7) dots along the bottom and lower side edges.
4. Very lightly connect each of the bottom dots with the vanishing point.
5. Erase the connecting lines above the back floor line.
6. Go over the PERSPECTIVE lines with the black pencil.



The Jockey Fence:

1. Make a dot near the middle on the left side of the paper for a vanishing point.
2. Make two dots on the right edge of the frame in the lower third of the paper for the bottom and top of a fence.
3. Very lightly connect each of the dots with the vanishing point.
4. Erase the connecting lines outside of the frame.
5. Add vertical posts onto fence. Posts to the left will be closer together and farther apart as you continue adding them to the right.
6. Go over fence lines with the black pencil.



THE CHALK STAIN [5 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. Place a dot in an upper corner to mark your light source. (Draw a large arrow pointing out the direction on your demonstration project 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 or ground.

6. Now that you know what you have to do, add some color, highlights, and shadow to your drawing.

MOUNTING YOUR ARTWORK [1 minute]

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 [1 minute]

(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.