

The Colors of Impressionism: An Approach to French Culture and Language

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Introduction and Rationale

Imagine standing before an audience of your peers. You are confidently talking about a work of art. You are an “art critic”, sharing your informed opinion with an audience of students who are able to follow along and ask informed questions. Such is the vision which inspired me to develop this unit, a vision which developed directly from something in a text book. Lurking at the end of Chapter One of the high school French book amidst the usual vocabulary and grammar requirements is a splash of color. It is the first extended cultural reading encountered by the students and it is about the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists of France. Having, like many people, an instinctive but by no means very knowledgeable love of this period in art, I pour the energy and enthusiasm I feel into my teaching in an attempt to draw in all my students, even the most reluctant. Some students are quite knowledgeable about art and share my enthusiasm. Most textbook courses provide extra resources on French art, usually including overhead transparencies of great works from different periods, sometimes accompanied by the inevitable worksheets. For the past few years, I have approached it from a slightly different angle. Worksheets have, more often than not, the unfortunate effect of killing interest. They become tasks needing completing and are checked off the students’ “to-do” lists as quickly as possible. How would it be then, if instead of plodding through readings and comprehension questions, students became “art critics” who were able to discuss paintings with insight, and, above all, have a context for their speaking?

When a teacher is struck by mid-unit inspiration, it may be rather impromptu, but often leads to the liveliest and most interesting lessons. On this particular occasion, I showed the students transparencies and, through careful questioning, brought the students to a point where they were able to recognize and describe the major differences between French Classical Art and Impressionism and Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, the Fauvists and Symbolism. The students noted vocabulary they would need to become “art critics” and then talked about different “mystery” paintings, deciding which artist had produced each painting and discussing the various technical elements in the picture that helped them arrive at their decisions.

I felt immense satisfaction when I saw just how much students were able to participate and how confidently they were expressing themselves in French. The students themselves felt motivated and proud. Moments like this are, to me, what teaching is all

about. Creating such moments is sometimes challenging in a busy year with the demands of the highly condensed and accelerated path that most public-school students have to take to learn a foreign language.

This year, 2009, was the inaugural year of the Charlotte Teachers' Initiative and a seminar was offered on Color. This was an ideal opportunity to expand my knowledge of the physics and chemistry of color. In this way, I could come to a deeper understanding of the developments in the production of paints and the theory of color, which made the bright colors of Impressionism possible. My vision, then, is to develop my initial concept to a more extensive and structured unit with the aim of drawing students into French culture and art. I want to place students in a situation where they will have a natural desire to express their ideas after they have learned enough vocabulary and structure to be able to do so successfully. More ambitious still, I also want to make the students think about art as a part of society, as a mirror of its world. The Impressionists, with their new color palette and interest in light and how color is perceived, are a mirror of, or perhaps more accurately, a window into the latter part of nineteenth century France.

In the mid eighteenth hundreds, much of ancient Paris was razed to the ground, modernized and sanitized under Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann, and many helpless Parisians were made homeless by the inexorable march of modernity. The killing of the French puppet Emperor Maximilian in Mexico in 1867 and France's humiliating defeat by the Prussians in 1871 added to the social and political upheaval. The Impressionists' rebellion and rejection of classical art bore witness to the social upheaval of the époque. Improvements in technology and new, synthetic colors enabled them to bring their ideas and rebellion to the canvas and leave them for future generations. The appeal of these attractive rebels and their art can help students to experience another time – its challenges and its achievements. Through learning about the Impressionists' rebellion in color, theme and vision, students can catch a glimpse of the complex web created by the interrelationship of society, politics, science, technology and culture. They will be brought closer to this world by approaching it in its own language – French.

In our increasingly global, multi-cultural world, foreign language should find its way to become an integral part of the curriculum rather than a pleasant but rather unnecessary embellishment or mere “icing on the cake” of the core curriculum. A study of French Impressionism – bound up as it is with the contemporary advances in the science of light and color as well as with the social upheaval of its time – relates the study of the French language and culture to science, history, art and music. Impressionism is placed in a relevant context for modern-day students. Students make cross-cultural and historical comparisons, and make connections which help them understand the modern world. The unit is aimed primarily at intermediate-level high school students who have sufficiently developed language skills to listen and read about color and art in French and who can express more advanced concepts orally. It can be adapted for students of different ages and at different levels of proficiency. It presupposes, at all levels, a foreign language

class where the students feel supported and do not fear ridicule if their efforts are less than perfect.

My hope is that this experience will be interesting, even exciting, and, in some small way, transformative. One of the goals for foreign language teaching is to help students to relate to the world outside their own country, and come to accept and enjoy cultural differences. Another equally important goal is for students to see that, underneath these differences, human beings are fundamentally similar as they take part in the unfolding drama of their countries and times. In our country and time there is upheaval and self-questioning. America and much of the modern world has been shaken by terrorism, wars and economic recession. We are, like the French in the latter half of the nineteenth century, a society which is questioning itself. To explore how the uncertainty of our times impacts today's artists, I will ask each student to find a work of art by a modern, American artist and see a little of the color and vision of our times.

Overview

Many students study foreign language because it is “required” if they wish to graduate on a four-year college track. They are by no means “language buffs” or even convinced that knowledge of a second language is necessary, interesting, enriching or desirable. After all, is it not true that much of the world understands English, admires America and watches American movies? All too often, the foreign language is a “subject” on the edge of the curriculum and the fascination of opening a window on a foreign culture is all but lost. Humans are social beings and are endlessly fascinated by communication with one another. Foreign language should then appeal to even the most recalcitrant of students if the beacon of communication is kept alight.

Many of my students at Providence High School in Charlotte, North Carolina (PHS) come from relatively affluent families. Students of foreign language are generally on a college track. Students who choose French often have a reason – a love of the sound of French, an interest in French cuisine, a parent who has a degree in French, family roots in France or a love of French culture. Suffice it to say, that these students usually study French because they choose to do so and thus have an added level of motivation. Some have also experienced travel to other countries and bring an extra level of understanding to the study of another culture. I am privileged to have these receptive students in my classes and have an urgent sense of the need to engage and motivate them.

Although this unit focuses on high-school students, some activities may certainly be adapted for younger students. Colors are an integral part of any foreign language curriculum as they are part of the initial, basic vocabulary taught. The initial activity involving color cut outs and the formation of a color wheel mural is an example. Again, it is always helpful to a student of any level to see foreign language fitting in with the

other subjects they are studying. Impressionist art is attractive and lively and a form of art to which most student populations are able to relate. The unit may be used as a whole, or parts of it may be used as time and individual circumstances and constraints permit.

This unit takes students through a simple understanding of the science of color and a concomitant vocabulary “brainstorm” into the world of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. After a global introduction to the movement – including reference to Impressionist music - activities focus on carefully selected individual paintings illustrating different aspects of the use of color and paint and of nineteenth century French society. The unit culminates in students producing their own image or work of art, which shall display a deliberate use of color based on ideas studied. The students shall use what they have learned about color to add to the visual impact of their work of art. Students will then present their work to the class and give a short explanation of the effect that they intend their work to have on the observer and the techniques they used to obtain that effect. They must also explain which French artist inspired their work. Different options allow each student, regardless of innate artistic talent, the opportunity to produce a successful and satisfying work of art. This may be adapted easily for less advanced students by allowing them to present their works in English.

Background

Social and political events in Paris

In his work “*Impressionism: Art, Leisure and Parisian Society*”, the eminent art historian Robert L. Herbert eloquently describes the situation of Paris during the early nineteenth century and the changes wrought by Napoleon III and his minister, Baron Haussmann (1). The Paris of the early 1800s was a city of narrow, winding streets and unsanitary dwellings. Emperor Louis Napoleon had seen the benefits of modernization in the city of London. He had been impressed by developments in hygiene and architecture which had transformed London into a modern metropolis, and decided to completely modernize Paris. Paris should become the “first city” of Europe – a showcase for French culture and technology. This modernization took a human toll as Baron Haussmann had many poorer districts razed to the ground to make way for new construction. The poor were unceremoniously evicted and sent out towards the outskirts of the city and many monuments and residences of ancient Paris were destroyed. Streets were widened, and squares, new bridges and new residences were built, creating the beautiful buildings and boulevards for which Paris is known today. By 1867, when Paris housed a world exhibition, France was ready to display its new wealth and the prominence of its industry. Shortly thereafter, Napoleon III’s modernized Paris and his autocratic regime both came under threat from internal and external forces. First of all, Baron Haussmann was relieved of his ministerial position following increasingly vociferous criticism of his

ruthless methods. Following this, Napoleon III was defeated by the Prussians and Paris was under siege for four humiliating months. An armistice was eventually signed but insurgents – who were outraged by the humiliation of the war – set up a rival government called the Commune. The insurgents came under attack after three months and there was a bloody civil war. Thousands of communards were executed without trial, and Paris was only to return to some sense of normality three years later. Finally there was a period of prosperity. The area around the *Grands Boulevards* was the wealthiest area of Paris, and the advantages of the broad, light, open avenues inherited from Baron Haussmann were finally fully appreciated.

Many Impressionist painters had protested against the authoritarianism of Louis Napoleon but nevertheless appreciated the light and beauty of this new city and wanted to paint contemporary society. Social conditions were ripe for the innovations the Impressionists would bring to French art, and new paint colors gave them the materials to do so. In the words of Robert L. Herbert: “Monet and Renoir ... interpreted (Hausmann’s) light and air in terms of the intense color-light of their new palette” (2).

The French Art Establishment

Just as French society had felt the restraints of an authoritarian regime, French art was ruled over by the iron hand of the French Academy. The officials of the Academy selected which works by artists were to be displayed at the Salon, their annual exhibition. It was necessary for artists to have their work shown in the Salon in order to be able to become well known by the new, wealthy middle classes. Academic art at the time placed emphasis on “drawing, on line and form, light and shade – a triumph of *disegno* over *colore*”(3). The subject of art was to be suitably intellectual and was to work with lofty themes drawn from classical mythology, history or religion. Art was for the élite – or the middle classes who were aspiring to be part of the élite. The finish of the paintings was to be polished and smooth and there was no room for innovation. Artists studied at the Academy’s school and their training emphasized: “drawing over painting, imitation over inspiration, composition over color, and a finished surface over a more painterly one” (4).

French Art was therefore mired in the past and it is easy to see that the time was ripe for an injection of new blood. Paris had undergone a complete modernization, and industry was developing at a rapid rate, yet French artists were still painting carefully composed Greek and Roman themes in colors unlike those of the bright and modern city of Paris, with its tree-lined boulevards, public parks and graceful new buildings.

The Advent of Photography

Photography was born in these tumultuous years, offering an alternative to the traditional portrait to those who wished to have their own image captured on paper. The first positive photograph was made by the Frenchman Joseph-Nicéphore Niepce in 1826. He

subsequently collaborated with a Parisian theater designer Louis-Jacques Mandé Daguerre. The latter's "daguerreotypes" required an exposure time of thirty minutes and were considered a form of art rather than a way to document modern life. Early photographers were often painters.

It is important to understanding the genesis of Impressionism that both Manet and Degas studied photography in the 1860s. The lighting necessary for photography and the directness of its relationship to the subject thus became part of their artistic foundation, and this experience had an effect on their subsequent development. Indeed, critics complained about "the flatness of the forms, illuminated with a direct, bright light more reminiscent of photography than painting" (5). Photography captured a moment in time without the stifling conventions of the French Academy. The painter and art historian Eugène Fomentin felt that photography's directness was likely to lead to a moral decline in painting, as it was "so clear, so explicit, so formal, so crude" (6). Philip Ball draws compares this negative view of photography to the art establishment's opinion of Manet's *Olympia* (1863) which was considered to be similarly shocking and disturbing (7). Photography was thought to be a threat to painting's very existence, yet the Impressionists still had an advantage over early photography: "...if photography could stop or freeze time ... painting and drawing could represent time by recording motion" (8). Richard R. Brettell makes the point that when photography finally caught up with shorter exposure times, Impressionism can be viewed, from a certain standpoint, as being "obsolete" (9).

Science, Technology and Color Theory

Other areas of science and technology were developing at a rapid pace during this time period. The textile industry was transformed by the power loom, cotton gin and sewing machine. Steam engines were developed and gave power to new factories which produced cast iron, steel and ceramics. Steam also allowed the development of new modes of transport. Steam locomotives could already reach a speed of 30 miles per hour by the mid 1800s. Between 1852 and 1870, the number of railroads in France tripled, enabling the middle classes – including artists - to engage in leisure travel. France's overseas trade quadrupled and the creation of banks followed. France was becoming a modern state with a complex economy. The population of Paris increased and its medieval, narrow streets were no longer sufficient for the needs of the population – giving rise to the need for Haussmann's modernization project. Paris became, under Napoleon III, the center of Europe. Even the stiff reparations demanded by the Prussians and the damage caused by their siege of Paris were not enough to halt the course of modernity.

Colors and dyes were not immune from the march of progress. Michel-Eugène Chevreul, the director of the Gobelins dyeworks in Paris, investigated the reasons for the dullness of certain dyes when used in tapestries. He realized that complementary colored

threads, when placed side by side, would merge on the retina of the observer when viewed from a distance giving a gray tone (optical mixing). However, with larger areas of color, where optical mixing on the retina was not taking place, complementary colored threads when placed side by side actually enhanced one another and each of the colors appeared stronger. His work "*De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs*" was published in 1839. Chevreul also devised a complex color wheel divided into seventy-four segments which mapped the variation of tone between white and black. The work of the German Hermann von Helmholtz was also important. He argued that artists could only hope to reproduce the effects of natural light through using color contrasts, because the pigments available at the time could not reproduce nature's true colors (10). He used the pigments available to make mixtures based on Chevreul's complementaries. The American physicist Ogden Rood took this work further and the Impressionists referred constantly to his work.

There were also innovations in the production of paints during this time period. Watercolor cakes – which were convenient to use – were developed in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the steam engine allowed pigments to be crushed mechanically rather than by hand or by stone rollers powered by horses. The collapsible metal tube was invented in 1841 to replace the use of pig bladders for storing paints. This was much more convenient and particularly important for the Impressionists who wanted to paint outdoors "en plein air". According to Renoir: "without paints in tubes, there would have been no Cézanne, no Monet, no Sisley or Pissarro, nothing of what the journalists were later to call Impressionism" (11). One negative side to the increasing commercialization of paints was that many artists – including Impressionist artists – no longer knew much about their pigments or even how to distinguish good paints from bad. Some paint suppliers adulterated their paints with materials like chalk or gypsum to make them go further. Some paints discolored and faded over time, something which greatly worried Degas who was one of the few painters of the time to attempt to know and understand his palette.

The pigments used in paintings were, up until the 1600s, mineral or organic colors taken from nature – ultramarine, azurite, indigo, ochre, cochineal red lake, vermilion, red lead and copper resinate, for example. Baroque color manufacturers discovered how to make synthetic versions of certain natural pigments, thereby gaining more control over the particular hues. These were pigments from synthetic iron oxides. In the eighteenth century, sulphuric acid was used in the textile industry and became more readily available. Iron oxide is a by-product of the manufacture of sulphuric acid and therefore became cheaper. From 1770 onwards, chemists were discovering many of today's chemical elements. With the new list of elements on the periodic table, there were many more possibilities for creation of new pigments. The French chemist Lavoisier was the scientist who discovered that oxygen is an element taken up by burning substances. He then, with others, wrote a table of elements including eighteen metals. Lead white – the only white pigment in common use up until the end of the eighteenth century – was

causing acute health problems and greatly concerned the public health authorities in France. Lead white was used in art but also to paint houses and thus was causing widespread health problems. Guyton de Morveau was asked to produce a new, safer pigment. He pronounced that zinc oxide, which had been synthesized in France at the Dijon Academy, was the best pigment available.

In 1817, it was observed that one of the by-products produced by a zinc factory was a yellow oxide which was subsequently called cadmium. From this, cadmium yellow and cadmium orange were produced. Claude Monet, Édouard Manet and Berthe Morisot all used cadmium yellow in their paintings in the 1870s. Further experimentation with transition metals led to other new materials. Emerald green was developed in Germany from copper aceto-arsenite, and precipitations of lead chromate with lead sulfate gave varying yellows including deep lemon yellow. The Parisian, Pannetier, obtained a transparent green called viridian from chromium oxide. This was a color which the Impressionists and Cézanne often used in their paintings. Cobalt salts yielded cobalt blue and subsequently cerulean blue and cobalt green as well as the first new purple pigment – cobalt violet. Synthetic ultramarine was also produced, making this previously prohibitively expensive pigment affordable. The palette of colors of the nineteenth century artist thus contained many more colors than in previous centuries and many of these new pigments were brighter and more vivid than the colors available in earlier time periods.

France was at the forefront of chemistry but the French academicians were cautious in their acceptance of colors which had not been tried and tested and wanted them to undergo more study before being used in art. Their concerns were not unfounded as can be seen by the example of the English artist, Turner, who avidly used new pigments as soon as he could get them. Some of the colors were not stable and this left some of the works painted in the early and mid 19th century in a poor condition by the end of the nineteenth century. Some of the Impressionists were to make similar mistakes, but nevertheless, the scene was set for the brilliant colors and innovations of Impressionism to burst on the controlled, academic world of nineteenth century French art.

Strategies, Activities and Lessons

Time is always a constraint on activities. For this reason, I give examples of varied activities so that individual teachers may select those which fit the needs of their individual courses of study, schedules and personal interests.

Activities

Color and the color wheel (1)

At the beginning of the school year, I will have a wall prepared with a six-section color wheel (primary and secondary colors.) Sections will be marked with colored yarn and the circumference will be marked with images cut out from magazines. The images will be the color of the six sections of a traditional color wheel and the color will be marked beside each segment in French: jaune, orange, rouge, violet, bleu, vert. The students' first task will be to cut out items of each color from magazines (e.g. cars, flowers, houses.) They will bring these to class and say (in French) what each item is (good practice of the construction *c'est +nom modifié*) and its color, whether they like the color of the item and why. In this way, the concept of the color wheel will be introduced and students will have reviewed basic color vocabulary along with other common vocabulary. This part of the unit will take place over the course of a week as the students bring in their colored images. Their short presentations of their colored items will act as a warm-up to each class.

Color and the color wheel (2)

For the second stage of the unit, I will give the class directions in French on how to form a color wheel. Students will draw the wheel on cardboard using a compass and divide it into three equal segments. These segments will be in turn divided into four. They will mark the first segment of each of the three color zones with a *j* – for *jaune*, a *b* – for *bleu*, and a *r* – for *rouge*. They will then mix equal quantities of the primary colors to form the secondary colors and each combination of secondary and primary colors to give the tertiary colors. In this way, all sections will be painted. They will thus have a wheel with twelve segments (and will have had a good workout with the imperative in the process!)

Background to Impressionism

Students will view a Power Point presentation on the background to Impressionism – a simplified version of the background presented in this paper. Students will receive a copy of the Power Point presentation so that they can follow along and take notes without difficulty. They will then read an article in French about Impressionism. Students will read, look up vocabulary, and answer questions on the reading. The latter will be carefully framed in order to leave the student with answers which give a summary of what they have read.

Video: The Impressionists

During the following lesson, I will show a short video excerpt from a BBC Corporation series of programs on the Impressionists. It shows Monet and Renoir at la Grenouillère watching bathers disporting themselves and discussing what they actually can see – life, for Renoir, patches of color for Monet. It is followed by a scene with an aging Monet asking a journalist what he sees when he shows him a bunch of flowers. He is after the answer “colors”. I will then show the pictures Renoir and Monet were painting at la

Grenouillère, give some background and talk about the colors in the paintings. The pictures referred to are: *Bathers at la Grenouillère* by Claude Monet and *La Grenouillère* by Pierre-August Renoir. The video excerpt is brief and the discussion of the pictures will also be concise.

This activity will lead naturally to a discussion of the Impressionist palette of colors. I will distribute a colored photocopy of a typical palette of colors used by the Impressionists to each student. Which colors are new synthetic colors and which are natural colors? Where would the colors be placed on a color wheel? Which are the complementary colors? I will pass around the classroom some particularly beautiful photographs of French landscape and students will identify some of the same colors in the photographs and be encouraged to look carefully to see if shadows are actually black and whether white exists in nature. Can students see many different colors in areas of photographs which give the general impression of being one particular color?

Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Paintings

This will be followed by a power point presentation with different paintings chosen to represent aspects of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting and the choice of colors by the artists. Paintings will be displayed on an LCD projector and a commentary about them will be given in French. The commentary will also refer to events in French society. Students will be given a copy of the slides so that they need to listen but are not too occupied with writing and are able to look at the paintings. A suggested list of paintings is given in Appendix B.

Song: Regard Impressioniste – Yves Duteuil (11)

Students receive a copy of the words to this song with some words omitted. The words omitted will be words important to Impressionism (e.g. *lumière, soleil*.) Students will listen to the song several times, fill in the text and discuss the meaning of the text (see Appendix D.)

Student Art Assignment

The next stage of the unit will be a student art assignment. Students will be charged with selecting an artist from those presented in the power point presentation. They will then create their own work of art using aspects of the artist's use of color and technique. They will place patches of the colors they have used in their picture on a disposable artist's palette (available at craft stores) and prepare a short speech in French (100-150 words). In their speech, they will tell which artist they selected, their reasons, how they have used color and incorporated techniques (big brush strokes, dots of color, bold patches of color, complementary colors, for example). Students will be shown simple sets of pastel crayons, color crayons, inexpensive oil paints and acrylic paints available inexpensively

from craft stores, and may choose the medium which they would like to use. They will also be shown a collage. Ideas for the projects are given in Appendix C. The teacher may decide to allow students to do their artwork during class and choose art projects accordingly.

The students' art will be graded according to a rubric so that it is clear what is expected. The art will be displayed and students will vote (secret ballot) on which work of art they would most like to hang in their room. Works of art will be selected for display. In our school they will be presented at our annual International Dinner which is organized by the foreign language clubs.

Epitaphs

Groups of students will write a 100-word obituary and design a tombstone for artists without mentioning their names. This is prepared in class but students must bring in facts about the artists' lives which they will have researched either at home or as an additional classroom assignment according to time available. The classroom will be darkened and students will go around with flashlights and visit each "grave" and decide which artist is "in each grave" according to the details given in the obituary. This activity is particularly appropriate around Halloween.

Contemporary Artists' Visions of Our World

The final stage will be for each student to find and bring in an image of a modern work of art by an American artist. There will then be a group discussion about the colors, techniques and themes we can see in the art. Students will say whether they find the art innovative and rebellious or whether it seems more classical in nature. The discussion will be conducted in French.

Notes

- (1) Herbert, Robert L. *Impressionism: Art, Leisure and Parisian Society*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. p. 1 – 32
- (2) Herbert, p. 18
- (3) Eggebeen, Janna and Clarkin, Maura , *French Impressionism/ Post Impressionism*. The Department of Teacher and School Programs, Education Division, Washington D.C., The Editor's Office of the National Gallery of Art, 1990.

- (4) Ball, Philip. *Bright Earth: Art and the Invention of Color*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001. p. 169
 - (5) Ball. p. 285
 - (6) Eggebeen and Clarkin, p. 12
 - (7) Ball, p. 285
 - (8) Brettell, Richard R. *Impression: Painting Quickly in France 1860 – 1890*, New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000. p. 57
 - (9) Brettell, p. 57
 - (10) Ball, p. 178
 - (11) Ball, p. 180
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Additional Resources for Teachers

“Michel-Eugène Chevreul’s principles of color harmony and contrast”. Handprint Watercolors, April 15 2008

<http://www.handprint.com/HP/WCL/chevreul>

“Les couleurs de Monet”. A. Caudelier, October 25 2006.

<http://www.intermonet.com/colors/couleurs.htm>

“WRI 152/153: Impression and the Making of Modernism”. Sarah Sherman, 2008.

<http://blogs.princeton.edu/wri152-3/sdsherma/archives/002008.html>

“The 12-Step Color Wheel”. artSparx.com, 2009.

<http://artsparx.com/colorwheel.asp>

“How we see color”. artSparx.com, 2009

<http://www.artsparx.com/seeingcolor.html>

“Michel-Eugène Chevreul.” Echo Productions, 1999.

<http://www.colorsystem.com>

“Nicholas Ogden Rood.” Echo Productions, 1999

<http://www.colorsystem.com>

“Color in Art – Impressionism and Expressionism.” Professor Elizabeth Bisbing, Farleigh Dickinson University.

<http://alpha.edu/~bisbing/impressexpress.html>

“L’impressionnisme: la science des contrastes.” Benchmark Group, 2008.

<http://www.journaldunet.com/science/art-et-science/impressionisme/impressionisme.html>

“La couleur au fil des siècles 4/4.” Syndicat National des Ophthalmologistes de France. No date retrievable.

<http://www.snof.org/histoire/couleurs4.html>

“Impressionnisme.” L’Académie de Reims. No date retrievable.

http://www.crdp-reims.fr/artsculture/dossiers_peda/impressionnisme.pdf

This pdf document may be used for educational purposes.

<http://www.impressionniste.net/index.htm>

Web-sy 2004 – 2008

This is a site about Impressionism and exhibits of artists in France. It also introduced me to the words of the song by Yves Duteil about Impressionism, which I later purchased so that students could hear it in the classroom (details given below.)

http://www.musee_orsay.fr/fileadmin/mediatheque/integration_MO/PDF/Expos.impressionnistes.pdf

This is another good pdf document about the subject

<http://decormag.com/decormag/client/fr/Chroniques/DetailNouvelle.asp?idNews=23140&idSm=220>

This site has a color wheel explained in French

<http://www.ficml.org/jemimap/style/color/couleur.html>

This site has an interactive color wheel in French

http://www.autourdupapier.fr/site/fiches_techniques/fiche_roue.pdf

This site has an explanation of the color wheel in French and an activity for students to do.

<http://semsci.u-strasbg.fr/pigments.htm>

This has a useful list of pigments in French

<http://mtholyoke.edu/courses/rschwartz/hist255/la/delacroix.html>

Site which talks about Delacroix and Romanticism

<http://www.edupics.com>

Many pictures by the Impressionists can be viewed on this site.

<http://www.nga.gov/feature/monet/manetbro.pdf>

This document discusses the controversy over the Gare St. Lazare.

<http://royalacademy.org.uk/exhibitions/citizensandkings/comparative-page,329,AR.html>

Discussion of David's *Napoleon in his Study* (1812)

<http://www.learn.columbia.edu/monet/surf/>

This is a wonderful interactive site which shows Monet's series of paintings of Rouen Cathedral in different lights.

Other useful tools :

Duteil, Yves. *Chante l'air des Mots*. Album released by Les Editions de l'Ecritoire, May 20, 2009. Track 17 is called *Regard Impressioniste*. This is a good song to study with students. I highly recommend ordering the following teacher resource from the National Gallery of Art, Washington. It can be ordered on-line, is free for teachers, and may be kept for several months. It provides a very informative guide to Impressionism and gives helpful points to assist discussion of individual paintings.

Eggebeen, Janna and Clarkin, Maura, *French Impressionism/ Post Impressionism*. The Department of Teacher and School Programs, Education Division, Washington D.C, The Editor's Office of the National Gallery of Art, 1990.

Videos:

The Impressionists. BBC, 2006

This is a mini-series dramatizing the life of the Impressionists. I used a scene in my activities to illustrate the Impressionists' way of looking at nature. Caution should, however, be exercised as other scenes of bohemian life are not suitable for viewing in a classroom.

Tavernier, Bernard. *Dimanche à la campagne*. Kino Video, 1984.

A delightful movie with no problematic scenes. The movie has scenes where you are suddenly aware that the actors and the décor deliberately echo different impressionist paintings. You can have fun working them out for yourself, or obtain the guide to the movie produced by Film Arobics which can be purchased at filmarobics.com

Appendix A

North Carolina State Standards Addressed

The following list of standards addressed is not intended to be an exhaustive listing.

STRANDS: LISTENING, READING, SPEAKING, WRITING

COMPETENCY GOAL 1: INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION - The learner will engage in conversation and exchange information and opinions orally and in writing in the target language.

Objective 1.03: Express preferences, feelings, emotions, and opinions giving supporting details orally and in writing.

COMPETENCY GOAL 3: PRESENTATIONAL COMMUNICATION – The learner will present information, concept, and ideas to an audience of listeners or readers on a variety of topics in the target language.

Objective 3.05: Summarize and interpret information from authentic material orally and in writing.

COMPETENCY GOAL 4: CULTURES – The learner will gain knowledge and demonstrate understanding of the relationship among practices, products, and perspectives, of cultures other than his/her own.

Objective 4.04: Examine historical and contemporary literature and the arts in order to understand the cultural practices and perspectives of the target cultures.

Objective 4.06: Discuss the influence of important people, events, and achievements of the target countries on their own and other cultures.

COMPETENCY GOAL 5: COMPARISONS –The learner will develop insight into the nature of language and culture by comparing his/her own language(s) and culture(s) to others.

5.06: Understand selected economic, political, and social events that have shaped the target culture and their relationship to the United States across time.

COMPETENCY GOAL 6: CONNECTIONS – The learner will acquire, reinforce, and further his/her knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Appendix B

The following are suggested art projects which may be used to illustrate artists' different uses of color and theme. All may be offered or a few may be selected according to the teacher's preference.

1. The Academy - Neo-classicism: David's *Napoleon in his study* 1812. (Darker colors, Napoleon in a classical stance, painting for the glory of France)
2. Courbet - Realism: *The Stonebreakers* 1849. (Painting the mundane, palette knife used. Somber, dark pigments.)
3. Delacroix – Romanticism: *Liberté Guidant le Peuple* 1830. (Heroic poses, blue white and red elements refer to colors of the French flag, allegory of liberty)
4. Manet: *Gare St. Lazare* 1873 (The railway and the modern world; the woman is looking at us directly; drawing is not “finished”; painting “en plein air”)
5. Morisot: *Summer's day* 1879. (Fluttering brush strokes (Herbert p. 150) background and forms hue and lightness nearly match/ diffuse color-light wraps subjects and gives atmospheric unity. Accents to zones of color not shapes e.g. contrast of blue parasol and orange gunwale or red hair and green foliage.)
6. Monet: *Regatta at Argenteuil* 1872. (Theme of the middle class at play; complementary colors.) *Lavacourt under Snow* 1878 – 1880 (White does not exist in nature)
7. Monet: *Rouen Cathedral* 1894 (Show several of the paintings to see the different lights and colors visible at the different times of day.)
8. Renoir: *Boating on the Seine* 1879 – 1880 (Cobalt blue and chrome orange.)

9. Seurat: Pointillism. *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* 1884 – 1886. (Colors to be mixed by eyes.)
10. Van Gogh: interpretation and expression. *Night Café* 1888 (atmosphere of desolations, colors which jar) and *Gauguin's Chair* 1888 (Chair personifying its owner; simplicity; blue shadows)
11. Gauguin: The siesta 1891 – 1892 (Exoticism, colors used for effect not to match nature.)

Appendix C

The following are examples of art projects. Several may be selected to offer to students allowing them a choice.

- a. A “Van Gogh” still life – one simple item with a background. Using an item to represent a person.
- b. Select a small part of a painting by one of the artists to trace and then fill in the colors. The colors may be a copy of the artist’s own colors or different. In each case, the student will explain what effect he/she feels that these colors produce and why. Are complementary colors used?
- c. A simple picture of an item with a shadow. What color is the shadow and why?
- d. A “Monet” white scene where white is in fact many colors.
- e. Select a photograph. Trace the outlines and color in the style of an Impressionist or Post-Impressionist artist.
- f. Sketch or copy a simple item and background. Instead of paint, fill in with collage – cut out tiny piece of color from magazine pages using a hole puncher. Again, use color thinking about complementary colors and color effects.
- g. A series of three photographs of student’s own house or garden at three different times of the day and in three different lights. The photographs must be taken from exactly the same spot. Photographs must be mounted, the time of day clearly noted. Student must present the dominant colors of the different times of day on their palette.

Appendix D

Lyrics for the song by Yves Duteil (from the album *Chante l'air des mots* released by *Les Editions de l'Ecritoire*, May 20, 2009 – track 17.)

I have printed in bold suggested words which can be omitted in the student version of the text. Students can fill the words in whilst listening. These words could be pre-taught and given to students in random order if preferred. I have picked out words which have an importance to Impressionism (light, garden, sun) and which refer to particular paintings (divan bizarre, tables.)

Regard impressioniste

Il y avait au **jardin** des bouquets de **lumière**
Le **soleil** traversait les **couleurs** du sous-bois
Au bord du bel **étang** un pêcheur solitaire
S'endormait doucement, sa canne entre les bras
C'était un jour d'été, **léger** comme un dimanche
L'air était **transparent** sous le feuillage **clair**
Le **bonheur** était là, paisible, entre les branches
Et les **reflets** mouvants des arbres et des fougères
Le soleil **inondait** le bord de la rivière

Des couples enlacés **dansaient** sur le ponton
Près des **tables** encombrées de bouteilles et de verres
Des **guirlandes** accrochées croulaient sous les balcons
Une femme debout **regardait** quelque chose
Une **lueur** magique au fond de son regard
Son bras disparaissait sous un **bouquet de roses**
Elle était appuyée sur un **divan bizarre**
C'était au **Grand Palais**, sur des toiles de maîtres
Il y avait un **Monet** et deux ou trois **Renoir**
Le cœur dans les **tableaux** je me sentais renaître
Et en fermant les yeux je pourrais les revoir
Le monde a la **beauté** du regard qu'on y pose
Le **jardin** de Monet, le **soleil** de Renoir
Ne sont que le **reflet** de leur **vision** des choses
Dont chacun d'entre nous peut être le **miroir**
La vie nous **peint** les jours au hasard du voyage
En amour en douleur ou en mélancolie
C'est un peu de ce temps qu'on laisse en **héritage**
Enrichi du **regard** qu'on a posé sur lui.