

The Swing

By Auguste Renoir

Print Facts

- Medium: Oil on canvas
- Date: 1876
- Size: 92 x 73 cm
- Location: Musee d' Orsay, Paris
- Period: Association with Impressionists
- Style: Impressionism
- Genre: Exterior
- Renoir used models to pose for this painting. The woman is Jeanne, a young woman from Montmartre and the man is his brother, Edmund.
- A young man seen from the back is talking to a young woman standing on a swing, watched by a little girl and another man, leaning against the trunk of a tree. Renoir gives us the impression of surprising a conversation – as if in a snapshot, he catches the glances turned towards the man seen from the back. The young woman is looking away as if she were embarrassed. The foursome in the foreground is balanced by the group of five figures sketchily brushed in the background. Renoir is particularly trying to catch the effects of sunlight dappled by the foliage. The patches of pale colour, particularly on the clothing and the ground, render the quivering light.
(from www.musee-orsay.fr)

Artist Facts

- Pronounced (rehn-WAR)
- Born February 25, 1841 in Limoges, France
- Died December 3, 1919, France (age 78)
- Renoir grew up in Paris, France.
- Renoir began studying art in Paris, France.
- Grew up in a working class family and as a boy worked in a porcelain factory where his drawing talents led him to paint designs on fine china.
- He married Aline Victorine Charigot, who modeled in his painting Luncheon of the Boating Party.
- Renoir painted approximately 6,000 paintings and painted for nearly 60 years of his life.
- Renoir continued painting late in his life even though he had severe arthritis and had to have an assistant place a paintbrush in his hand.
- Two of Renoir's paintings have sold for more than 70 million dollars each!
- One of Renoir's sons was an actor and another was a filmmaker.
- To view a biography, go to http://www.artble.com/artists/pierre-auguste_renoir

Key Principle of Design to Teach

- **Repetition and Rhythm:** Repetition occurs when an artist repeats an item or element in a work of art. By repeating a particular element or combination of elements (such as color, shape or lines), artists can sometimes create the illusion of motion or stability or represent patterns and

textures. Often this is done to help unify an artwork. The regular repetition of a particular element can make the artwork seem active or suggest visual vibration.

Possible Questions and Suggestions to Teach Repetition and Rhythm

- What shapes can you see repeated? (The dappled sunlight on the ground and clothing and the bows on the woman's dress are the same basic shapes -organic, not geometric- repeated throughout the painting in different values.)
- Have you ever been underneath a tree and watched the sun move through the leaves? What does it look like? Point out the light and shadows repeated throughout the painting on the people and things underneath the trees. Turn off the lights. Use a flashlight and fake leaves/flowers to recreate the "dappled sunlight" on someone's clothes.
- Why do you think the artist uses repetition? (unifies the painting, makes it interesting to look at, if he did it in only one spot it would look funny and out of place, should always repeat things in a painting at least once)
- How do the repeating bows keep your attention focused on the woman on the swing? (takes you up to look at her face)
- If you have one, show something like a toy car that shakes. Tell them that Renoir was creating movement in his painting by using repetition and rhythm. This creates a visual vibration.

Keywords

- Repetition, Rhythm, Texture, Colors, Light, Value, Cool (receding) colors

Other Possible Questions

- Using several different pieces of paper, cover everything but the man. Gradually take off pieces of paper and continue to discover parts of the painting.
- What is this man doing? Who do you think he's talking to?
- What is the woman doing?
- What are the man and the child by the tree doing in this painting? (They are viewing what is happening just like we are.)
- What do you think the man and the woman on the swing are talking about?
- Do they look like friends or strangers? Why?
- Why do you think the woman is looking away as the man is talking to her? (She is embarrassed.)
- Do you see any other people in this painting? (Look closely at the background.)
- What colors do you see in this painting? Are they cool or warm? (mostly cool)
- What season is it in this painting? How can you tell? (green leaves)
- Is it a shady or sunny spot? How can you tell? How do you think the artist achieved or painted it this way?
- Where are the dark areas of this painting? The light areas?
- What is the mood of this painting? How does it make you feel?
- Would you like to spend an afternoon in this spot?

- Do the tree trunks look smooth or rough? What about the men's hats?
- What else (besides the bows) keeps you focused on the woman? (The man is looking at her.)
- How do the man and the child near the tree keep your attention focused on the man talking? (They are looking at him.)