

Harvest Scene or Haymaking by Paul Gauguin

Print Facts

- Medium:
- Date: 1889
- Size: 92 x 73.3 cm
- Location: Courtauld Institute Galleries, London
- Period: Breton period
- Style: Post-Impressionism
- Genre: Rural scene or genre painting
- This painting is known for its bright colors and its sharp, out-lined edges
- He painted this in Le Pouldu in Brittany, in a search for a simpler life.
- Gauguin was intrigued by folk and primitive art, and he used distorted perspectives and flat spaces of color

Artist Facts

- Pronounced: (goh-GAN)
- Born in 1848 in Paris, France
- Died in 1903 in Tahiti (age 55)
- Spent most of his childhood in Peru.
- At the age of seventeen he enlisted in the merchant marine (people who work on commercial ships) in order to fulfill France's military service requirement. After three years he joined the Navy, spending two more years there.
- In 1870 Gauguin began a career as a stockbroker (a person who buys and sells shares of companies) and remained in this profession for twelve years. He married a Danish girl, Mette Sophia Gad, and seemed destined for a comfortable middle-class existence. Gauguin was living a very traditional life as a Parisian stockbroker, family man and weekend painter.
- Gauguin at age 35 decided to give up his business after the stock market crashed and devote himself entirely to painting (with encouragement from Camille Pissaro). His wife took their five children back to live with her parents. In Paris, Gauguin supported himself by pasting advertisements on walls.
- Gauguin had an original style that included broad strokes of unmixed paint, bright colors and simplified designs.
- In 1891 Gauguin moved to the French colony of Tahiti. Most of his most famous paintings were painted here.
- In Tahiti he lived a life of poverty and his health deteriorated.
- Spent time in 1888 at the Yellow House in Arles staying with Van Gogh. The two did not get along over the course of their friendship.
- Some believe Gauguin was the one who actually cut off van Gogh's ear.
See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/may/04/vincent-van-gogh-ear>

Key Principle of Design to Teach

Movement creates the look and feel of action to guide the viewer's eye through the work.

Possible Questions and Suggestions to Teach Movement

- This piece is painted from top to bottom. The brushstrokes move in a downward direction like a waterfall to help take the viewer through the painting.
- The oxen are moving forward.
- What kind of tree is in the center of this painting? (A palm tree.) Do palm trees usually grow in fields? (No. He painted these Breton peasants working in a field in France.) Gauguin moved a lot throughout his life and lived in many different places. He liked to take different things from all the places he had been and insert them randomly into his paintings. He didn't just paint what he actually saw. It was his way of showing the movement of his own life in his work.

Keywords

- Movement, Brush Stroke, Perspective, Line, Texture, Form, Shape, Color

Other Possible Questions

- What are the people doing in this painting?
- What colors do you see in this painting? Which color do you see the most?
- Is this mostly a warm or cool painting? (Warm.) Do you think the peasants feel hot/warm working out in the field on a sunny day?
- What season do you think it is in this painting? (Fall, Harvest time)
- Can you tell what time of day it is? How does the artist depict the time of day?
- If you were in this painting what sounds would you hear? What smells would you smell?
- What do you think the weather is like on this day? How can you tell?
- Are the people in this painting men or women?
- What is the man doing in this painting? What are the women doing?
- What shapes can you see in this painting?