  
Artistic Transformations

NOTE: This lesson can be studied in conjunction with the [Head of Baudelaire](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/head-of-baudelaire.html) lesson on European Social Revolutions and Artistic movements to strengthen students’ knowledge on European history.

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| **Introduction** | |
| Edgar Degas (1834—1917) was a French Impressionist artist and is most well-known for his oil paintings, pastel drawings, and bronze sculptures. He is considered one of the founders of the Impressionist movement, but unlike his contemporaries, he mainly produced depictions of figures rather than landscapes. His work most notably illustrates movement—some of his most famous pieces feature ballet dancers.  Degas received a formal art education and attended the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. During his studies and early career, he was heavily influenced by the works of Renaissance artists. This is especially exemplified in the Head of a Young Man in Profile—he used Classical techniques, portrayed the nobility of human beings, and used realism in the face. While Degas’s interest in portraiture remained constant, he became increasingly interested in how someone’s mind and attitude could be portrayed through their countenance.  Most of Degas’ artistic productions occurred during the modernist period which was characterized by technological, scientific, and cultural innovations. The economic prosperity and optimism of La Belle Epoque contrasted with the violent and tempestuous Napoleonic Wars and World War I from which European countries were emerging. The desire to leave behind those belligerent years was reflected in France’s cultural and artistic scene, particularly in Paris where most artists were drawn towards new forms of entertainment.  Although Degas was a founding figure of the avant-garde Impressionist artistic movement that consisted in rejecting the classical art conventions, his academic art education is prominent in his art. His academic training consisted in emulating established masters and the classical tradition, often representing specific subjects and themes rooted in history taken from ancient and ‘exotic’ areas and mythology seeking to create highly polished artworks that exemplified the artist’s mastery of color and form.  Impressionism followed the rejection of classical art and emerged from the Modernist period that sought to experiment with new styles and techniques, using symbols to convey language and emotions. It is characterized by loosened brushwork and lightened palettes, pure intense colors. The Impressionists broke away from tradition by avoiding clarity of forms and abandoning linear perspective while representing scenes of nature, everyday life, and portraying the essence of a person, place, or object. | |
| **Indiana Standards Connections:**    WH.6.2 Trace major events and global consequences of WWI.    WH.6.4 Examine the events and developments of the interwar period and their impact on the beginning of WWII including the impact of WWI on society, the Great Depression, and the rise of totalitarianism.    S.2.1 Define culture and identify the material and non-material components of culture.  VA:Re.7.1.6a Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value.  VA:Cn11.1.6a Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses. | **Compelling Question(s):**  How does this drawing differ from other paintings and artworks by Degas?  How did European social movements influence Degas’ art practice?  What is Impressionism?  What are the main characteristics of this artistic movement? |
| **Lesson Objectives:**  Students will analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses. | |
| **Materials** | |
| Edgar Degas Background Information  [Edgar Degas (1834-1917): Painting and Drawing- The MET](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dgsp/hd_dgsp.htm)  [Edgar Degas- Art History YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXB187Gpz6I)  [Head of a Young Man in Profile- W2W Website](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/head-young-man.html)  Historical Context  [What is modern art? The MoMa](https://www.moma.org/collection/terms/modern-art/what-is-modern-art)  [Modern Thought and Culture in 1900- Crash Course](https://www.google.com/search?q=la+belle+epoque+crash+course&sca_esv=c935ac157191f824&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS1137US1137&ei=P3KSZ52cIY21ptQP1e7JmQQ&ved=0ahUKEwjdt6i-pYyLAxWNmokEHVV3MkMQ4dUDCBI&uact=5&oq=la+belle+epoque+crash+course&gs_lp=&sclient=gws-wiz-serp#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:a4cbd928,vid:xGjpTjeGuZc,st:0)  [Modernism (art term)- Tate Museum](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/modernism)  [Modernism- Poetry Foundation](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/152025/an-introduction-to-modernism)  [History of Modernism- Miami Dade College](https://www.mdc.edu/wolfson/academic/artsletters/art_philosophy/humanities/history_of_modernism.htm#:~:text=Modernism%3A%20Characteristics,art%2C%20politics%2C%20and%20science.)  [La Belle Epoque: The Twilight of the 19th Century- Miami Dade College](https://www.mdc.edu/wolfson/academic/artsletters/art_philosophy/humanities/belleepoque.htm)  Impressionism  [The case for Impressionism- The Art Assignment YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tw51Eh9vcw)  [What is Impressionism? Art Movements & Styles- National Galleries Scotland YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTOO-ukvs4g)  [Impressionism, an introduction- Smarthistory](https://smarthistory.org/a-beginners-guide-to-impressionism/)  [Impressionism: Art and Modernity- The MET](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/imml/hd_imml.htm) | |
| **Learning Plan** | |
| **Activities**  Day 1   1. Students will observe this drawing and describe the subject matter. Does it remind them of something? They might mention that the man’s profile reminds them of classic Greek sculptures with its strong and defined facial features, and its shading. Does the man’s face seem relaxed? What emotion is he conveying?  2. Introduce students to Degas as an artist who is considered the founder of Impressionism in the European artistic scene during 19th century [modernism](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/education/glossary/modernism) (Other lesson plans on the W2W website are ideal to teach in connection to this lesson). Highlight Degas’ classical training in the École de Beaux Arts. Although he was trained under classical artistic conventions that emphasized emulation and disregarded individual creativity, Degas’ later artworks differed from academic convention by illustrating movement and depicting the subjects’ emotional state. Show some examples of his other artworks-- [Head of a Young Man in Profile- W2W Website](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/head-young-man.html) provides some resources that illustrate the breadth of his from sculpture, paintings, and prints and different subjects represented such as landscapes and female figures, and his personal life.  3. Lead discussion on European history; begin with European Modernism and La Belle Époque. These lessons will provide historical background information to understand how social movements led to technological, cultural, and artistic innovations that in turn, influenced artists who reflected on these changes and portrayed them in their artworks.  Day 2   1. Watch, read, and discus: [Modern Thought and Culture in 1900- Crash Course](https://www.google.com/search?q=la+belle+epoque+crash+course&sca_esv=c935ac157191f824&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS1137US1137&ei=P3KSZ52cIY21ptQP1e7JmQQ&ved=0ahUKEwjdt6i-pYyLAxWNmokEHVV3MkMQ4dUDCBI&uact=5&oq=la+belle+epoque+crash+course&gs_lp=&sclient=gws-wiz-serp#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:a4cbd928,vid:xGjpTjeGuZc,st:0) 2. [History of Modernism- Miami Dade College,](https://www.mdc.edu/wolfson/academic/artsletters/art_philosophy/humanities/history_of_modernism.htm#:~:text=Modernism%3A%20Characteristics,art%2C%20politics%2C%20and%20science.) [La Belle Epoque: The Twilight of the 19th Century- Miami Dade College](https://www.mdc.edu/wolfson/academic/artsletters/art_philosophy/humanities/belleepoque.htm) 3. Discuss the video with the students, emphasize how social conditions shaped artists’ perception of reality. Read and discuss more resources on Impressionism [The case for Impressionism- The Art Assignment YouTube,](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tw51Eh9vcw) [Impressionism, an introduction- Smarthistory](https://smarthistory.org/a-beginners-guide-to-impressionism/) 4. Introduce students to additional Degas’ artworks: [Edgar Degas (1834-1917): Painting and Drawing- The MET,](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dgsp/hd_dgsp.htm) [Edgar Degas- Art History YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXB187Gpz6I) 5. Based on the background information provided on European Modernism and Impressionism, pair students to observe and discuss Degas’ drawing “Head of Young Man in Profile”. How does this drawing reflect the transition between historical periods and artistic traditions? Students can mention that the formal elements such as well-defined features, shading, and position index while the man’s eyes suggest Degas’ evolution to a more impressionist style by representing the man’s emotional state through its stern face and strong jaw.  * Discussion: Guide students to discuss Modernist thought through Degas’ drawing.   What elements indicate a transitional period? Do they agree that this drawing belongs to the Impressionist period? Why or why not? | |
| **Assessment Suggestions**  Students will summarize what they learned from Edgar Degas’ life and how the social movements influenced his art practice. They should focus on the history of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly on how the wars led to rapid societal changes that simultaneously influenced artists’ perspectives and their art practice.  Students should have a firm understanding of how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses. | |
| **Extensions**  This lesson can extend to other contemporary artists or artworks by Edgar Degas. Students can select different sketches, paintings, or sculptures of this artist and compare them with the “Head of Young Man” drawing. How does this drawing differ from his other artworks? How does the use of color change an art piece? What are the similarities? What emotions does this drawing evoke? | |

Head of Young Man in Profile Activity Possibilities

Some of the best opportunities for education are *integrative*—meaning that students are able to make connections across disciplines to reinforce the knowledge that they are developing. For example, they may be learning about Renaissance Italy in World Studies at the same time that they read Dante’s *Inferno* in English class while also studying Botticelli in Art. Feel free to combine and adapt some of the ideas across disciplines and standards to best suit your particular context. You can also collaborate with other teachers at your school or supplement the resources provided by contacting your librarian.

**Note: The following ideas are meant to give general guidance for teachers to include artifacts and other material culture in their classrooms. They are not meant to be treated as comprehensive activities or lessons that are one-size-fits-all for any classroom. They should be personalized to best fit the needs of a teacher’s individual context in accordance with prior student learning, student abilities, available resources, and any curricular guidance.**

**Art**

**Visual Arts – Responding:**

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| **Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work**  **Enduring Understanding: Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed throughout engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.**  **Essential Question(s): How do life experiences influence the way you relate to art? How does learning about art impact how we perceive the world? What can we learn from our responses to art?** | |
| **VA:Re7.1.1a** | Select and describe works of art that illustrate daily life experiences. |
| **VA:Re7.1.6a** | Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value. |
| **VA:Re7.1.6a** | Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value. |
| **VA:Re9.1.5a** | Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society |
| **VA:Re7.1.Ia** | Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences. |
| **VA:Re7.1.IIa** | Recognize and describe personal aesthetic and empathetic responses to the natural world and constructed environments |
| **VA:Re7.1.IIIa** | Analyze how responses to art develop over time based on knowledge of and experience with art and life |

**Visual Arts – Connecting:**

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| **Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.**  **Enduring Understanding: People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.**  **Essential Question(s): How does art help us understanding the lives of people of different times, places, and cultures? How is art used to impact the videos of a society> How does art preserve aspects of life?** | |
| **VA:Cn11.1.1a** | Understand that people from different places and times have made art for a variety of reasons. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.2a** | Compare and contrast cultural uses of artwork from different times and places. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.3a** | Recognize that responses to art change depending on knowledge of the time and place in which it was made |
| **VA:Cn11.1.4a** | Through observation, infer information about time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.6a** | Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.7a** | Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses |
| **VA:Cn11.1.8a** | Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity |
| **VA:Cn11.1.IIa** | Compare uses of art in a variety of social, cultural, and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.IIIa** | Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society. |

*Students can be asked to consider how art reflects time periods, beliefs, cultures, traditions, etc. In exploring the ostrich egg cup, students are examining how items such as this reflected class and stature in European society and why such items were seen as luxury. Students could also explore how luxury items have changed over time; how different cultures use art, artifacts, and props to demonstrate their interests, beliefs, and stature; how such items demonstrate social capital; etc. Students can discuss why animal products are so commonly used in fashionable items like the ostrich egg cup and the fan.*

**Social Studies**

**Grade 6: History, Places, and Cultures in Europe and Americas**

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| **6.1.3** | ***Explain the impact of humans on the physical environment in Europe and the Americas.*** |
| **6.3.10** | *Explain the ways cultural diffusion, invention, and innovation change culture.* |
| **6.3.11** | *Differentiate between the terms anthropology, archaeology, and artifacts while explaining how these contribute to our understanding of societies in the present and the past.* |

**Ethnic Studies**

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| **ES.4.1** | *Students examine historical and contemporary economic, intellectual, social, cultural and political contributions to society by ethnic or racial group(s) or an individual within a group.* |

**Geography and History of the World**

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| **GHW.4.2** | *Use a variety of text (writing, maps, timelines and/or other graphic representations) to show the movement, spread and changes in the worldwide exchange of flora, fauna and pathogens that resulted from transoceanic voyages of exploration and exchanges between peoples in different regions. Assess the consequences of these encounters for the people and environments involved.* |
| **GHW.4.3** | *Identify and compare the main causes, players, and events of imperialism during different time periods. Examine the global extent of imperialism using a series of political maps.* |
| **GHW.4.4** | *Analyze and assess how the physical and human environments (including languages used) of places and regions changed as the result of differing imperialist and colonial policies.* |

**World History and Civilization**

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| **WH.7.3** | *Investigate and interpret multiple causation in analyzing historical actions and analyze cause-and-effect relationships.* |
| **WH.7.6** | *Formulate and present a position or course of action on an issue by examining the underlying factors contributing to that issue and support that position.* |

*Outside of the 6th and 7th grade Indiana standards, the exploration regarding how imperialism has led to an impact on other cultures and environments. Students should be able to examine the role of human environment interaction involved in the development of such items as the cup and fan included in this lesson. There’s room for them to make connections to contemporary issues that are similar to and a consequence of this result of imperialism.*

**Language Arts**

**Writing Skills:**

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| **4.W.5** | **Conduct short research on a topic.**   * **Identify a specific question to address (e.g., What is the history of the Indy 500?).** * **Use organizational features of print and digital sources to efficiently locate further information.** * **Determine the reliability of the sources.** * **Summarize and organize information in their own words, giving credit to the source** * **Present the research information, choosing from a variety of formats.** |
| **5.W.5** | Conduct short research assignments and tasks on a topic.   * With support, formulate a research question (e.g., What were John Wooden’s greatest contributions to college basketball?). * Identify and acquire information through reliable primary and secondary sources. * Summarize and paraphrase important ideas and supporting details, and include direct quotations where appropriate, citing the source of information. * Avoid plagiarism and follow copyright guidelines for use of images, pictures, etc. * Present the research information, choosing from a variety of sources. |

*Students could conduct research projects in which they examine examples of cultural diffusion and/or how animals and environments have been used, and potentially abused, for human products.*