

ARTIST PROFILE

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

BLOCK: _____

I hope everyone is safe and doing well. While we are home dodging COVID-19, lets take a look at a few great artists.

EDGAR DEGAS



Edgar Degas was born in July 19th, 1834. He was a French artist famous for his pastel drawings and oil paintings of ballerinas. Degas also produced bronze sculptures, prints, and drawings. Degas is especially identified with the subject of dance; more than half of his works depict dancers. Although Degas is regarded as one of the founders of Impressionism, he rejected the term, preferring to be called a realist, and did not paint outdoors as many Impressionists did. Degas was a superb draftsman, and particularly masterly in depicting movement, as can be seen in his rendition of dancers and

bathing female nudes. In addition to ballet dancers and bathing women, Degas painted racehorses and racing jockeys, as well as portraits. His portraits are notable for their psychological complexity and for their portrayal of human isolation.

At the beginning of his career, Degas wanted to be a history painter, a calling for which he was well prepared by his rigorous academic training and close study of classical art. In his early thirties, he changed course, and by bringing the traditional methods of a history painter to bear on contemporary subject matter, he became a classical painter of modern life. He devoted his whole life to painting and mastering his style and use of media. He never married and spent the last years of his life, nearly blind, restlessly wandering the streets of Paris before dying in September 1917.

Currently, at the time of this writing, The National Gallery of Art has an online virtual exhibition of his work. The Exhibition is called “Degas at the Opera” There are 17 pieces that are on display for your viewing.



Assignment Instructions:

1. Go to the National Gallery of Art website. It can be found at: <https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/2020/degas-opera.html>
2. If you are trying to complete this assignment at a time when the online gallery has been taken down simply do a Google image search for “Edgar Degas Painting”.
3. Spend some time looking through several of his paintings.
4. Find three that resonate with you. These should be paintings that intrigue you and stand out from the others.
5. List your three choices. Write down the name of the painting and when the piece was made. You may have to do some detective work if you are using the Google Image search option.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

6. Between the three pieces of art that you have picked out narrow your interest down to one piece that you feel is your favorite. What is the name of this piece? Pretend you are describing the piece to a person who is blind. Describe in detail the scene; what is going on, what are the colors, lines and shapes that are visible? Stay away from emotional descriptors but attempt to vividly paint the picture with your detailed description.

7. Degas once said, “A painting requires a little mystery, some vagueness, and some fantasy. When you always make your meaning perfectly plain you end up boring people.” Can you see this mystery and vagueness in the piece you have selected? Explain your answer and give examples that can be seen in the painting.

8. One of the greatest goals for an artist is to provide a visual catalyst that propels the viewers mind into the scene. Many young people today are so desensitized to art because of all the media, TV, Internet and the constant imagery that bombards their minds. If you can look at a piece of art and your mind is blank and you feel no emotion you have not cultivated your art viewing skills. To master the art of seeing you have to develop the ability to become emotionally involved in what you are looking at and learn how to identify the harmonies of various varieties of elements (line, shape, form, value, color, texture) and how they contribute to your feelings. This perception is very much inborn in some but has to be developed in others. So, now that you are pretty familiar with your selection, how does the piece make you feel? Where does it guide your thought process? Where do you think Degas' mind was in creating the piece?

9. Degas had an eye for movement. While other artists would try to capture the personality of the subject through specific characteristics, Degas went for movement. It almost feels like he was obsessed with trying to capture the emotion of the motion itself. On a blank piece of paper do 5-10 gesture sketches of a figure in motion. Don't concentrate on detail but on the emotions of the lines and the movement of the figure. Don't have any anxiety about drawing accurately, use lively, loose, long, light lines to express your forms.

