French Art History:
A Two-Week Unit Plan
Aimed at Providing an Artistic
Insight into French Culture

An Honors Thesis  (HONRS 499)

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Purpose of Thesis

The goal of this project is to provide a general overview of the five major movements of French art. According to the unit plan which follows the research portion of the thesis, third- or fourth-year secondary school students will be introduced to the significant French painters and their techniques of each period. Throughout the course of the two weeks, students will not only be introduced to the appealing qualities of various works of art, but also the corresponding history. Included in the thesis are daily lesson plans, activity sheets, and forms of assessment. In addition, a videotape has been prepared which presents to students selected paintings representative of the individual time periods. By the end of the two-week unit, students will have developed an appreciation for French art.
Introduction

Acquisition of a foreign language extends beyond the attainment of speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills. While my intent is not to downplay the importance of these components, I do propose an exploration of other aspects related to foreign language learning. An introduction to culture and history is essential to studying a language. Understanding the various cultural elements of another country generates interest in the corresponding language. As a French secondary education major, I believe the topic of French art history is interesting and relevant to foreign language learners. The painters have the ability to capture in their work the essence of everyday life and the significant events of their day. Therefore, a study of the various works of art provides students with a visual perception of French history, culture, and ideas. My goal is to develop a two-week unit plan which presents the five major movements from French art: Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Impressionism, and Post-impressionism. The artists selected for this project come from a list of artists found in the "civilization" section of the Amsco workbook, French Three Years (Blume 331-33). In an attempt to integrate the language with the culture, the lectures, activities, assignments, and examination are all administered in French.

Since my objective is to present the entire unit in
French, the lessons are most appropriately designed for third- or fourth-year high school students. In addition to discussing the noted painters and their techniques, a study of the historical events which were occurring simultaneously is also examined. Although history is not a separate entity of art, the history notes follow the art segments. The artists are presented the first week, and the corresponding history is provided the following week. Learning all of the information at once overwhelms students; therefore, the two concepts are taught separately.

During the two-week unit, various learning styles are incorporated in order to accommodate different students' needs. Activities included in the lesson plans require the development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Throughout the first week, the initial fifteen minutes are reserved for lectures. This teacher-centered method serves as an introduction to the painters and an explanation of each artistic period. Students work on note-taking strategies the first day in order to demonstrate how to organize all of the new material. Students are then given charts (see appendices) which they can use to record information related to the specific artistic periods. Since students are expected to differentiate among art movements, painters, and paintings, such skills guide them as they complete their charts.

Current education methods indicate that teachers should
not dominate the entire class period. Instead, teachers provide guidance while students learn together. A brief lecture begins each class; then, the focus reverts to students. Activities are planned which require the students to account for their learning and understanding. For example, the lecture portion of the fifth day of the first week is eliminated. With some teacher assistance, students discover the techniques and characteristics of Post-Impressionism on their own. During the second week, the class is divided into five groups. Each group is responsible for presenting one painter to the class. All of the art movements are represented, one by each group.

In order to demonstrate the organization of these lectures and discussions, I have included the lesson plans in the appendices. The lesson plans serve as further reference which will describe in detail the various activities intended for the two-week period. Additionally, the methods of assessment, such as homework assignments and the examination, are included in the last section. A video entitled Une explication de l'art français also accompanies this project. Over 100 different paintings, which are representative of the five art movements, are included. I have selected noted works from each of the painters which typify the techniques of their respective periods. In the background, French musical selections related to each of the art movements are played as the paintings are presented. Because videotape does not allow
one to control the amount of time between art works during a lecture, the selected paintings are also in the form of a set of video floppy disks. Video floppy disks provide greater flexibility because the teacher can discuss each painting in detail and then advance to the next image.

In order to conclude the art appreciation unit appropriately, students view the actual paintings at the Art Institute of Chicago. The French art exhibit at the art museum, which houses a permanent collection of French paintings, is an excellent means to conclude the two-week unit. After two weeks of discussing the painters and their techniques, students are better prepared to appreciate the art works in the museum. A form letter to the Art Institute of Chicago is also located in the appendices.
Chapter 1: Painters and Their Techniques

Although the two-week unit focuses on the classical through the post-impressionism painters, the foundation of French art corresponds to the development of French civilization that originated in the Middle Ages. While French art dates from the prehistoric drawings in the caves of Lascaux, the first painting was a side view of Jean II, the second Valois King of France who reigned from 1350 to 1364. The work was completed around 1355 by an unknown artist (Lucie-Smith 9). Years later, the Parement of Narbonne was completed in approximately 1370 for Charles V. Initially, the painting was to be placed in the royal chapel for Lent. Divided into five panels, the primary central scene depicted the Crucifixion. In the two lower corners of the painting were images of the King and Queen of France. The significance of this work illustrated the conception of medieval royalty: the king served as the messenger of God because the ruler delivered His word to the people (Lucie-Smith 10).

Another art form which appealed to numerous patrons was the illuminated manuscript. Perhaps the most representative of the numerous examples of this genre was that of the Duc de Berry's Tres Riches Heures. As a detailed calendar that focused on the agricultural duties associated with each month, the collection began logically with January (Underwood 13).
Painted by the Limbourg brothers in 1416, this opening illustration featured the Duc de Berry, brother of Charles V, at the table seated with his attendants. Similarly, a grouping of small panels that resembled the illuminated manuscripts, such as the Small Circular Pieta, was also popular (Lucie-Smith 14).

During the late fifteenth century, Jean Fouquet was the leading painter. Around 1455, Fouquet completed a portrait of Guillaume Jouvenel des Ursins, who served as Chancellor of France during the reign of Charles VII and Louis XI. When compared to the profile of Jean II, Fouquet’s work revealed a "psychological subtlety" that was not evident in the former work (Lucie-Smith 18).

As the Middle Ages came to a close, the Renaissance generated a significant shift in style. A major movement initiated by the School of Fontainbleau diminished the religious undertones that existed in the medieval works. In particular, the Fontainbleau influence focused on "secular and pagan allegories" (Lucie-Smith 34). New themes representative of the Fontainbleau artists were "fantastic, wilful, luxurious and amusing" (Lucie-Smith 35). Antoine Caron, a leading artist of this period, painted Massacres under the Triumvirate in 1566. The work presented lanky characters placed in an expansive setting. The murderous activity was almost lost in the enormous background. The vivid color scheme appeared inappropriate for the morbid scene (Lucie-Smith 42).
After the Wars of Religion between the Protestants and the Catholics, the beginning of the seventeenth century witnessed a re-assertion of Catholic influence. French artists again incorporated into their paintings the religious fervor prevalent in the earlier periods. Georges de la Tour, for example, re-established the spiritual consciousness in his work. Examples include *The Penitence of St. Jerome*, *Nativity* and *Job Taunted by his Wife* (Lucie-Smith 57-8). Typical of La Tour's painting was his regard for the "sacred to the ordinary." According to Lucie-Smith, the motionless figures in La Tour's works "inform us that we are witnessing a sacred event and not merely an incident taken from life" (60).

Similarly, like the *Très Riches Heures* of the Duc de Berry, La Tour's careful observations of "dignity" and daily activities of peasants associated him with the three Le Nain brothers (Lucie-Smith 61). In their work, the brothers depicted the lifestyle of small farmers and laborers (Underwood 43). Such characteristics resembled certain qualities of later works: Chardin's still-lifes, several of Corot's initial landscapes, and a few of David's portraits. Additionally, the brothers incorporated mythological themes in their work (Lucie-Smith 64). Several of their works included *The Traveller's Rest*, *Travellers at the Inn*, and *Venus at the Forge of Vulcan*.

The first major art movement which is discussed in depth is known as "le Classicisme." The aforementioned medieval and
Renaissance painters served as an influence for the following artists. One of the first major contributors to the Classical period was Nicolas Poussin. During the early to mid-seventeenth century, Poussin created works which were concise and carefully planned (Lucie-Smith 71). The surroundings in his paintings usually incorporated Roman architecture, and the still, natural settings contrasted the activity of the figures often found in his work. According to Wright, Poussin achieved a "unique sense of order, inspired by classical antiquity" in his paintings (5). Prevalent in Poussin's work was his intense, academic scenes. Poussin felt that his work should stimulate thought rather than please the eye (Wright 25). While mythological allegories were a focal point of his work, The Adoration of the Golden Calf, that illustrated Exodus 32, demonstrated Poussin's ability to incorporate Biblical scenes. In the upper-left corner, Moses holds the Ten Commandments, and in the foreground, the Israelites pray to the Golden Calf (Wilson 30). Earlier, Poussin was requested by the Pope to paint the Martyrdom of St. Erasmus (1628-9). Poussin did not know how to approach the project for he was unaccustomed to painting dramatic scenes. While Poussin typically worked with figures on a smaller scale, the dramatic scene required a close-up view of the characters in which he had to portray their anguish. Following the completion of the work, Poussin never received another commission (Wright 25). Perhaps Poussin was not comfortable
portraying human emotions.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Jean-Antoine Watteau joined the classical movement. His ornate painting style, use of intricate flower patterns and elaborately dressed figures filled his paintings. Before Watteau would begin painting, he would make many sketches of various people: soldiers, stylish Parisian woman, or actors from the Commedia dell'ante (Lucie-Smith 120). Watteau possessed the ability to take ordinary people and events and to recreate them as objects of beauty (Wright 42). All of the sketches were then assembled to form the main work. Unlike Poussin, whose paintings portrayed one central theme, Watteau attempted to "convey a mood" through his work (Lucie-Smith 120). Art critics often associated the term "fêtes galantes" with Watteau's work, for his brilliantly costumed subjects were often observed enjoying themselves outside in nature (Lucie-Smith 120).

Towards the end of his career, Watteau suffered from an illness which, according to critics, accounted for the somber tone prevalent in a number of his later paintings. For example, in *Le Mezzetin* (1717-19), an isolated character serenades no one (Lucie-Smith 122). The epitome of the "fête galante" was portrayed in *A Pilgrimage to Cythera* (1717) where a pair of lovers leave for their journey to Cythera (Lucie-Smith 123). The painting *Gilles* contrasts the reflective and somber Gilles who overlooks the gaiety of the secondary
figures in the background (Lucie-Smith 126). *L'Enseigne de Gersaint* (1721), a commentary on the discouraging fifty years prior to its completion, depicts figures on the left side of the painting who are storing away a portrait of Louis XIV.

The Classical period also included Jean-Baptiste Chardin. In spite of the mythological depictions and representations taken from ancient history which were prominent in the paintings of his predecessors, Chardin specialized in still-lifes. When Chardin was young, his father denied him the privilege of studying under historical painters (Lucie-Smith 155). Although Chardin's work did not encompass the traditional techniques, his still-lifes were admired because of his careful attention to "surface and texture" (Wright 45). In particular, Chardin's extraordinary use of color resulted from the interrelation of colors and tone. Examples of his still-lifes which he painted with great care and precision included *Still-Life: Apples, Pear and White Mug, Flowers in a White Vase* (1760-63), and *Rayfish, Cat and Kitchen Utensils*. In addition to the still-lifes, Chardin's figure-painting deserved mention as he succeeded in capturing everyday occurrences. While his paintings may have lacked the intense moral content of previous artists, he completed the daily scenes with the same keen observation recognized in his still-lifes (Lucie-Smith 160). *The Draughtsman* (c. 1738), for example, portrays a solitary man in a torn coat. Some critics believed the character is representative of Chardin at a
younger age. In *The Morning Toilet*, a mother is shown with her daughter, getting ready for church (Lucie-Smith 160).

One of the most influential painters of this period was Louis David. Through his work, painting returned to an academic focus, incorporating Roman allegory (Lucie-Smith 173). In 1785, David painted *The Oath of The Horatii* in a neo-classical style. Many critics viewed this work as a prediction of the approaching Revolution (Lucie-Smith 174-75). *The Horatii* reflected the citizen’s wishes to re-establish a Republic "based on classical antiquity" (Wright 56). Another of David’s famous works included *The Death of Marat* (1793). Marat, a key individual in the French Revolutionary War, was murdered in his bath. The somber tone of the painting contrasts David’s desire to emphasize the importance of the tragic political figure (Wright 57). Instead of portraying ancient Roman events, the painting observed the present historical setting of the late eighteenth century (Lucie-Smith 178). In contrast to the earlier work *The Oath of the Horatii*, David completed another work in 1799, *The Rape of the Sabines*. According to Friedlaender, the work "increased refinement" since individual characters were more pronounced (26).

As a painter to Napoleon Bonaparte, David agreed to represent in his paintings the greatness of this leader (Friedlaender 27). His painting, *Napoleon in his Study*, is reflective of this period.
Finally, David was a skilled portraitist who provided an insight into human character and personality that goes beyond outside appearances. In *Mme Récamier* and *Mme Pécoul*, for instance, he portrayed an attractive woman's "character" without detracting from her elegance (Lucie-Smith 179).

As a student of David, Dominique Ingres was one of the last Classical painters. Initially, Ingres began with mythological scenes; however, as time progressed, he broke away from David's influence and developed his own unique style. Ingres specialized in portraits; his female nude paintings, such as the *Large Bather* (1808), proved to be his most appealing works. Another female composition, *Mademoiselle Rivière*, demonstrated Ingres' keen regard for detail that created an almost surreal effect (Wright 62). Male portraits, however, were also among his works. In 1832, Ingres completed a painting of *Monsieur Bertin*, who, as editor of the *Journal des Débats*, spoke out against the Constitution and advocated the liberal bourgeoisie following the July Revolution of 1830 (Lucie-Smith 193).

In the next artistic movement, "le Romanticisme," painters freed themselves from the academic rigidity of the previous period. The expressive and emotional Romantic era provided an idealized representation of individuals and the natural surroundings. Leaders of the "Romantic explosion" were Théodore Géricault and Eugène Delacroix (Lucie-Smith 195).
Géricault's youth occurred during the Napoleon era. His initial paintings were completed prior to the decline of the emperor; one example was *The Wounded Cuirassier* (1814) which portrayed the turmoil of the deteriorating nation (Lucie-Smith 195). Later, in 1819, Géricault produced *The Raft of the Medusa*, a work of epic proportions portraying a crisis of his day. The painting depicted the 150 individuals who endured the tragedy of the destruction of their boat near the coast of Africa (Lucie-Smith 197). Like David, Géricault also represented a Napoleonic military figure. Whereas David's study of Napoleon was more serious and historically accurate, Géricault's *The Cavalier* incorporated vivid Romantic qualities such as depicting the anguish and concern for the wartime circumstances (Wright 68). Finally, Géricault had a fascination with severed body parts. This odd interest was portrayed in *Study of Two Severed Heads* in which he presented a careful representation of the subject matter (Wright 64).

Another significant artist who contributed to the Romantic movement was Eugène Delacroix who applied all of the major characteristics of this period to his work: "nature, liberty, the love of change for its own sake, the fascination with power, [and] the search for emotion" (Lucie-Smith 199). *Liberty Guiding the People* (1830), which memorialized the Revolution of 1830, is known for its profound political statement (Lucie-Smith 200). In *The Massacre of Chios*, Delacroix conveys the romantic mood of the Greek War of
Independence (Wright 71).

Following the Classical and Romantic eras, "le Réalisme" reacted against the idealized qualities of the Romantic period. The Realistic paintings focused on daily life and nature (Blume 332). Painters of the Realism movement moved away from "abstract" and academic concepts which are intangible and concentrated primarily on concrete subject matter (Gauss 10). Additionally, they refused to enhance the attractiveness of their compositions: "Beauty is in nature and is found in reality under the most diverse forms...But the artist has not the right to amplify that expression" (Gauss 10-11).

Gustave Courbet strongly supported this theory. Excluding classical allegorical figures from his work, he only painted "real and existing things" (Gauss 11). Therefore, The Funeral at Ornans offended many because of its accurate representation of the scene in which Courbet did not glorify any component of the painting (Lucie-Smith 217-18). Instead, Courbet presented the morbid and bitter reality of death. Immodesty was another of his traits, and Courbet often included his own personality in his work. This is evident in Good Morning, Monsieur Courbet (1854) (Lucie-Smith 218). Another work which features Courbet is The Painter's Studio (1855); he is presented in the act of painting with a nude model placed next to him (Lucie-Smith). Once again, Courbet is portrayed in his Self-Portrait at Ste. Pelagie (1872-73).
The painter became a member of the Commune, a socialist government, in 1871. Following the group's termination, Courbet was imprisoned for destroying the Vendome Column. Representative of his prison sentence in Paris, the painting depicts a Courbet who enjoys the dark hair of his youth. However, at the time of his imprisonment, he was actually ill and gray (Faunce 124).

Honoré Daumier, another realist, initially began his career as a caricaturist. As he became involved in painting, his caricature abilities influenced his work. Daumier's compositions lacked complexity and were extremely bold, for Daumier focused on the fundamental structure and avoided intricate detail. Ordinary subjects such as chess players and passengers in a railway carriage served as the focal point of his work (Lucie-Smith 206).

In spite of Daumier's two-dimensional image of the tree and foliage in Bathers (c. 1852), the affects of light in the work foreshadowed the forthcoming Impressionism movement (Rey 70). Little Peasant Girls (c. 1852-56) revealed Daumier's compassion and care for young children (Rey 72). In Third Class Carriage (c. 1862), Daumier displayed empathy for the lower class (Rey 102). Finally, Chess Players reveals the distinct personalities of the two opponents. The hands and faces were painted with exactitude and resulted in the visible emotions of the characters (Rey 108).

The next two painters from the realist movement were
students of the Barbizon School, named for a town situated near the Forest of Fontainbleau. The common thread evident in the works of the Barbizon painters was the representation of landscape (Underwood 191). Jean-François Millet, who combined landscapes and peasant life in his paintings, was a leading painter of this movement. His art displayed a shift from the romantic elements to a realistic portrayal of the subject matter. In his work, Millet wanted to examine the "heroic toil and struggle" of the lower class, and the inclusion of moral overtones distinguished his work from that of the works of Impressionism (Lucie-Smith 214-16). Two of his well-known works are The Gleaners and The Angelus. The Angelus, a commissioned painting, took Millet two years to complete. The painting was the object of an auction during the period of the French Revolution. Both the American Art Association and French collectors desired the masterpiece. Although American buyers initially acquired it, the work was eventually sold to the French. Presently, the painting is housed in the Louvre (Murphy viii). Millet’s Return of the Flock and Woman with a Rake were additional examples of his work which capture the peasant lifestyle.

Jean-Baptiste Corot, a recognized Barbizon landscape artist, achieved "simplicity and directness" in his initial paintings (Lucie-Smith 211). In 1827, Corot employed a classical style in his painting Le Pont de Narni. Additionally, he completed a series of paintings known as
Souvenirs. The series, which includes Souvenir de Mortefontaine (1864), presented an ideal version of Corot’s actual vision (Lucie-Smith 212). Paintings, like The Port of Rochelle, illustrated a natural freedom due to the light flooding into the scenes. Clearly, this painting was viewed as a predecessor to the Impressionist movement (Wright 76).

In addition to his landscapes, Corot also completed figure paintings. Frequently, his subject would be women who, clothed in shades of blue, were pictured alone, pensive, and oblivious to the fact of being the object of a painting. Such qualities were found in a Woman in Blue (1874) (Wright 78). This reflective mood is also portrayed in Young Woman Wearing a Wreath of Flowers, where the subject’s unbuttoned blouse and hair cascade over her shoulders to create a "sensual charm" (Poulet 4).

During the second half of the nineteenth century, a new artistic revolution surfaced. A group of painters, referred to as the Impressionists, initiated a unique style of painting. The term, "Impressionnisme," did not define a distinct method of painting; rather, it was associated with a collection of artists who shared similar ideas. Each individual painter maintained his own specific style (Gauss 20). The label Impressionism was actually derived from one of Monet’s paintings shown at an 1874 exhibition: "Impression: Soleil Levant" (Modern French 1). The function of light is a significant characteristic of the Impressionists. While many
turned to nature as the principal theme of their work, others painted what they saw. Impressionist art was quite different from the works of the Classical period: "Although [the Impressionists’] compositions and colors were carefully planned, their paintings seemed casual and spontaneous" (Modern French 1). Through the use of numerous brush strokes of light and genuine color, the artist created a fleeting glance of an outdoor scene or daily life (Modern French 2). The goal of Impressionism, then, was to develop a method to realistically portray "sunlight and movement" (Underwood 245).

One of the early impressionist painters was Edouard Manet. A prominent light source was evident in his paintings. In addition, Manet employed a thick contour around the objects in his work. Critics disapproved of Manet’s art because of its lack of moral conviction (Lucie-Smith 221). Manet, however, refused to incorporate virtuous lessons in his work because it deterred from the artistic value of the painting. His compositions were, he believed, a result of life’s pleasures, not a perfected vision of it (Lucie-Smith 223).

**Le Déjeuner sur l’Herbe** evoked considerable confusion because of Manet’s use of both nude and dressed characters (Lucie-Smith 221). A series of inconceivable constructions, moreover, occur in **A Bar at the Folies-Bergère**. The reflection of the female bartender is inaccurate, and the gentleman whom she is serving is exaggerated because of Manet’s distorted representation created by the view from the
mirror. An illogical representation of the items arranged on the counter is also seen from the mirror. Instead of presenting a realistic account of the scene, Manet intended to develop an impressionistic view (Modern French 6). Similar significant contributions by Manet which incorporated his artistic interpretations included *Music in the Tuileries Gardens, The Reader*, and *Gare Saint-Lazare*.

Whereas Manet focused on "luminous objects," Claude Monet was obsessed with the whole idea of light (Underwood 256). Monet was more fascinated with the effects of light than with a realistic representation of the actual objects. With light as his guide, Monet painted repeated compositions of the same subject in order to capture the essence of the effects of light during various times of day and during different seasons. Monet’s use of changing light led him to paint several series of paintings of the same scene such as *Haystacks, The Rouen Cathedral* and *Water-lilies*.

Another characteristic of Monet’s work was his ability to convey "movement and life" with his numerous brush strokes (Underwood 256). In order to observe Monet’s work, one must view it in its entirety. The purpose of his paintings was not to examine individual objects within the work, but to envision the complete composition (Underwood 248).

The next two painters, Auguste Renoir and Edgar Degas, were not completely faithful to the characteristics of the Impressionist movement (Lucie-Smith 230). Combining elements
of both realism and idealism into his paintings of "nineteenth-century life," Renoir employed small and quick brush strokes to create beautiful representations of women and children (Lucie-Smith 231). According to Underwood, his work "exhales the joy of life and an enthusiastic delight in expression" (262). The paintings which focused on a gathering of people rely on a source of light to bring the subjects and the background together (Modern French 10). Two well-known paintings which depicted large numbers of people were The Luncheon Boating Party and Le Moulin de la Galette, and favorite examples of women and children included Two Sisters (On the Terrace), A Girl with a Watering Can and Two Little Circus Girls.

Degas diverged from his fellow Impressionist painters because light was not his chief concern. Instead, Degas was known for his ability to capture movement in his paintings. Often relying on dancers as his subject matter, he illustrated the performers while they were "at work" (Lucie-Smith 232). Additionally, "he frequently chose to paint the awkwardness or inelegance, what he called 'attractive ugliness'" (Modern French 7). Degas also captured the characters as if they were unaware of the artist's presence. In The Dancing Class, for example, dancers fix their dresses and appear bored, oblivious to being painted. When observing this particular painting, the eye moves to the corner of the studio as the perspective of the dancers decrease in size (Roberts plate 19).
Since Degas did not care to represent nature in his work, he worked with the dancers as well as the night life of theaters and cafes. Café Concert at the Ambassadeurs, in particular, was a lively work which characterizes this quality (Modern French 8). Additionally, Degas incorporated movement in his numerous works of horses such as Jockeys in the Rain.

As Impressionism came to a close, Georges Seurat surfaced and introduced the Neo-impressionist technique, pointillism. Rather than employ color in an experimental fashion like the Impressionists, he developed a logical pattern of color, where spots of different sizes and color were placed side by side to create a total effect. In his work, Seurat expressed the magnificence of everyday life, and his most famous work, Un Dimanche à la Grande Jatte, exemplified this trait (Lucie-Smith 236-37). The scene illustrates a typical day at the lake side.

The next period of art both simplified and exaggerated form. "Le Post-impressionnisme" portrayed figures which were not anatomically correct and presented fantastic images of nature. The first of the Post-impressionists was Paul Cézanne, who is known for his still-lifes. Even the individuals represented in his paintings resemble his still-life work. Cézanne focused on the "solidity, depth and weight" of the subjects in his paintings in order to achieve a "geometric design" (Underwood 279-80).

As Cézanne completed paintings, he became dissatisfied
and would leave his work on the road. His wife would chase after him in an attempt to salvage her husband’s work (Underwood 279). *Bathers* (1900-5) is an example of his work in which his goal was to create the "highest possible degree of pictorial unity" (Lucie-Smith 236).

Paul Gauguin eliminated complexity from his paintings through the use of a thick, dark contour around his subject matter (Lucie-Smith 281). In his painting *Jacob Wrestling with an Angel*, Gauguin attempted to portray a Biblical scene as a "Breton peasant woman" might perceive it after hearing the allegory explained in a sermon (Lucie-Smith 242). In 1891, Gauguin moved to Tahiti where the people and landscapes of this tropical region soon became the subject of his work. His typical Tahitian compositions, such as *Two Tahitian Women on the Beach*, incorporated "copper-coloured natives posed against dazzling blue skies, red-yellow sands, and brilliant tropical greenery" (Underwood 283).

A swirling brush stroke pattern was a trademark of Vincent van Gogh’s work (Underwood 284). Van Gogh’s unique style was the result of "an extreme violence of temperament which pushed him towards the use of arbitrary and symbolic color" (Lucie-Smith 243). One noted example of his work, *Sunflowers*, appears to be restricted to one color, and the extensive use of yellow that characterizes the flower is accented only by green and blue outlines (Wilson 86).

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec was skilled at drawing. His
subject matter resembled that of Degas: cafes and theaters (Lucie-Smith 234). Toulouse-Lautrec’s highly structured compositions and vibrant use of colors characterized his work. Unlike the paintings of Degas, Lautrec’s work was highly stylized and animated. The result of much of his painting was a series of publicity posters such as Ambassadeurs: Artiste Bruant and Jane Avril (Underwood 295).

One of the last significant contributors to the Post-Impressionism movement was Henri Matisse, who led a school of painters who referred to themselves as the Fauves, or "wild beasts" (Lucie-Smith 248). This school of painters concerned themselves with the intensity of color. The fauvist style was rebellious because of their theory that "nineteenth-century Realism was dead" (Lucie-Smith 249). In Matisse’s work, he ignored the original and logical state of his subjects. Figures in his work took on altered forms that he painted with a "decorative simplicity." Matisse’s paintings lacked a three-dimensional quality which created the flat and two-dimensional appearance (Underwood 301-4). This can be observed in The Red Room and in Oranges.

The selected painters from the major art movements in France represent the focus of the two week unit plan. Each of the artists was chosen because of his significant contributions to his respective art period. A study of these masters presents a broad overview of French art which encourages students to appreciate the French civilization and culture.
Chapter 2: History

Between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries existed an era known as the Middle Ages. Early in the fourteenth century, the Hundred Years War erupted and plagued the inhabitants of France. In 1328, Charles le Bel, King of France, died, leaving two daughters as his sole heirs. Since a daughter was prohibited from inheriting the throne, Charles le Bel’s cousin, Philippe de Valois was chosen by the French to rule. Edward III, the king of England, however, claimed his right to the throne because on his mother’s side, he was Philippe le Bel’s grandson. In spite of Edward’s relations to French royalty, the people of France disapproved of the English influence. The French church refused to recognize Edward’s ascent to the throne because legally, the rights to the throne could not be transferred through a woman (Ravise 22). Although Edward claimed the French throne in 1328, the people of France acknowledged Philippe de Valois as their ruler from 1328 to 1350. Defeated by the English in 1346 at Crécy, Philippe’s reign was then succeeded by Jean le Bon, who occupied the throne from 1350 to 1364. Another English victory in 1356 led to the capture of Jean le Bon at Poitiers. Following Jean’s death in 1364, his son, Charles V, ascended to the throne.

Although the English experienced several victories throughout the Hundred Years War, France was victorious in the
end as a result of Jeanne d'Arc’s guidance. According to the sixteen-year old saint, God had chosen her to help the king of France regain his kingdom. In 1428, Jeanne d'Arc presented herself to Robert de Baudricourt requesting arms. His initial reaction was to mock her; however, once Jeanne d'Arc convinced him, Robert led her to see the French king at Château de Chinon. Since Jeanne d'Arc had never before seen Charles VII, the king tested her faith by placing himself among a roomful of people. Upon her entrance, Jeanne d'Arc walked towards Charles VII and knelt before him. Jeanne d'Arc was indeed a miracle; the king had provided her with soldiers, and they experienced their first success at Orleans in 1429. Charles VII later gained the recognition of his people after Jeanne d'Arc led the king to Reims for his coronation. Later in 1431, the saint was taken prisoner at Compiègne because of accusations of heresy. On May 30, adversaries burned Jeanne d'Arc at the stake in Rouen, robbing France of the saint who reestablished a sense of courage and pride in the country. With a renewed spirit, the French expelled the English from all of France, with the exception of Calais, in 1453. Following the destruction of the Hundred Years War, the combined efforts of Louis XI (reigned 1461-1483) and his son Charles VIII (reigned 1483-1498) helped to restore the war-torn country and to annex new territories (Ravise 23-24).

As the fifteenth century came to a close, French kings occupied a significant portion of French territory and later
invaded Italy in an attempt to annex more territory. In addition to the quest for more land, the exploration of Italy also generated new ideas, recognized as the Italian Renaissance. Previously, Christian dogma enforced the ideology that mortal existence was a period of oppression, and happiness could only be achieved in the eternal life after death. During the Renaissance, a study of Greek and Latin literature revealed an emphasis on earthly life and nature. Humanists encouraged the development of the "complete man"; there was a focus on the unlimited physical and intellectual capabilities of the individual. The optimism of the era led to an increased confidence in the future and the capacity of human reason (Ravise 41).

An advocate of the intellectual movement, François Ier, who reigned from 1515 to 1547, supported artists and scholars. François Ier also founded the Collège des Lecteurs Royaux, which was later recognized as the Collège de France. The College provided courses on classical Latin, Greek, and Hebrew (Ravise 41). Other accomplishments of François Ier also included battles against Charles Quint, who was not only the Emperor of Germany but also the King of Spain, who invaded France on several occasions (Ravise 42).

In spite of the popularity of the Renaissance, religious reformers Martin Luther and Jean Calvin desired complete renovation of the church. Both radicals longed for the church to re-establish the original practices of the Christian faith.
Rome denied this request; therefore, the reformers, or Protestants, separated from the Roman Church. While the majority of France remained faithful Catholics, a portion of the French population did accept the Protestant doctrines. As a result of the split in religious beliefs, the Wars of Religion between the Catholics and Protestants ensued, beginning the second half of the sixteenth century (Ravise 43).

In 1589, Henri III was assassinated, who was then succeeded by Henri de Navarre, a Protestant. Because of his Protestant beliefs, Catholics disapproved of Henri de Navarre; therefore, in 1594, Henri IV renounced the Protestant faith in order to be accepted as king. Four years later, Henry IV endorsed the Edit de Nantes which allowed the Protestants specific liberties, including religion. In spite of the king’s noble efforts to reunite and rebuild France, Henry IV was assassinated in 1610 (Ravise 43).

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Louis XIII at the age of nine ascended to the throne. Because of his young age, Louis depended upon the advice of his mother and several ministers for guidance. Cardinal de Richelieu, a significant counselor to Louis XIII’s court, established three primary goals. First, he planned to dissolve the political and military power granted to the Protestants in the Edit de Nantes. Second, Richelieu compelled nobles to obey the king and his ordinances. Third, the Cardinal desired to reduce the
familial power of the Habsbourgs which was extremely
threatening to France. During Richelieu's period of political
guidance, he only accomplished his first two aims (Ravise 51).
His successor, Cardinal Mazarin, completed the final goal and
resolved the conflicts with the Habsbourg family (Ravise 52).

The next ascendant to the throne, Louis XIV, reigned from
1661 to 1715. With the sun as his symbol, Louis XIV was
popularly known as "le Roi-Soleil." When he first came into
power, France was in "first position" in Europe because of its
material wealth, literary achievements, and increasing
population. Toward the end of the sun king's reign, however,
Louis was encouraged to become involved in a series of wars
which weakened France. In 1685, Louis XIV repealed the Edit
de Nantes which caused numerous French Protestants to flee the
country since they could no longer practice their religion.
Finally, a financial crisis also resulted in decreasing the
reputation of France (Ravise 53).

Following Louis XIV's death in 1715, his great grandson,
Louis XV, became ruler when he was five years old. A
persistent conflict existed between those who wished to
maintain the absolute authority of government and those who
desired more freedom. A major criticism of government
targeted the taxing system which did not affect the rich,
noble, and religious factions. Instead, the remaining
population financially supported the needs of government and
the king (Ravise 67-9).
Louis XVI became king in 1774; his indecisive character thwarted his valiant efforts to improve the conditions of France. France demanded a fair, constitutional monarchy which supported equitable taxing policies and additional freedom of press, religion, and politics. In May 1789, financial difficulties erupted in France, causing the king to call together the États Généraux, which consisted of representatives of nobility, clergy, and the Tiers État (bourgeoisie). Members assembled in order to discuss potential renovations of a political system which dated back to the Middle Ages. The Tiers État, under the supervision of Mirabeau, wanted to create a new constitution; the nobility and clergy, however, disapproved of all changes. Members of the Assembly feared the king would dissolve their membership when Louis XVI began to assemble his troops. As a retaliation, the bourgeoisie revolted and stormed the Bastille on July 14, 1789, which was the beginning of the Revolution (Ravise 79).

The National Assembly demanded the "Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen" which set standards for freedom and equality. In 1792, the Assembly ordered the execution of King Louis XVI. Meanwhile, Robespierre, a French revolutionary who was elected to the États Généraux in 1789, eliminated the moderates from the Assembly which led to widespread terror. A series of unjustified arrests and executions then followed. Robespierre was later sent to the
guillotine in order to put an end to the violence (Ravise 79-80).

Although the goal of Robespierre's execution was to minimize the terror, circumstances in France failed to improve (Ravise 70). Finally, in 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte came into power and created an authoritarian government (Ravise 70). One of Napoleon's initial acts of government in 1801 concerned the signing of the Concordat with the Pope which reinstated the Catholic faith that had been eliminated from France since the Revolution. As a prominent military figure, Napoleon Ier became emperor in 1804; he was later defeated in Waterloo in 1815 (Ravise 85-6). Following Napoleon's death in 1821, two of Louis XVI's brothers, Louis XVIII and Charles X, served as the next two kings. During the reign of Louis XVIII (1814-24), he established a constitutional monarchy which was based on democratic ideals. The new government structure included two assemblies which worked towards universal suffrage: the Chambre des Pairs and the Chambre des Députés. The next king to ascend to the throne, Charles X (1824-30), deplored liberal policies and wanted to serve as an absolute ruler. In 1830, Charles X approved the Ordinances of July which revoked the liberty of the press and diminished the number of voters. Because of his increasing unpopularity, Charles X was compelled to resign (Ravise 87).

King Louis-Philippe succeeded Charles X; during his reign, he made significant contributions towards the
advancement of republicanism. Unfortunately, another revolution erupted February 24, 1848, and Louis-Philippe was forced to surrender (Ravise 89). After Louis-Philippe's downfall, the Chambre des Députés appointed a temporary government of moderate republican members. The Deuxième République emerged, representing for the first time members of the working class. Napoleon Ier's nephew, Prince Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, was named president of the Republic in December of 1848 (Ravise 105).

From 1851 to 1870, Napoleon III governed France, initially as an absolute ruler. However, he later altered his political system in 1860 and became increasingly more liberal by 1867 (Ravise 105). While France was under Napoleon III's control, he involved his country in new wars. With the help of his English allies, Napoleon engaged in warfare in Crimea in order to impede the Russians from taking Constantinople, which is presently known as Istanbul, Turkey. Later, Prussians enraged Napoleon III when they entered into France in 1870. The Prussian army imprisoned the emperor and his soldiers in Sedan, September 4, 1870. Paris then surrendered months later on January 18, 1871. Approximately one and a half million French inhabitants were affected by the Treaty of Francfort which removed Alsace and a significant portion of the Lorraine. The settlement imposed upon France large war repayment fees (Ravise 106).

The brief history portion of France summarizes the
significant events which occurred during the five French art movements. Historical background, which influenced the various painters and their works, provides insight and reasoning to the students as they observe the different paintings, techniques, and styles.
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Appendices
French Art History

The goal of the two-week unit plan is to provide a general overview of the five major movements of French art: Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Impressionism, and Post-Impressionism. Throughout the course of the two weeks, students will not only be introduced to the appealing qualities of various works of art but also to the corresponding history. A study of the paintings provides students with a visual perception of French history, culture, and ideas.

Students may have no prior knowledge concerning this subject; however, the classroom discussions, activities, and writing assignments will be conducted completely in French. Therefore, the unit is designed for third- or fourth-year students who have already developed French speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities.

A video entitled Une explication de l'art français accompanies this unit. Over 100 different paintings, which are representative of the five art movements, have been included. The works selected for the video typify the techniques of each painter's respective art movement.

Prior to the unit, the teacher will have to make several arrangements in order to ensure the success of the lessons. First, the teacher will have to develop a collection of French art work in order to create a display of paintings. Prints of the works may be obtained through art calendars, posters, or
color copies from art books. The school library should also be contacted in order to request art books be set aside as references for the students as they begin their speeches. Finally, the Art Institute of Chicago needs to be informed of the date of the class field trip. Contact information for the museum is included in the lesson plans.

The cognitive objectives of this unit incorporate three levels of thinking:

**Objective 1** - Comprehension: Students will be able to recognize the distinct qualities of the five different art periods.

**Objective 2** - Application: With knowledge of the artistic periods, students will be able to distinguish between painters according to their respective art movement.

**Objective 3** - Analysis: Students will analyze the unique differences among painters from the same art movement.

One final objective concerns the affective domain: Students will develop a foundation to begin to appreciate French art. After studying the techniques and terminology for two weeks, they will be better prepared to analyze, observe, compare, and contrast the various French works.
Two-Week French Art Unit

Date: Monday (week 1, day 1)

Topic of lesson: Introduction to unit

Concepts to be developed: Students will assess their own prior background knowledge on the subject of French art. Students will begin building on this schemata.

Behavioral Objectives: Students will learn to brainstorm as a form of assessment, engage in a writing activity and develop effective note-taking strategies.

Procedures:

I. Brainstorming activity--start off discussion with some of the following questions:

Qu'est-ce que nous savons de l'art français? Vous pouvez me dire n'importe quoi. Chaque personne doit me donner un fait. Qu'est-ce que vous voulez savoir? Que voulez-vous apprendre pendant les deux prochaines semaines?

The answers to these questions will enable the teacher to assess students' knowledge and their objectives in learning.

II. Have students look at the paintings on the wall (bulletin board) which are grouped by specific art movements--ask them to explain why the paintings are grouped that way. Do they see similarities within the groups and differences between groups? Student responses are noted on the chalkboard.

III. Writing activity--Each painting is numbered randomly,
and each student is given a number at the start of the activity (which corresponds with the painting). Each student must write a descriptive paragraph in French about his/her painting, to be read in front of the class. Students will be allowed ten minutes to complete this task. As students read their descriptions, students mark down on a piece of paper which painting they think is being described. The student with the most correct answers wins a bonus point.

IV. Introduction to medieval art--Before teacher begins lecturing on the major art movements, he/she demonstrates how to take effective notes (in charts provided to each student) during the introductory lecture.

Materials: Bulletin board previously put up--prints from calendars and color prints from books (See video bibliography for more information), charts for each of the art periods for note-taking, lecture notes.
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- Charles VII
- La naissance de la France pendant la Guerre de Cent Ans
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- Jean Froquet
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- Les peintures du 15e siècle (1455) en Bourgogne
- La peinture de l'époque

- La Renaissance
- Les peintures
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