

M I O N E T

the
late
years

Educator Resources

**de Young **
\ Legion of Honor
fine arts museums
of san francisco

Dear Educator:

Thank you for supporting your students' visit to *Monet: The Late Years* at the de Young museum. This exhibition concentrates on the final phase of Monet's career, from 1913 to his death, in 1926. Monet had established his artistic reputation with Impressionist works focusing on the effects of light on color. Now, inspired by his garden at Giverny, which he planned, cultivated, and nurtured, he began even more innovative explorations. His late works, boldly balancing representation and abstraction, redefine the master of Impressionism as a forebear of modernism. The resources found here will provide you and your students with tools for viewing and responding to the works in the exhibition. The materials are organized by three grade-appropriate themes:

Shapes and Colors: An Invitation to Monet's Gardens (Grades K–2)

The Gardener and the Painter (Grades 3–5)

Cultivating Innovation (Grades 9–12)

In each grade section, you will find

1. A description of pre-visit objective(s)
2. Whole-class discussion prompts and guided activity
3. Resources for your students' independent activity

This guide includes the following resources:

- Glossary
- Pre-visit activities by grade level
- Exhibition map

Materials prepared by Heide Miller, senior teaching artist, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Glossary

Inspiration: The process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially something creative

Innovation: The introduction of something new and different

Impressionism: A Western style of painting developed in the 1860s, characterized chiefly by short brushstrokes of bright colors to represent the effect of light on objects

Landscaping: Designing an area of land by introducing or organizing plants (trees, shrubs, flowers, grass, etc.), ponds, and other features or altering the contours of the ground

Cultivating: Preparing and using land for growing crops or plants

Scale: The size of something, such as an artwork, especially in proportion to its surroundings

Abstraction: The expression of the essence or quality of an object or idea, separated from its specific form, often in a nonrepresentational way

Shapes and Colors: Visiting Monet's Gardens

"I make no other wish than to mingle more closely with nature." —Claude Monet

1. Objective

Through discussion and drawing, your students will be able to explore Monet's work by noticing and defining shapes and colors in his paintings.

Big Question: What are some of the shapes and colors Monet used in his paintings?

Teacher Talk: We will be visiting a special exhibition (a group of artworks shown together) at the de Young museum called *Monet: The Late Years*. Before we go, we will learn ways to look at and think about the paintings of Claude Monet, an artist who lived in France. Monet loved painting pictures of landscapes filled with plants, flowers, trees, the sky, ponds, and oceans.

2. Whole-class discussion and guided activity

On a whiteboard or large piece of butcher paper taped to the wall, write four headings:

Flowers				
Trees and Leaves				
Structures				
Water				

Using the provided posters of Monet's paintings, guide the students to describe what they see, eliciting as much detail as possible in regard to shapes and colors. Record their ideas pictorially alongside the appropriate heading. Examine the various shades of color depicted in the images.

3. Independent activity: make a book on the shapes and colors in Monet's garden

After the whole-class discussion, the students will make their own list of shapes and colors they can identify in the posters of Monet's paintings and design their own garden using their favorite forms and shades.

Use the included cardstock worksheets (do not fold yet). Students may work together or independently to fill in the tables.

Teacher Talk: Choose shapes and colors from your lists to make your own Monet-inspired drawing. Turn the paper over. On the length of the paper, create a garden using shapes and colors of your liking! Will you add a drawing of yourself in the garden?

Suggested prompts: select two or three of the following to guide your students' thinking.

What type of tree will you draw? What is its shape? Can you describe the color and shapes of the leaves?

Will you include the flower shapes and colors you like the most?

What type of buildings will you include?

What colors are you seeing in the water shapes?

When finished, fold along the dotted lines to create an accordion book. Punch a hole in the indicated space and thread approximately 32 inches of yarn through to make a wearable booklet. Feel free to bring them to the museum when you visit!

Grades 3–5: Pre-Visit Activities

The Gardener and the Painter

“Beyond painting and gardening, I am good for nothing.” —Claude Monet

“I feel sure that I shall see something that is not so much a garden of flowers as of colors and tones, less of an old-fashioned flower garden than a color garden . . . planted so that only the flowers with matching colors will bloom at the same time, to harmonize in an infinite stretch of blue or pink.”

—Marcel Proust, writer

1. Objective

Students will understand the different roles Claude Monet played in creating the paintings of his later years: landscape designer, gardener, and painter. Students will have the opportunity to explore the importance of each skill set as they design and map their own gardens.

Big Question: What skills did Monet have to develop in order to be a landscape designer (someone who selects plants and creates a plan for a garden), a gardener, and a painter?

Teacher Talk: Soon our class will be visiting the de Young museum to see a special exhibition. *Monet: The Late Years* explores the work of the French painter Claude Monet. To prepare for our visit, we will be discussing how Monet designed and cultivated a garden that would inspire him to make his artworks.

All his life, Monet painted garden scenes, landscapes, and seascapes (in fact, he grew up near the sea!). As a young man, Monet began creating paintings that were focused on the effects of light and color in nature.

When Monet moved into a house and gardens at Giverny, a small village near Paris, he was 42 years old. This new home provided Monet with a wonderful opportunity to paint landscapes, but first he had to fill the gardens with plants and let them grow in. He planted flowers that would bloom at different times of the year, installed walkways and structures that allowed him multiple viewpoints, and even

built a pond to capture reflected light. He planned, planted, and nurtured the gardens around his home with the utmost care.

2. Whole-class discussion and activity

Using the poster of *The Japanese Bridge* (1899), lead a discussion around the image using the following framework:

Suggested prompts:

What subject(s) did Monet capture in this work? (bridge, trees, flowers)

As a painter, what did Monet use to describe these objects? (colors, shapes, brushstrokes)

As a gardener and landscape designer, what did Monet have to do to create this scene in his garden? (learn about the plants, decide where to plant them, know how he wanted the bridge to be built, create a walkway from which he could view this scene)

Repeat with *The Artist's House at Giverny* (1913).

As a class or in three groups assigned to the bulleted headings below, brainstorm what Monet might have needed in order to create this outdoor garden studio. Use the map of Monet's gardens to guide understanding of the layout of the property at Giverny. Each group can share their ideas with the rest of the class. Use these follow-up questions to guide the discussion.

- **Monet the landscape designer**

Knowledge about plants and their growing patterns (when they bloom, how to care for them, which plants would grow well in the climate).

Where to walk or sit? Where to view? Where to paint? How to create a pond, and where to get the water?

- **Monet the gardener**

Tools, soil, seeds, water source, knowledge about plants and cuttings.

Who might do this work? Where would the tools be kept?

- **Monet the painter**

Paints, brushes, canvases, easels, sketchbooks.

Where would he paint? What would he do when the weather kept him from painting outside?

Guided activity:

Model the process for creating a garden that would inspire art making. Do this collectively as a class. Copy the bolded words below, from the Landscape Design Worksheet, onto a whiteboard or large piece of butcher paper. You might choose to follow the sample worksheet with your class and design a garden map together.

Teacher Talk: Let's design a garden that will inspire artistic work. The worksheet will ask what kind of artist you would like to be and what you will need to plan for your garden. Let's use "singer" as an example.

Painter	Sculptor	Dancer	Actor	Chef
Illustrator	Musician	Writer	Photographer	Other: <u>Singer</u>

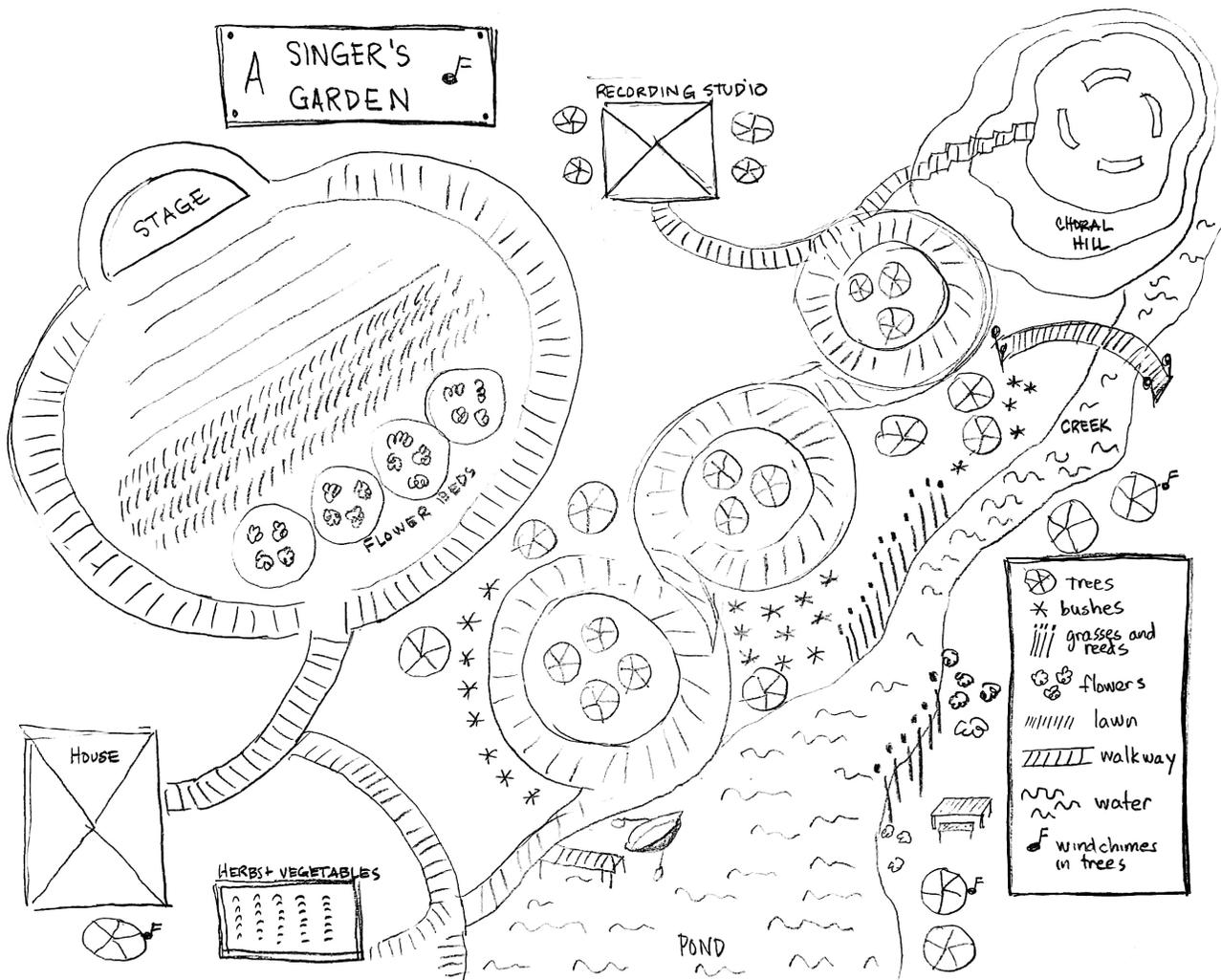
Needs:

- What types of spaces will you need to create your art? *A shelter for good acoustics, quiet areas*
- What sights, sounds, and smells will be important for inspiration? *Beautiful colors in different hues for different moods, leaves that will rustle softly, wind chimes to inspire tunes, the sound of water bubbling for rhythmic sounds*

Plan:

- **Plants:** Will you select plants by color? Shape? Blooming season? Scent? *Bright flower colors for energetic songs, soft pastel colors for quiet songs*
- **Trees:** Will you select by color? Shape? Height? Will you need shade? *Trees that will sway, leaves that will flutter*
- **Scale:** Will your plants be multilayered with different heights and widths? Do you want big bold shapes? Or small delicate forms? Or a bit of both? *Plants that allow for open views, not too tall.*
- **Architectural elements:** What "hardscape" (nonliving) elements would you add? What walkways or structures would help you do your artistic work? Bridges? Seating? Shelter? *Circular paths to inspire choruses and verses, sheltered stage for performing*

On a whiteboard, create a garden plan that accommodates the needs that have been discussed. The sample map included in this packet can be used as a reference, but the variations in map design are innumerable.



3. Independent activity: create an artist's garden map

Now the students can complete their own worksheets and create a garden map.

- Copy the following page so that each student has a worksheet for making notes.
- Use the back, or drawing paper, for the creation of the garden map.

My Landscape Design Worksheet

If you were an artist, what kind of artist would you like to be? Circle or write in the type of artist you imagine to be:

Painter **Sculptor** **Dancer** **Actor** **Chef**
Illustrator **Musician** **Writer** **Photographer** **Other:** _____

Write down notes as you plan your garden design:

What are your needs?

- What types of spaces will you need to create your art?

- What sights, sounds, and smells will be important for inspiration?

What will you plan?

- Plants: Will you select plants by color? Shape?

- Trees: Will you select by color? Shape? Height? Will you need shade?

- Scale: Will your plantings create layers of height and width? Do you want big bold shapes? Or small delicate forms? Or a bit of both?

- Architectural elements: What "hardscape" (nonliving) elements would you add? What walkways or structures would help you to do your artistic work? Bridges? Seating? Shelter?

9–12: Pre-Visit Activities

Cultivating Innovation

“The subject is something secondary, what I want to reproduce, is what lies between the subject and myself.” —Claude Monet

“These waterscapes and reflections have become an obsession. They are beyond my old man’s powers, yet I want to succeed [in describing] what I feel.” —Claude Monet

1. Objectives

In considering Monet’s lifelong commitment to creative experimentation—which led to explorations in painting that approach abstraction late in his life—high school students will examine and discuss concepts relating to artistic innovation.

Big Questions: How do Monet’s late paintings reveal his determination as an artist? In what ways did Monet ensure that his work would continue to be relevant?

Teacher Talk: We will be visiting the de Young museum to see the exhibition *Monet: The Late Years*. To prepare for our visit, we will be thinking about and discussing how the artist Claude Monet committed himself to an artistic life in which he could explore new and unconventional themes.

Monet spent his early years like most artists at that time: trying to please critics and sell paintings to support his family and build his career. When the Impressionist style of painting he and other artists innovated was finally accepted and celebrated, Monet didn’t want to simply re-create versions of paintings that were valued by the public. He wanted to push ahead and delve into the unexplored. We will examine how Monet’s work defined the Impressionist movement but later moved toward investigations that pushed painting closer to abstraction.

2. Whole-class discussion

Teacher Talk: First, compare the image of *The Japanese Bridge* (1899) with the painting of *Water Lilies* (1914–1915). What do you notice about the painting style of *The Japanese Bridge*? What do you think is the subject? Now look at *Water Lilies*, which was painted fifteen years later. Can you identify a shift in Monet's style of painting? What are you seeing in this work that might show a move toward more abstracted compositions? (Hints: cropping of the subject, flattened use of space with an exaggerated horizon line, looser brushstroke, saturated color.)

In order to understand how an artist remains committed to exploring new ideas, we will be working with themes that are related to the idea of innovation. First, we will look at a quotation from Monet, his peers, or art historians. Next, we will answer some questioning prompts, and finally, we will try to connect the theme to examples of artists and innovators in the present day.

We will start by doing this work together, then divide into small groups to explore themes in the same way.

Guided class work:

Experimentation

"I was once briefly tempted to use water lilies as a sole decorative theme in a room. Along the walls, enveloping them in the singleness of its motif, this theme was to have created the illusion of an endless whole, of water without horizon or shore. Here nerves taut from overwork could have relaxed, lulled by the restful sight of those still waters." —Claude Monet

"This is indeed the project I had a long time ago: of water, water lilies, and plants, but on a very large surface." —Claude Monet

Teacher Talk: One of the ways Monet innovated is by experimenting with the size—or scale—and shape of his canvases. We know from earlier works that he often rejected the standard canvas proportions that were often available, opting instead to create custom-size canvases according to what interested him.

In Giverny, he had three barnlike structures built in increasing sizes to be used as painting studios. With the largest studio, Monet could paint at a much greater scale. There he created the "grand

decorations" that were placed after his death in an oval-shaped room at the Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, where the viewer is virtually surrounded by huge curved panels of water lily paintings.

How can an artist's nontraditional approach to materials and process inspire existing and new audiences to experience the art in a fresh way? Discuss as a group.

When you think about artists and designers who are innovators today, who comes to mind? What role does experimentation play in their work?

Note student comments on a whiteboard. Below are some examples for quick reference:

Yayoi Kusama

Lin-Manuel Miranda

Banksy

Beyoncé

Elon Musk

Lady Gaga

Prince

3. Small group/independent activity

Teacher Talk:

1. Use the provided quotation and information about Monet to answer the questions and discuss your assigned theme that relates to innovation.
2. Consider present-day examples that relate to the theme, either from the list of artist innovators we generated as a class or from your own experiences.
3. Report to the class.

Expectations

Question: When a creative person is expected to repeat their art without innovating, what would that feel like? How might an artist respond to this pressure?

"When I saw Monet, with his four canvases in the field of poppies, change his palette as the sun continued on its course, I sensed a study more precise of the light than of the subject: the mobility of luminosity. This affirmed an evolution, a new way to see, to feel, to express: a revolution." —Georges Clemenceau, journalist, writer, and former French prime minister (1906–1909 and 1917–1920)

Monet often made multiple paintings of similar scenes and landscapes, exploring how light and color changed according to different times of day, seasons, and weather conditions.

Relevance

Question: Why might an artist want to develop works that step away from tradition and instead reflect present-day thoughts and attitudes?

Note: In the following quote, Barbizon school references an art movement from 1830 to 1870 that attempted to represent nature as it appeared. The critics reference to the shore is a literal reference to the bank of the pond in Monet's garden.

"Mr. Claude Monet is breaking the final bonds which connected him to the Barbizon school; he is busily renewing his art in accordance with his view of things and his own means. . . . The shore is receding and will soon be erased. . . . No more land, no more sky, no more limits now;. . . Here the painter has deliberately moved away from the restrictions of the western tradition." —Roger Marx, critic

"For anyone who has managed to follow the development of contemporary art, Claude Monet emancipated French painting: there is no painter who is not indebted to him for something."

—Paul Signac, painter

Monet was concerned with his relevance as an artist. He wanted to create works that were fresh and interesting, that would be considered "modern" for his time.

Freedom

Question: What is artistic freedom, and how might it be constrained by the labels we apply to artistic styles? What factors might prevent an artist from having complete artistic freedom?

"I still very much regret having caused the naming of a group whose majority had nothing impressionist about it." —Claude Monet

Monet rejected labels that were placed upon him and did not care to see his work considered as part of a wider artistic movement.

Acceptance

Question: In what ways can art criticism and popular opinion enable an artist to move forward? In what ways can they hamper an artist's innovation?

"And whether my Cathedrals, my Londons, and other canvases are painted from nature or not, this is nobody else's business, and of no importance." —Claude Monet

At the beginning of his career, Monet tried to conform to traditional painting standards in order to have his work approved for exhibitions. He often endured negative criticism of any work that introduced new styles of painting.

Economics

Question: How might the process of creating work change when there isn't a need to make money?

"When I have no longer needed to sell, I have managed to work; now, I think I am as hard on myself as it's possible to be." —Claude Monet

Monet had reached a level of financial independence by the time he was in Giverny. His paintings were selling well and could support his lifestyle.

Control

Question: What might be the advantages and disadvantages to Monet's strategy of controlling his environment and the subjects he chose to paint?

"Then he's like a lord who pays for the haystacks he likes. The corner of a field suits him, so he buys it. With a tall flunky and guard-dogs, so that people don't bother him." —Paul Cézanne, artist

Monet created an environment in which he could be completely free to immerse himself in his art making. He believed that his self-imposed isolation in his home and garden at Giverny allowed him to further develop his ideas.

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