

Berthe Morisot – *The Psyche Mirror*, 1876
Impressionism – painting



Key Facts:

Artist: Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) was one of the well-known women painters of the Impressionists. The Impressionists were centered in Paris, France.

Art period/style: Impressionism

Key characteristics of that period: Impressionist artists painted what they saw and felt rather than how things were exactly. They painted with short, choppy brush strokes and dabs of color, working to capture the effects of light. Impressionists painted scenes from everyday life.

Techniques: Oil painting with thick, loose brushwork and thick impasto application of paint and bright colors.

Some Background: As a woman artist, Morisot painted many indoor scenes. She painted outdoor scenes like many of the Impressionist painters, but she is most known for her feminine images.

The Five Core Habits:

Practice the *Five Core Habits of Grammar* with art - NAMES (found on pgs. 18-19 in the Foundation Guide). Part of teaching is learning to ask a student good questions. This is a great activity for looking at art! Plus, you get to sneak in a little art history and technique along with.

5 CORE HABITS



NAMING

1. What do you call this?
2. Where does this name come from?
3. Are there any other names for this?



ATTENDING

1. What are the parts of this?
2. Where do you usually see this?
3. What makes this special?



MEMORIZING

1. What would help you memorize this? An acronym, a song, a chant, a picture, etc.
2. What did you already know about this?



EXPRESSING

1. Could you draw a picture of this or write a song about it? Could you act it out?
2. How does this make you feel?



STORYTELLING

1. Can you tell me a story about this?
2. Can I tell you a story about this?

N names (name things specifically)

A attending (look and listen carefully. Also- taste, smell, touch. Compare things.)

M memorizing (soak up facts and ideas. Memorize facts and relations of things to recall, connect, and expand new ideas to older ones from past memorizations.)

E expressing (express ideas creatively- reciting, drawing, singing, dancing)

S storytelling (hear and tell stories)

This helps us grasp the basic elements, vocabulary, and rules of any subject, and helps us progress more quickly toward comprehension and creativity in future studies.

Using the image on the first page, go through these questions:

N – Names:

- Name the artist, era/art style, and technique
- What can you find? Name the things you see.
- Who is the girl?
- What else do you see?
- What colors do you see?

A – Attending

- What does the girl in the painting see?
- What might the girl hear? Smell? Taste? Feel/touch?
- What emotions might she be feeling?
- How is color used? How about texture?
- What is she doing?

Attending to details – here is a close-up. What else do you notice now?
Can you see her thick brush strokes?



M – Memorize

Memorize the artist, time period, and facts about the artwork/technique.

E – Express

Express your thoughts and ideas about the art. You can also express by trying the technique on your own. For creating a painting in the style and technique of Berthe Morisot, we focused on that thick, impasto texture. The idea is to paint with quick, loose brushstrokes. And apply the textured paint thickly. There are several ways to do this.

1- If you don't mind spending some extra money, you can buy acrylic medium to build up texture on the canvas or mix with your paint. Liquitex and Golden are two brands that make a thick molding paste. It is good stuff! But a bit expensive. U.S. Art Supply makes an impasto medium (seen below) that would be perfect for this too! You can find this tub on Amazon for \$13. Apply this thickly with a paint knife (or plastic knife) or a paint brush to achieve different textures. Mix this with several paint colors to make your textured painting.



Here is an example using the impasto medium

2- Another, and cheaper option, is to mix various things into your paint to give it more texture (as the example from the Discovering Great Artists book). The problem with this is that most of the texture will end up falling off of your paper or canvas once it is dry. You can add salt, glitter, egg shells, sand, Elmer's glue, sawdust, oats, and any other texture materials you can think of to your paint. Mix these together with different colors of paint in small disposable cups or bowls. Then have your students apply the texture paint thickly onto their canvas.



3- And another recipe for creating your own thick, impasto medium:

- 1/2 cup of baking soda (corn starch can also work)
- 2 Tbsp. Elmer's glue
- 2 Tbsp. paint
- 2 Tbsp. of water (depending on consistency... add as needed)

These amounts can all be varied depending on how thick or thin you want your texture.
To thicken- add more baking soda.



And finally, for this art project, the subject matter your students choose to paint could vary. You could have older students paint a portrait of a woman, as Berthe Morisot often did. Or maybe you would rather choose an outdoor scene. Here are a few ideas:



S – Story telling

Tell the story about this work of art.

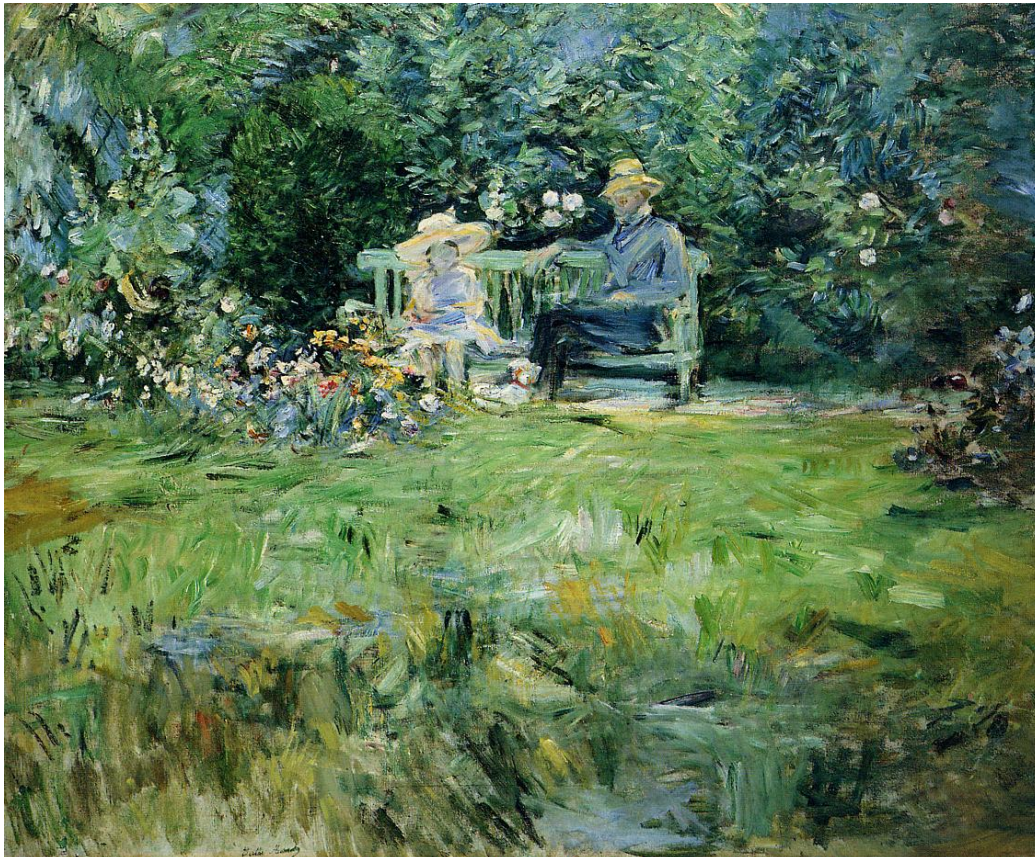
Refer to image on first page.

Very talented artist as a young girl, Berthe Morisot's parents encouraged her to study art and become a professional even though it was unusual for women to be artists. Women were rarely taken seriously in the art world, but she was always admired. Being a female artist, Morisot's paintings were often labeled as being full of "feminine charm" by male critics, for their elegance and lightness.

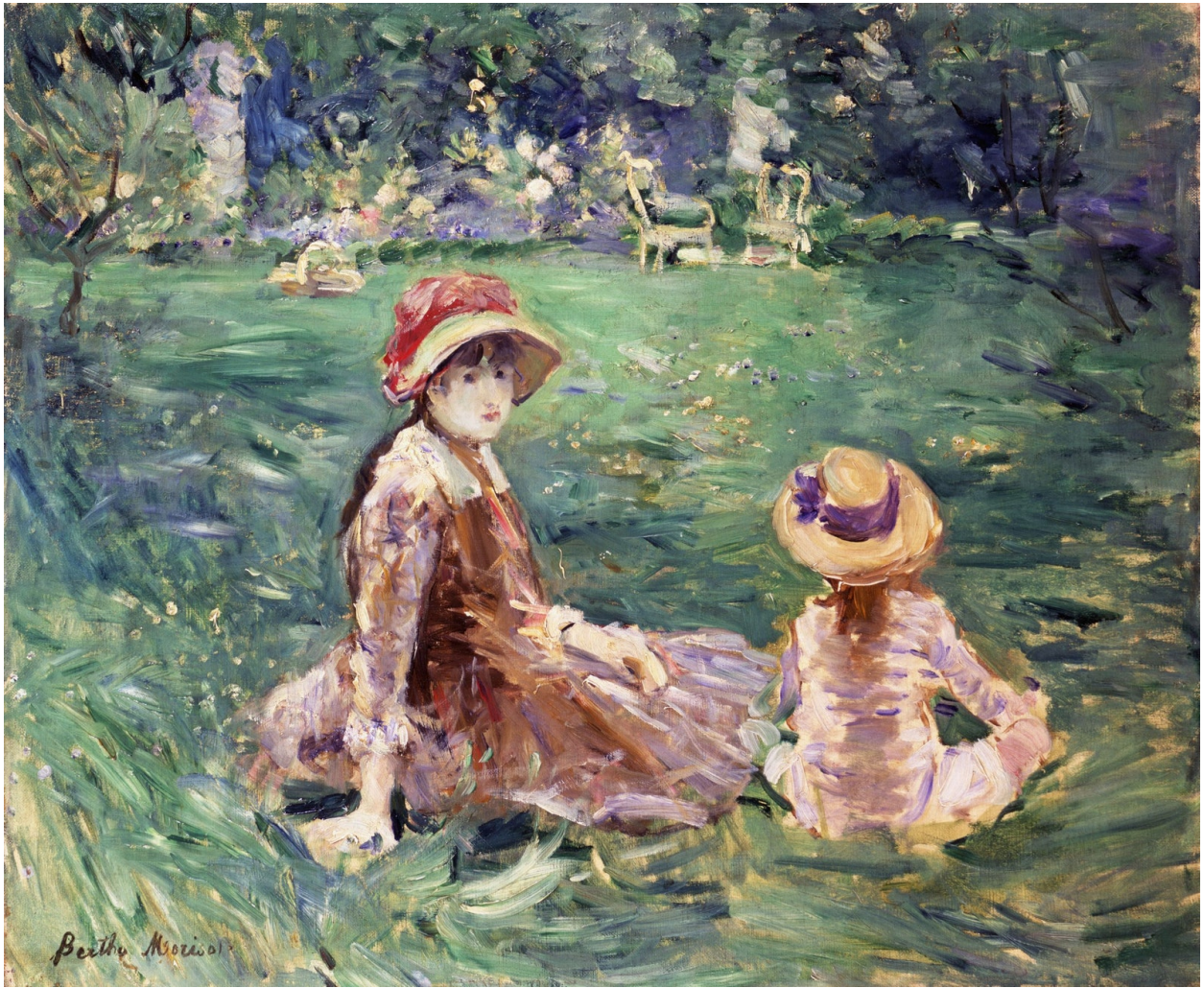
In this painting, a woman gathers up the waist of her loose blouse at the back, possibly imagining the effect of wearing a corset. Light floods the room from windows that are on each side of the mirror. The light is reflected in the mirror creating a rich tonal range of whites. A tilting dressing mirror of this type was known as a Psyche, a title that was given to this painting on various occasions. The young girl considers her appearance in the reflection.

This painting is a great example of Morisot's interest in subjects derived from everyday life and in capturing the effects of light. As you can see in the details or close-ups of this painting, this painting is a great example of her quick brushwork and thick, impasto application of paint.

A few more examples of her paintings:



The Lesson in the Garden, 1886



The Garden at Maurecourt, 1884



Young Woman Sitting in Front of a Window, 1879



Summer's Day, 1879