

Mary Cassatt "The Bath"

Before presenting the artist I had the students describe what they saw in the painting. Some questions to lead the discussion are...

- What do you see?
- Who is in the painting? What is their relationship? (mother and child)
- What are they doing? (bathing)
- Where are they? What room? (inside, bedroom, dresser, rug...)
- When was it painted? Yesterday or many years ago? Why? (old fashioned clothes, bathing in a bowl, pitcher...)
- Who painted it? ...a man or a woman? (most of the kids assumed a man) Why?

presentation :

- **Mary Cassatt** was a famous artist that lived and painted in the 1800's (about 150 years ago).
- What made her unique is that she was an **American artist** (Pennsylvania) and a **woman**. There were not many famous artists from America back then and it was very unusual for a woman to become an artist 150 years ago.
- Women back then were expected to get married and raise families. It was very unusual for a woman to have a career. Do any of your mom's have jobs they do outside the home or careers they had before becoming mothers?
- When Mary was a little girl, she loved to draw and was very determined to become an artist. She begged her dad to send her to art school. He finally agreed and she attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Art. She then moved to France where most of the famous artists were at that time and studied with them. She became a part of a group of artists known as the Impressionists.
- **Impressionists** were a group of artists that wanted to change the rules about how paintings should look. Instead of formal portraits they liked to paint people doing everyday things.
- "**The Bath**" is one Mary Cassatt's most famous paintings. Despite not having any children of her own, her favorite subject to paint was **mothers and children**. *The Bath* is a painting of a woman bathing her child. Instead of painting a formal portrait, she chose to paint them in an '**everyday scene**'... bathing. Another thing Mary liked to do was use pattern in her paintings. A **pattern** is any sort of repeating element. Have the children point out all of the patterns (striped dress, rug, wall paper, dresser drawers...). By filling the scene with all this pattern, your eye is directed to look at the whole scene and jump around page. Show example of what the painting might have looked like if the artist had not used pattern. The painting then becomes a depiction of just the woman and the child. By adding pattern and filling the canvas, the painting becomes a depiction of an entire scene... 'bathing a child.'
- patterns are in our everyday lives. Have children point out all the patterns in their clothing, around the room.

project :

- illustrate a scene of a special relationship in your life, in the style of Mary Cassatt, using lots of pattern.
- choose a special adult in your life (mom, dad, grandparent, teacher, babysitter...)
- I supplied a black and white stick figure image mounted to a patterned scrap book paper, clothing templates to trace, and 4x4 sheets of patterned paper (4-6 per kid).
- The children were directed to choose different patterns, trace the clothing, cut and paste to 'dress' their figures and add details with colored pencils. If they had time they could add an 'everyday' activity or place that was special to them and their loved one (taking a walk, reading a book, playing with a toy...)