


1st 

## INTRODUCING ART

### Artist: Georges Seurat

1. Georges Seurat was born December 2, 1859, the son of wealthy parents.
2. Georges enjoyed going to the library to study art while he attended college. He spent many hours absorbed in books on scientific color theory and the emotional value of lines, angles and curves.
3. After college he set up a studio in Paris. He always dressed rather formally in a top hat and black suit. Every evening he dined with his mother.
4. On summer afternoons he sketched on location at the seashore and in the streets of Paris making preliminary drawings and color studies.
5. Georges enjoyed working late in to the night, using a gas lantern to light his canvases. He worked very slowly working on only small areas at a time.
6. On March 29, 1891 Seurat died suddenly of a throat infection. Because of his early death he left only seven paintings.
7. Seurat had naturally curly hair and as an adult wore a full beard.
8. Seurat's technique is popularly called **pointillism**, but his friends and followers called it **divisionism**. This method requires a great deal of patience. Tiny dots or points of pure color mixed only with white are applied to the canvas. The theory is that no colors are pre-mixed since the eye mixes the color automatically. His compositions are very formal but beautifully design. He believed a painting should be based on science, however his work was beautifully and creatively executed.

### TITLE: "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte"

1. Read a poem about a visit to the park, or perhaps a picnic trip. Example:  
"Sing a song of picnics,  
Bread and butter spread,  
Greenery all around about,  
Cherries overhead." by Rachel Field, "A Little Book of Days"
2. Who has been to a park recently. What did it look like? Did it compare to this park?
3. Count the people in the painting? Is the park very large? How large? What are the people doing? What do you think their names would be? Would any of them seem like they would be fun to have for a friend? What other things do you see in this painting?
4. Walk into the painting. Imagine what you would do if you were at this park on the same Sunday afternoon. What would you say to the people if you needed to ask directions to the refreshment stand, or the zoo. Does this park have a zoo?  
Suggestion: This park is in Paris, France and the people are likely speaking French. See what the kids will do with that. You might bring a English to French dictionary along.
5. **Perspective** - What makes a painting look like you can walk into it. How has Seurat used perspective?  
Suggestion: Seurat has used several methods to create depth in this work, have children identify these in the painting. **a. Overlapping** **b. Big objects are near, far objects are small.** **c. Artists place near things near to us, low on the canvas, far things higher on the canvas.**
6. Would a park in our city look like this on a summer Sunday afternoon? What would be different?  
The same? If you came to this park, how long would you like to stay? What would you bring?
7. Compare sounds you might hear in a park on Sunday afternoon as compared to the same park on a Monday morning. Is it possible to say both scenes are peaceful? How?
8. How many kinds of sporting activities are going on in this painting? Sailing, fishing, canoeing, swimming etc. Is the lake/river in this painting a good place for swimming? What would swimming suits look like back then? Also how does park attire in general differ from the 1800's to present.
9. Seurat was a **Post Impressionist**. Describe parts of this period of art history. Discuss **pointillism** and how it works. Colored pencils and small pieces of paper with circles can be used for children to try it out. Have circles on paper. Use primary colors to create secondary colors.
10. There is a wonderful out-of-print children's book entitled "The Boy Who Could Enter Paintings" by Herb Valen. If you happen to have a copy or find one in your school library it would be a great addition. It's about a boy who walked into Seurat's painting.