

(American Legends)

Grant Wood/Edward Hopper

“American Gothic” by Grant Wood became famous almost overnight for many reasons. In the 1930’s, the stock market had collapsed leading to a period called the Great Depression. Many people lost jobs, money, and home. The traditional values and simpler times of rural America seen in Wood’s painting comforted a country going through fearful and uncertain times. This old-fashioned pair was like parental figures—stern and inflexible but strong and always there. It became a symbol of American morality and courage.

“Nighthawks” by Edward Hopper is a powerful and dramatic portrayal of loneliness. The bright artificial light inside an all-night diner contrasts with the darkness of the world outside. There is an air of detachment toward the human figures sitting silently at the counter. Hopper painted many aspects of city life. He captured the “character” of city streets, houses, railroads, and shops. Hopper has been compared to a film director blocking out a scene and using dramatic lighting to create a mood.

Students decided to do their renditions of these famous American Legends by adding themselves (friend or family member) into the scene or portrait.



Edgar Degas—

At the end of the 19th century, a few artists were changing the way people looked at the world. At that time art was controlled by a powerful organization, the French Academy, and artists had to follow strict rules in order to get their work shown. Discouraged by what they saw, a group of young artists—among them Monet, Renoir, and Degas—decided to create images based on the world they saw around them. They were called “Impressionists”. Degas was fascinated by the quality of movement, which he expressed through his dynamic

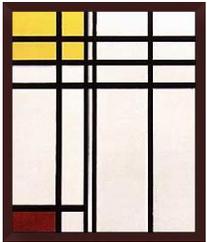
compositions of horses and ballerinas. We tried to capture movement as Edgar Degas did in our own "Horses and Ballerinas".

Students used the media of water soluble colored pencils and watercolors to capture the bright colors of the Impressionists' work.



Impressionists—

Throughout history, students of art have learned how to make their own work more successful by studying the work of famous artists or "Masters". Each student created a collage (a technique of pasting other materials to the surface) to represent the painting of their choice.



Piet Mondrian (Working with Abstraction)—

At the beginning of the 20th century, artists like Mondrian were searching for new visual forms to express the changing world around them. Technology, industry, and science were advancing at a rapid pace. Traditional representational art was no longer adequate to express the challenges and anxieties produced by this new era. In an attempt to simplify and perfect his images, Mondrian banished curved lines and organic shapes from his work, using only straight lines and geometric shapes. He also abandoned shading and used only black, white, gray, and the three primary colors. Mondrian's style made him one of the most influential artists of the 20th century. Not only did his work inspire other abstract painters, but it also influenced architecture, interior design, fashion, and the graphic arts.

Students used acrylic paints on artists' canvas boards to create their own rendition of a Mondrian.



Copper Tooling (with Abstract Expressionism)—

The 5,000 year history of copper and bronze as materials easily molded for story-telling. Students chose copper tooling to tell their story of "Abstract Expressionism" with artists Chagall, Dali, Klee, Matisse, Munch, and Picasso. They

sculpted the metal from both sides, as counter repousse'. To achieve this, they used wooden Popsicle sticks and small wooden dowels. They flatten the open parts of their designs; stipple other parts, and added lines and more lines to show texture.



Georges Seurat

Born in Paris, France, in 1859. Seurat is probably best known for inventing 'Pointillism'. It was Georges's method of putting little dots and touches of different colors of paint next to each other. Instead of mixing red and yellow next to each other. That way, your eye would mix the color right on the canvas. He believed this method would make his colors appear more natural and real looking—almost like colored light.

Students rendered their Seurat paintings by first painting in the background and then using Q-tips to place their dots of pure color. No mixing of colors was allowed.



Mary Cassatt (Family Portraits)—

Adopting French Impressionists techniques, Cassatt developed her own specialty of every day subject matter. Cassatt drew her subject matter from her own family and home environment. Cassatt was the only American who was invited to show work with the French Impressionists. The freshness, immediacy, and veracity of her oils produced throughout her working life are also evident in her pastels, drawings, and watercolors.

Students chose chalk pastels to render their own "Family Portraits".