# Claude Monet (1840-1926) Argenteuil Basin with a Single Sailboat, 1874

# **Linkage & Integration in the Primary Curriculum:**

Visual Art Strands: All

Concept & skills development in each level:

Line, Shape, Form, Colour & Tone, Texture, Pattern & Rhythm, Space

**English** Strand: Oral language, reading and writing

Gaeilge Strand: éisteacht, labhairt, léitheoireacht & scríbhneoireacht

**History** Strand: Continuity and Change over time

Unit: Literature, art, crafts and culture

Strand: Life, society, work and culture in the past

Unit: Life in the 19th century

#### **About the Artist**

Claude Monet (1840-1926) was the eldest son of a Parisian shopkeeper. At the age of 19, Monet enrolled at the Académie Suisse (Swiss Academy), a Parisian workshop, which provided artists with models. It was an important place for artists whose ideas were not always in line with more formal teaching at the official schools. After brief military service in Algeria, he studied in the studio or Charles Gleyre in Paris, and then went to paint "En plein air" (out of doors) in the Forest of Fontainebleau with artists Renoir and Sisley, whom he had met in Gleyre's studio.

In 1871, Monet's paintings were refused by the Royal Academy annual exhibition. Tired of not having a place to exhibit their artworks, Monet and his friends, Renoir, Pissarro and Sisley organised the *Société Anonyme Coopérative des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs* ("Cooperative and Anonymous Association of Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers"). They were later joined by artists such as Cézanne, Berthe Morisot, and Edgar Degas. Their first exhibition was held in Paris in April 1874. Monet's painting of a Le Harve landscape, *Impression, Sunrise,* 1872/3 was included in this exhibition. Writing a negative review of the exhibition, a critic called the art "impressionist" after the title of this painting, which is how this type of art became known as "Impressionism".

In 1883 Monet moved with his family to a house at Giverny, north of Paris where he made a large garden, which he painted for the rest of his life, using it as an outdoor studio. Some of his most well-known paintings are series' of paintings depicting the same subject in different light, such as *Rouen Cathedral* and *Haystacks*. His *Water Lilies* series is also very well-known.

## Some background information on Impressionism

For most people the appeal of Impressionism is direct and uncomplicated; the pictures show a simple lifestyle and idyllic world of the past. This is a nostalgic world of sunlit days - boating on the river, walks in the meadow, excursions on steam trains, glimpses of dressing up for dances, theatre, the ballet, parties and picnics – successfully conveying a sense of pleasure and enjoyment of life. The story behind these artists and their times shows how this movement, more than any other, shaped the path of modern painting.

Impressionism proved to be a relatively short-lived movement in painting that originated in France in the 1860 lasting for just over three decades. The aim of Impressionist art was to capture the fleeting moment and the transient effect of a certain place, person or time. The artists wanted to depict real life, paint straight from nature and capture the changing effects of light and atmosphere. They shared a desire to show paintings unfettered by stylistic restrictions that had previously dominated the art world. Impressionist artists worked out of doors in front of the subject with speed and directness, hoping to distinguish their works with a new freshness, immediacy and truthfulness. Many of the paintings they exhibited were completed later in the studio.

### Other developments in the evolution of Impressionism

**Technology** helped the Impressionist artists in a number of ways.

- The invention of commercial paint tubes in the 1840s facilitated open-air painting.
- The discovery of a new range of dyes extended artists' colour ranges.
- The researches of chemists such as Eugène Chevreul, whose 'colour wheel'
  (1839) indicated that orange and blue are complementary colours so when they
  are placed together, the intensity and hue of each is enhanced.

These researches gave rise to theories about the optical combination of colours, which became fundamental to the techniques of the Impressionist painters.

**Photography** reinforced the Impressionist concern with more instant realistic effects. It made possible the production of accurate reproductions of works of art, thus making an increasing number of people realize that the naturalistic realism they had become accustomed to in traditional art was not the only acceptable vision.

# About the painting:

This painting of a luminous landscape on a brisk autumn day was painted by one of the most important of all the French Impressionist artists, Claude Monet.

In 1871, after the Franco-Prussian war, Monet moved with his family to Argenteuil, a picturesque suburb of Paris. Over the next few years fellow artists such as Sisley, Renoir and Pissarro joined him here. What attracted these artists to Argenteuil? With the expansion of the railway system, these once-rural areas had become the weekend playgrounds of bourgeois city-dwellers. The Impressionists were fascinated above all by two things: modern contemporary life and the fleeting effects of light and atmosphere. At Argenteuil they found both.

Monet acquired a boat and turned it into a floating studio. This enabled him to observe the river Seine and its leisure boaters surrounded by water. Here, you can just make out the town of Argenteuil on the distant horizon, but it is the rippling surface of the water, reflecting the fiery blaze of the autumn leaves that is the primary subject of the work.

This painting was cleaned quite recently. Now you can see revealed the original vivacity of the colours and the distinctive 'broken' brushwork that were such key features of Impressionism.

## Claude Monet, Argenteuil Basin with a Single Sailboat 1874

Rinne duine d'ealaíontóirí is tábhachtaí na healaíontóirí Impriseanaí Francacha uile, Claude Monet, an phéinteáil seo de thírdhreach soilseach ar lá earraigh géar a phéinteáil.

I 1871, tar éis an Cogadh Franc-Phrúiseach, bhog Monet lena chlann go Argenteuil, bruachbhaile pictiúrtha de Pháras. Thar an chéad cúpla bliain eile tháinig ealaíontóirí comhalta ar nós Sisley, Renoir agus Pissarro chuige anseo. Cad a mheall na healaíontóirí seo go Argenteuil? Le leathnú an chórais traenach, bhí na dúichí seo, a bhí tuaithe tráth, tar éis flúirsiú mar fhaichí imeartha deireadh seachtaine na gcónaitheoirí cathracha búirgéisigh. Chuir dhá rud draíocht ar na hImpriseanaithe rud thar ceann aon rud eile: saol comhaimseartha nua-aoiseach agus na héifeachtaí sciorraigh de sholas agus atmaisféar. In Argenteuil fuair siad an dá rud.

Fuair Monet bád agus chas sé isteach i stiúideo snámhach é. Chumasaigh sé seo é chun breathnú ar an abhainn na Séine agus a bádóirí fóillíochta timpeallaithe ag uisce. Anseo, is féidir leat baile Argenteuil a dhéanamh amach ag bun na spéire, ach is é dromchla tonnaíola an uisce, ag frithchaitheamh lasair lasánta de dhuillí an earraigh atá mar phríomhábhar an tsaothair.

Déanadh an phéinteáil seo a ghlanadh le fíor dhéanaí. Anois is féidir leat móraigeantacht bhunúil na ndathanna a fheiceáil agus an scuabobair shuntasach 'bhriste' a bhí mar a leithéid de shaintréithe an Impriseanachais.

## Talking about this painting with children

Although painted with loose brushwork using impressionist techniques, children relate easily to this painting. Talking about the images with the class will also provide the opportunity to develop language skills. Ask the children to describe what they see as if to someone who is visually impaired and cannot see. Help them with suitable vocabulary – encourage them to name the colours (blue, mauve, yellow), describe them (dark, pale, bright), where are objects situated in the picture (the trees are in the front at the right) gradually introducing concepts such as perspective, light and shadow.

### **Discussion Points**

- What is taking place in the picture?
- What season is it?
- Can you tell if it is a warm day?
- What is moving in the picture?
- How has Monet painted the reflections in the water?
- Is the water still or choppy? How does the artist show this?

### Ceisteanna eile

- An gceapann sibh go bhfuil an mbád seo ar an fharraige, ar an abhainn nó ar loch? Do you think this boat is on the sea, on a river or on a lake?
- Féach ar an mbád, an bhfuil duine éigin á seoladh nó an bhfuil an bád ag seoladh leis féin? Look at the boat, is there somebody sailing it or is it sailing by itself.
- Féach ar na crainn, cén am den bhliain é seo dar leat?
   Look at the trees, what time of year do you think it is?
- Cén sort báid seoil atá le feiceáil i do cheantar féin?
   What sort of sailboats can be seen in your area?

# **Suggested Projects**

### Visual Art

- Plan a class around the creation of a colour wheel. Monet has used strong vibrant contrasting colours. These are the colours opposite each other on the colour wheel: red and green, purple and yellow, and blue and orange look at Monet's picture. Have the colour-wheel circles already drawn and cut out. Discuss primary colours and complementary colours using examples. The students can then make their own colour wheel.
- Create some works of art using a single combination of contrasting colours such as purple and yellow, red and green, or blue and orange.
- Using a viewfinder, place it over any part of the image. Enlarge the details and make an analysis of the colours in the painting.
- Choose a special place and create impressionist-style paintings of the view –
  either a view from the school window or the children can choose their own special
  place. They can use photographs/postcards as a reminder, but the exercise is to
  explore the style of painting. Encourage them to use short quick brush strokes
  and to paint directly onto the paper no drawing first!
- Discuss with the students the type of poster they would design to advertise the area where they live. Get them to put their thoughts down on paper in the form of a preliminary drawing. Work this through to the completed, coloured poster.
- Make pictures to show different weather conditions
- Gather images of water and reflections from different sources. Create a series of paintings of reflections in different water conditions

#### SESE Project work

## History

 The influence of Impressionism: Irish artists such as Roderic O'Conor, Paul Henry and Mary Swanzy went to France and were influenced by this style – find other painters and examples of their works.

## Science & Geography

Initiate research and discussion on some of the following subjects:

- The Weather;
- Water, wind and the sea
- Sailing the development of all kinds of sailing craft

## Language

- Encourage the children to talk about this picture in the context of landscapes and seascapes and hot summer days.
- Ask them to write about their memory of a favourite summer's day
- Use words that describe water in the picture. Find really descriptive words like splash, freezing, ripples and use these as a basis for some creative writing, poems or prose.
- Make a list of everyday expressions that use colour to describe feelings such as 'red as beetroot' or 'blue with cold' use some of the art terms.

#### Music

- Find songs and instrumental pieces of music about the sea
- Relate the paintings to songs they already know (*Báidín Fhéilimí* m.sh)

#### Web resources

Music lesson plan on the sea: <a href="http://www.fullpitcher.co.uk/the-sea.htm">http://www.fullpitcher.co.uk/the-sea.htm</a>
Lyrics & scores of sea folk songs: <a href="http://www.cln.org/themes/songs.html">http://www.cln.org/themes/songs.html</a>

SESE links on the sea: <a href="http://www.marine.ie/home/community/">http://www.marine.ie/home/community/</a>

Teachnet lesson plan: <a href="http://www.teachnet.ie/cwinters/lessonplan2.htm">http://www.teachnet.ie/cwinters/lessonplan2.htm</a>

Colour Wheel: <a href="http://www.kidzone.ws/science/colorwheel.htm">http://www.kidzone.ws/science/colorwheel.htm</a>