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## The Premier Impressionist

Claude Monet's paintings were quite different from the art styles that were popular in 1870s France.

Traditional artists always did their artwork in a studio and their paintings were realistic – they looked exactly like the real world. Claude Monet was part of a group of painters who were called Impressionists. Their paintings



were light and a bit fuzzy – they gave an impression of what the real world looked like. Impressionists were very much interested in creating a mood and showing the subtle effects of light. Sometimes Impressionists worked outside, a most unusual thought in their time. Impressionism received its name from an early painting by Claude Monet titled *Impression, Sunrise*.

The Impressionist painters at first were severely criticized by art critics because their paintings did not fit in with what was considered to be good art in the form of realism. Knowing that trains were interesting subjects and represented modern progress, Claude Monet created a series of Impressionist paintings of trains from January to March of 1877. He worked on his paintings right on the train platform at the Gare Saint-Lazare, the train station on Saint Lazare Street. Although there were many train stations in Paris, this was the first train station built in Paris so it had historical significance.

Monet's friend and fellow Impressionist painter Pierre-Auguste Renoir told the following story to his sons about Claude Monet and painting the trains. Monet needed permission to spend time on the train



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platform and paint what he saw in his impressionistic style. One day Monet dressed in his very best suit along with a fine top hat, good linen shirt and silk tie. He carried a fancy walking stick with a golden knob handle. He appeared to be a wealthy gentleman when he really was a poor and struggling painter.

When he approached the clerk at the train office he presented his calling card which introduced him as Claude Monet, Painter. He asked to see the station master. The clerk readily admitted this fine gentleman into the station master's office. The station master was also impressed and gave Monet permission to paint on the train platform. The station master even held trains from departing on time so Monet could complete a scene even though passengers complained.

Was it all worthwhile? Monet's train scenes turned his career into a success and for the station master, made his train station famous until even now.



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. We can infer from the reading that Claude Monet came from which country?
  - a. Paris
  - b. France
  - c. Italy
  - d. England
2. Claude Monet belonged to a group of painters known as
  - a. Realists
  - b. Expressionists
  - c. Abstractionists
  - d. Impressionists
3. Why did Claude Monet paint train scenes?
  - a. Art critics did not like his landscape paintings
  - b. Trains represented something modern
  - c. Both a. and b. above
  - d. None of the above
4. Where did Claude Monet paint his train scenes?
  - a. London
  - b. Rome
  - c. Madrid
  - d. None of the above
5. How did Claude Monet obtain the station master's permission to paint at the train station?
  - a. He appeared in person
  - b. He sent a letter
  - c. He sent a telegram
  - d. He had a friend ask
6. What happened after Claude Monet showed his train paintings?
  - a. The critics still did not like his work
  - b. The public did not like his work
  - c. He became a successful painter
  - d. He stopped painting



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### Short Answer Questions

1. Why did art critics criticize the artwork of the Impressionists? Does this happen today as well?
2. Do some research on the Internet and locate pictures of Claude Monet's paintings. Do you like them? Explain why or why not.
3. Create your own impressionistic work of art using paint, crayon or colored pencils.
4. Do some research on the Internet and locate pictures of Pierre-Auguste Renoir paintings. Do you like them? Explain why or why not.
5. Puzzle companies have made jigsaw puzzles out of images of some of Claude Monet's most famous paintings. Would you like to put together such a jigsaw puzzle? Explain why or why not.
6. Do some research and find out what a walking stick is and when were they fashionable for men to carry.
7. Are you interested in being an artist? If you are, what kind of art interests you?



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## Answer Key

### Multiple Choice

1. b.
2. d.
3. c.
4. d.
5. a.
6. c.

### Short Answer

1. The Impressionist painters at first were severely criticized by art critics because their paintings did not fit in with what was considered to be good art in the form of realism. Lots of times even now something new is criticized.

2. Individual response

3. Individual response

4. Individual response

5. Individual response

6. Individual response

7. Individual response

