Images

1. [Image of Pierre Auguste Renoir]
2. [Image of a painting of a boat on the water]
3. [Image of a painting of a woman and a child]
4. [Image of a painting of a young girl]
5. [Image of a painting of two people in a town]
6. [Image of a painting of a group of people in a café]
7. [Image of a painting of a woman and a child in a room]
8. [Image of a painting of a woman and a child outdoors]
9. [Image of a painting of a group of people on a train]
10. [Image of a painting of a group of people in a café]
11. [Image of a painting of a woman with an umbrella]
12. [Image of a painting of a still life with apples]
13. [Image of a painting of a woman reading a letter]
14. [Image of a painting of a woman in a chair]
15. [Image of a painting of a woman playing the guitar]
The Presentation

1. **Self-Portrait**  
   1910, oil on canvas, 16-3/4” x 13-1/4”, private collection

Renoir painted this self-portrait at the age of 69. His rheumatoid arthritis had become painful, and he was confined to a wheelchair, but he continued to paint with a paintbrush strapped to his rigid fingers. This painting contains strong complementary color contrasts, with the orange hues of his jacket placed next to the blue of the background and the orange and blue that create the shadows and creases of his white hat.

Color contrasts also define the shapes in this painting. The shape of his white hat stands out in contrast to the dark blue of the background and the dark hues of his face. His white beard stands out in contrast to the similar hues of his dark skin and his jacket. Can the students see the geometric shape created by his face and beard?

2. **Sailboats at Argenteuil or The Seine at Argenteuil**  
   1873, oil on canvas, 20” x 26”, Portland Art Museum, Oregon

In this painting, which is part of the permanent collection of the Portland Art Museum, Renoir created a work that represents the very definition of Impressionism—a scene of modern life, painted out of doors to capture the effects of light and color. Renoir, along with his friend, Monet, set up his easel and painted the scene of people enjoying a leisurely afternoon along the Seine River near Monet’s home. Quick dabs of horizontally applied color capture the movements of sailboats and sunlight reflected off the water.

Contrasts of hues define the shapes of the sailboats. To capture the movement of the water, Renoir used the complementary colors orange and blue placed side by side to create a visual vibration that makes the sailboats’ reflections shimmer. The repetition of the triangular shapes of the sails throughout the painting creates a rhythm that moves the eye around the scene.

3. **La Loge**  
   1874, oil on canvas, 31” x 25”, Courtauld Institute Galleries, London

Unlike most of the Impressionists, Renoir preferred painting people to painting landscapes, and he preferred people enjoying leisure pastimes. This painting was shown at the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874 and received negative criticism because of the loose brushwork. However, Renoir still felt it was well painted (his brother, Edmond, was the male model).

Although the woman’s face is delicately modeled, all other shapes are created with quick dabs of color. This creates a textural contrast between the smooth appearance of her face and the feathery textures elsewhere in the
painting. Her hands are painted with smooth strokes but the pair of opera glasses in her right hand is painted with quick strokes of color that give only the impression of their shape. The flowers on her bodice are also created with quick feathery brush strokes, again simply giving the impression of their shape.

The contrasting repeating stripes of black and white through her dress create a rhythm that moves our eye through the painting. This contrast of black and white continues with the man seated behind, with the black shoulder of his jacket contrasting with the white of his shirt; the white of his gloves contrasts with his black sleeves, and also with the black opera glasses he holds in his hands; the white hue of his face contrasts with the dark feathery strokes that create his beard.

4. Girl with Watering Can
1876, oil on canvas, 40” x 29-3/8”, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Renoir loved to paint children. He had a finely developed feeling for the rosy complexion of a child’s skin, for the purity and gentleness of their eyes, and for their innocent self-confidence. In several of his works, including this one, he painted children at their own eye level, so the viewer saw their world as they did.

The figure of the girl--her features, her clothing, her hair--have all been created with dabs of color. The shape of her dress is created, not by smooth modeling, but by the contrast of the dark blue cloth against the lighter values behind her and beneath her feet. The lace on her dress is suggested by dabs of lighter color contrasting with the dark blue. The flowers in her hand, the roses in the foreground, and the flowers in the background have all been created with feathery brush strokes.

Renoir has used complementary colors in this painting to create a visual vibration that makes the scene come alive. Orange and blue highlights create the texture of the path at the young girl’s feet, while red and green dabs suggest the flowers in the background. The red repeats in the young girl’s hair ribbon, contrasting with the dark green background. The repetition of red continues across the top of the painting, and bottom left, creating a rhythm that helps to move the eye around the painting.

5. The Swing
1876, oil on canvas, 36-3/4” x 29-1/4”, Musée d’Orsay, Paris

This painting shows Renoir’s fascination with the effects of sunlight. Here the sunlight is filtered through the trees above, creating light and shadow on the scene. Many contemporary critics found this to be a disturbing feature, one of them commenting that “the sunlight effects are combined in such a bizarre fashion that they look like spots of grease on the model’s clothes.”

Renoir used color to create the shapes in this painting. Although there is some smooth modeling of the shape of the man in the foreground, dabs of lighter values create the effects of filtered sunlight on his shoulders. The woman on the swing is painted in loose, feathery strokes of color, with dabs of blue, violet, yellow, pink and white creating the effect of sunlight and shadow on her dress. Renoir also used complementary colors to create the effects of light and shadow on the path behind the woman. On the swing, dabs of orange, along with dabs of white, simulate the dappled patches of sunlight on
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the blue path. Renoir used violet to create shadow on the complementary yellow straw hats of the gentlemen in the foreground.

The contrast between the dark shade in the background and the woman’s sunlit dress gives her emphasis. Also, repeated dabs of bright values contrast with the darker values surrounding them, and create a rhythm that moves our eye through the painting.

6. SCANNING: Le Moulin de la Galette
1876, oil on canvas, 51-1/2” x 68-7/8”, Musée d’Orsay, Paris

This was the largest and most ambitious canvas Renoir attempted during the 1870s, while he was most involved with the Impressionist movement. The Impressionists’ insistence on painting out of doors usually restricted them to smaller canvases and simpler compositions. To attempt such a complicated composition on such a large canvas was truly remarkable. The resulting painting captured an interrupted moment, like a snapshot of the scene frozen in time, as if the viewer were a participant in the revelry. Le Moulin de la Galette was an open air dance hall in central Paris. It was a meeting place for artists and students, and this painting shows a youthful joie de vivre, with groups of young men and woman relaxing and passing the time on a sunny afternoon.

The whole scene is dappled with sunlight and shade, artfully blurred into the figures themselves to produce the effects of fleeting light which so fascinated the Impressionists. Compare Renoir’s rendering of dappled sunlight in this painting to that of the previous slide (he painted both paintings simultaneously, working on “The Swing” in the mornings, and moving on to “Le Moulin de la Galette” in the afternoons). Bright dabs of color, on the shoulders of the man seated on the yellow chair to the right, create the effects of sunlight shining through the leaves of the trees. Sunlight falls on the dancing couple to the left, with dabs of bright color on their shoulders contrasting with areas of shadow on their clothing. Complementary colors are used to create the effects of shading: streaks of violet create the shaded effects on the yellow hats of the gentlemen; orange and blue create the highlight and shadows on the dress of the woman dancer to the left.

Renoir used repeated shapes through this painting to create a rhythm that moves our eye around the scene. The shapes of the light fixtures repeat across the top of the painting. The bright faces of the crowd repeat around the scene, from the pleasant smiles of the people in the foreground, to the indistinct bright dabs of color representing faces in the background.
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Scanning Questions

Le Moulin de la Galette
1876, oil on canvas, 51-1/2” x 68-7/8”, Musee d’Orsay, Paris

Art Elements: What you see.

Color
• Do you see more warm (yellow, orange, red) or cool (green, blue, purple) colors? Point to some examples.
• Where have complementary colors been used? (To create shading, such as the streaks of violet that create the shading on the yellow hats of the gentlemen; orange and blue used together to create highlights and shading on the dress of the woman dancer on the left.)

Shape
• Can you find organic shapes? Geometric shapes?
• Which kind of shapes are dominant in this painting? (Organic.)

Art Principles: How the elements are arranged.

Rhythm/Repetition
• What colors have been repeated in this painting? (The flesh tones of the people’s faces, the yellow of the gentlemen’s hats, the dark blue of the clothing, the white light fixtures in the background.)
• How does this repetition create rhythm? (The colors are used repeatedly on the same shapes, and they are evenly dispersed around the painting, which causes the eye to move around the scene.)

Contrast
• Where are there areas of color contrast? (The women in the center foreground are wearing clothing of differing values that creates a contrast between light and dark. The white light fixtures contrast with the dark leaves of the trees in the background.)
• Can you find a place where geometric shapes contrast with an organic shape? (The man’s arm over the back of his chair.)

Technical Properties: How it was made.

• What has Renoir used to create this painting? (Canvas, paint brushes, oil paint.)
• Where do you think this painting was created, in the studio or at the scene? (At the scene. A friend of Renoir confirmed that he carried the canvas everyday from his studio to the Moulin de la Galette.)

Expressive Properties: How it makes you feel.

• How does this painting make you feel?
• What do you think people in the painting are feeling? Do they look happy or sad? Do they look like they’re having fun, or do they look bored?
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7. **Madame Charpentier and her Children**
   1878, oil on canvas, 61-5/8” x 76”, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Madame Charpentier was the wife of the prominent French publisher, George Charpentier. They entertained the prominent literary and political figures of the day, and Renoir’s friendship with them proved to be a turning point in his career. He was commissioned to paint her—one of the most celebrated Parisian hostesses—at home with her children. Madame Charpentier exercised her powerful influence to insure the painting was favorably hung in the Salon of 1879, and it was enthusiastically received by the critics.

This painting abounds with **contrasts**. The dark dress of Madame Charpentier with its touches of white at the bodice and hem, contrasts with the lighter values around her. The blue dresses worn by the young girls contrast with the orange of the furniture against which they sit. The smoothly modeled faces of the group contrast with the feathery brush strokes that create their hair, dresses and other **shapes** in the room. In addition, the solid **colors** of the clothing contrast with the patterns in the upholstery, carpet and wall decorations behind.

The repetition of bright white through the room creates a **rhythm** that moves our eyes from left to right: in the dog’s fur, in the girls’ dresses, at Madame’s bodice, at her hem, and in the still life on the table at the right edge of the canvas.

8. **On the Terrace**
   1879, oil on canvas, 40” x 32-3/8”, Art Institute of Chicago

In this painting, using the river as a background, Renoir captured his favorite subjects: a pretty girl and young child. This painting contains **contrasts** not only of **color** and value, but also of texture. The smooth modeling of the faces and hands of the subjects contrasts with the dabs of color that capture other features of the scene, such as the river and the foliage in the background. Even the flowers on the young child’s hat and on the bosom of the girl are created with simple strokes of color, contrasting with the smooth texture of their skin.

Complementary colors create simultaneous contrast throughout the scene. Red and green balls of yarn sit side by side in the sewing basket in the left foreground. Orange and blue flowers share space on the young child’s hat. The girl’s red hat contrasts with the green leaves behind it in the background.
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9. **Oarsmen At Chatou**  
   *1879, oil on canvas, 32-3/8" x 40", National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC*

Use of color creates the shapes within this scene of people enjoying a leisurely afternoon on the river. Broad strokes of orange create the shapes of the boats on the water, shapes that are repeated through the middle ground and into the background on the opposite bank of the river. Contrasts of color define the faces and clothing of the boating party and the surrounding landscape. Simultaneous contrast (side-by-side placement of complementary colors) creates a visual vibration with streaks of blue used next to the orange boat's reflection in the water, adding to the effect of the rippling water.

Renoir created rhythm in this painting by the repetition of his brush strokes. In the foreground, the grassy riverbank was created by diagonal, feathery brush strokes. Renoir repeated these brush strokes in the background, using feathery diagonal strokes to create the features of the opposite shore. In contrast, he used short, horizontal strokes to create the broad expanse of river through the middle ground.

10. **Luncheon of the Boating Party**  
    *1880, oil on canvas, 51-3/4" x 69", Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.*

In this masterpiece of Impressionism, Renoir captured the effects of light and color amid a group of his friends enjoying a leisurely afternoon along the Seine River. Improvements to the railway system changed the rural areas around Paris into suburban sites for leisure, easily accessible to all, and the site of this party was the Maison Fournaise, a restaurant in the town of Chatou, west of Paris.

Although Renoir undoubtedly executed some of the painting at the Maison Fournaise, this was not a work painted entirely out of doors. There is evidence that Renoir worked and reworked the composition, most likely in his studio, but his genius was retaining the freshness and spontaneity of the moment.

The repetition of faces throughout the composition leads our eye around the scene. The direction of each person's gaze leads the eye to another face, and that person's gaze is directed to another, and so on. This also serves to extend the boundaries of the composition, suggesting there is more to the scene than is shown on the canvas.

The faces in the foreground seem smooth and modeled, while the individuals in the background are painted with a more broken and feathery brush stroke. These contrasting textures of smooth and broken brush strokes create interest in the painting. Complementary colors also create simultaneous contrast: the blue shading in the orange-striped awning above, the orange trim on the blue dress worn by the woman in the lower left corner, and the violet shading that gives texture to the yellow jacket worn by the man in the right center of the painting.

[Note: The model for the woman in the lower left corner was a young dressmaker named Aline Charigot. She later became Renoir's wife.]
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11. The Umbrellas
1881-85, oil on canvas, 72” x 46-1/8”, National Gallery, London

This painting shows evidence of the change of direction that occurred in Renoir’s art in the early 1880s. He began this painting in 1881, and he finished it several years later, his style changing in the process. The right side of the painting was created in the Impressionist style, but the left side was not.

Although the faces and hands of the figures on the right are smooth and modeled, their hair, hats, and clothing were created using the broken, feathery brush strokes characteristic of Impressionism. However, the left side of the painting shows an abrupt change of style. The woman carrying the hatbox was painted with smooth strokes, sharply defined contours, and unbroken flesh tones. Her dress is almost sculpturally modeled.

The bright faces of the individuals in this painting contrast with the darker hues of their clothing, and the overall dark aspect of the rainy day. The contrast of brush stroke treatment from one side of the painting to the other also creates a contrast of texture—one can almost feel the difference in materials between the clothing on the left side and the right side of the painting. The repetition of blue tones carries throughout this painting, from the clothing of the individuals to the color of the umbrellas.

12. Fruits from the Midi
1881, oil on canvas, 20” x 25-5/8”, Art Institute of Chicago

This painting is a study in contrasts—of shapes, colors and textures. The varieties of fruit in this still life are shaped and shaded with feathery brush strokes of color that repeat throughout the painting. The reds, yellows, greens of the fruit, and the blue of the porcelain dish in which they rest, are subtly repeated in the feathery background and in the texture of the tablecloth. The repetition of these colors create a rhythm that moves the eye around the painting and unifies it.

Complementary colors, used to create shading and highlights, create simultaneous contrast. Touches of blue provide the shading on the orange fruits, green is used to shade the red fruits, and violet is used to shade the yellow fruits, thus providing each fruit with its own vibrancy. Additional contrasts can be seen between the organic shapes of the peppers in the foreground and the more geometric shapes of the yellow fruits in between. The use of shades of red, primarily on the right side of the painting, creates almost a visual equilateral triangle with the peppers on the table and the pomegranate in the dish. This aspect of the composition helps to break up the monotony of the repeated rounded shapes: the fruits, the bowl and the table.
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13. **Young Girls at the Piano**  
1889, oil on canvas, 46-3/8” x 32-3/8”, Musée de l’Orangerie

By 1890, Renoir had begun a series of small and medium size paintings for the private market that represented two young women absorbed in various tasks—reading, playing the piano, etc. Because these paintings were conceived as a series meant that Renoir could relax while painting and experiment with different poses, moods, colors and composition, knowing that if certain aspects didn’t work, he could solve the problem in the next painting.

This painting is one of several versions that exist of the same scene—young girls sitting at a piano. It represents Renoir’s departure from Impressionism and illustrates the style of his later years. His brush strokes are more fluid, creating vertical lines that start in the drapery in the upper left corner of the painting and continue down though the shapes of the girls and the piano. In his new style, surfaces are smoother, shapes are more modeled, and colors are more diffused.

Renoir still used complementary colors to add simultaneous contrast and visual interest. The girl at the piano wears a blue sash around her waist that contrasts with the orange cushion of her chair. Touches of blue that shade her dress contrast with the orange tones of the piano’s wood surface. Renoir also shaded the girl’s strawberry blonde hair with touches of blue.

14. **Young Girls Reading**  
1891, oil on canvas, 22” x 18-1/4”, Portland Art Museum, Oregon

How similar is this painting to the previous slide? It is the mirror image of the previous slide. The colors are again diffused, and the modelling is still smooth. Can the students pick out areas of simultaneous contrast where complementary colors are used? (In the background wall, where short brush strokes of blue are next to strokes of orange; violet-blue has been used the shade the yellow sash around the girl’s waist.)

How are these brush strokes different from the way Renoir applied color in the other paintings you have seen? Point to areas where complementary colors are side by side.
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15. **Woman with a Mandolin**  
1919, oil on canvas, 22” x 22”, private collection, New York

After 1910, Renoir’s rheumatoid arthritis was so crippling that he could no longer hold a paintbrush in his hand. Instead, he painted with the brush strapped to his wrist. In this painting, we see that, although inconvenient, his limitation was no deterrent to his art. The figure may be fleshier and less compact, but the color and shading are still vibrant.

The modeling of the mandolin player’s face, bosom and arms is smooth, but the details of her dress have been painted with broad strokes. The colors in her hair, dress and mandolin repeat in the background, with strokes of their complementary colors included to create simultaneous contrast. This same contrast exists in the upper left corner of the painting, where the yellow headdress of the mandolin player is accentuated by the streaks of violet paint in the background.

Famous and wealthy at the end of his life, recognized throughout the world as an artist of great stature, Renoir was still painting with the joy and excitement of a young man just starting his career. His paintings captured the pleasant, happy, and carefree moments of life.