

Comparing realism and impressionism



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Comparing Realism and Impressionism Realism originated in France in the 1850s as a result of the political and social upheaval of the time. The Industrial Revolution created a huge chasm between the rich and the working class, most of whom were quite poor. Artists began to reject the idealistic subjectivity of the romantic arts, focusing instead, on the everyday life and problems of the common man. Painters strove to depict life as it was without embellishment, painting the world around them as it was.

This movement attempted to present life, good or bad, ugly or sordid, and create a public consciousness of the squalor and desperation of this new working class. This attempt to create social awareness created a public outrage, mainly because they didn't know what to do with this new knowledge. Impressionism began in the 1860s and lasted through the 1880s. It was a new form of art based on the scientific qualities of light, a natural progression of painting with the advent of photography. Artists strove to catch a fleeting moment of time on canvas. The subject switched from the plight of ordinary man to plein air scenes of the recreational activities of the more genteel class.

Like Realists, Impressionist painters painted realistic scenes of things around them, but they strove to recreate the visual effects of transient sunlight rather than details in their work. But working en plein air required the artist to paint quickly to keep the paint from drying out. Because the painter had to work so quickly, the techniques of painters changed from carefully planned and executed to spontaneous, almost sketch-like works, leaving one with an impression of the subject rather than a tediously rendered portrait. Edouard Manet's painting *Young Lady of 1866* and Berthe

Morisot's Young Girl with a Parrot contain similar subjects, but strikingly different painting styles and techniques. Manet's painting consists of a young woman and a parrot on a stand, with no background images or embellishments to distract the viewer from the intended subject.

Brushwork is vigilantly done with no visible brushstrokes and careful blending of colors. Great attention is given to every detail of the painting, from the fine details in the young lady's garment and necklace to the exquisite detail in the bird's feathers. The dark background, contains nothing to distract the viewer from the subject of the painting and adds depth and dimension to the work. Berthe Morisot's impressionist painting Young Girl with a Parrot contains comparable subject to Manet's Young Lady of 1866, but is quite different in style and color.

Morisot uses bright colors with clearly visible brushstrokes and little detail. The image is not finished, but leaves room for the viewer to create their own impressions of what they see. The move from Realism to Impressionism was a direct reflection of the technological advances of the time.

While Realism sought to provoke an awareness of social conditions, Impressionism focused on use of light, which was much like the science involved in photography.