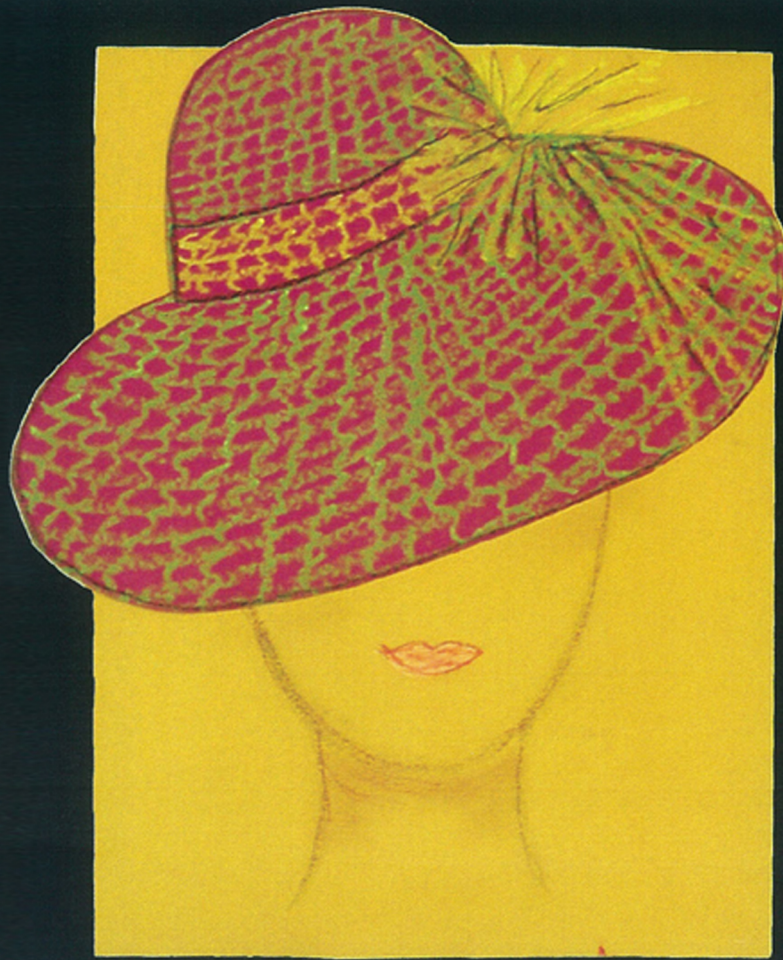


MARY CASSATT

Lesson For Ages 10 - Adult



Step 1 - Introducing the Master Artist: Slideshow Guide

MOTIVATION

BEGIN READING HERE

I want you to put yourself in the place of our artist for today. She is a young woman who very nervously approaches her father with news of an important decision she has made. She has been putting off this conversation for a very long time, because she is afraid of her father's reaction. But she has finally gathered her nerve and carefully watches his face as she reveals her news.

Have you ever experienced something like that with your parents? Do you remember a good reaction? Did you receive a negative reaction?

Let me finish my story about our artist's predicament. With trepidation she awaited her father's answer. With disbelief she heard him blurt out, "I would almost rather see you dead!"

What did she tell him to get such an unbelievably harsh response? She told him she wanted to become a professional artist! To understand this situation at all, we have to put ourselves in the time and place of our master artist, Mary Cassatt.

Mary was born into a wealthy family in the United States, where she first started her art education. In the late 1800's all women were expected to be wives and mothers, but not professional artists. Art was a man's world, but Mary had decided it was time to move to Europe to further her studies and career as an artist. Mary was sure of her decision and stuck to it. She knew she had to be strong and determined, even stubborn, to make her dream come true.

As time passed, her father softened his opinion and allowed her to go to Europe to continue her art education, but the entire family still disapproved of her career choice. For several years she studied, traveled and copied old master paintings in museums around Europe. Let's take a look at one of her earlier paintings.

When Cassatt first arrived in Paris, she tried to take classes at the best art school but was shocked to find out that they did not accept any female students. That wasn't going to stop Mary. She hired their best teachers to give her private art lessons.

[Click Start Lesson To Begin](#)

1. MANDOLIN PLAYER


The only way for Cassatt to get recognition, as a master artist, was to get her paintings accepted at the annual art show, the Paris Salon. It was very difficult for an artist to get their work chosen, especially a woman artist. This painting, *The Mandolin Player*, was her first work to be selected for the Paris Salon. Notice how dark it is. It resembles many of the paintings done by the old masters that Cassatt would have seen in the museums. Mary Cassatt's entries were accepted for Salon exhibition for five years. This was a great achievement for any artist, but for an American woman it was spectacular! Then Mary Cassatt met a group of young artists who were painting in a new way.

Edgar Degas (day-GAH) was the first one she met, and they became lifelong friends. They greatly admired each other's art. Degas invited Mary to show her paintings in an exhibition he and other artists were planning. It was an independent expedition apart from the Paris Salon, a very daring event in the art world. These artists were tired of the Paris Salon jury rejecting their art, so they organized their own show. We call these artists the **IMPRESSIONISTS**, because they tried to capture an instant impression of what they saw. They did not carefully blend their colors on the canvas. Their brushstrokes were short dabs and dashes. Some of these **IMPRESSIONIST** artists like to paint outdoors, because they wanted to show color and light. They didn't use the dark colors preferred by the old master artists. Mary Cassatt was the only American ever to display her work with these Impressionist artists and one of the very few women in the group.

Do you think Cassatt was thrilled to exhibit with Degas and his friends? **(YES)** She was honored to be included, but she detested the term *Impressionist* and never used it. To the end of her days she called herself and her fellow painters *Independents*. Why would she have chosen that name? **(DIFFERENT ART STYLE, FREEDOM FROM SALON)**

Let's look at how Impressionism changed her style of painting.

Click Next To Change Slide

Next 

2. YOUNG MOTHER SEWING

Isn't this painting much lighter and brighter than *The Mandolin Player*? **(YES)** Which painting looks more relaxed and informal? **(YOUNG MOTHER SEWING)** This is the way Cassatt liked to show people she painted. She simply saw people being people, not people sitting for stiff, formal **PORTRAITS**.

Do you like to be around your mother when she is quietly working? Is it a good time to talk and be alone with her? That is what Mary Cassatt shows us here, a quiet, relaxed time between mother and daughter.

Where is the child looking? **(RIGHT AT THE ARTIST)** Does she look as if the artist is bothering her? **(NO)** Mary Cassatt must have made her feel very comfortable while painting her portrait. More and more Mary was turning to children as models. They might wiggle and squirm when she tried to draw them, but at least they did not complain about the size of their noses, as some adults did!

Have you read Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*? Did it have some funny parts? Mark Twain was a famous American author who also wrote *Tom Sawyer*. His books were very popular during Cassatt's time, and they are still well read today. While painting children, Mary tried to keep them quiet by having *Huckleberry Finn* read to them. But that didn't work, because Mary herself kept bursting into laughter!

Look at the clothes the mother and daughter are wearing. What do you see on the mother's dress? **(BLACK AND WHITE STRIPES, BLUE APRON)** Use your eyes to follow a path with me: **(POINT OUT IN SLIDE)** Start at the mother's face, go down to the stripes, on to the plain apron, and around to the child's white dress and face. Did you know Mary Cassatt planned that path for our eyes to follow? What did she do to make our eyes travel on that path? Let's go on a search for clues to answer that question. Who is most in the center of the picture? **(MOTHER)** Who has on more colorful clothes? **(MOTHER)** So we notice the mother first, and her striped dress. Is anything overlapping the mother? **(CHILD)** The black and white stripes are like arrows that point down to the daughter's face. And Mary Cassatt had taken us on a wonderful walk through her painting. Artists call that path a line of COMPOSITION.

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)

3. BREAKFAST IN BED

Have you ever surprised your mother or father with breakfast in bed? Was it a special occasion like a birthday or Mother's or Father's Day? Do you think this painting is an everyday moment or a special occasion? Why? **(ANSWERS WILL VARY)** Mary Cassatt shares this private moment between mother and child. In Mary's day the life of women at home by themselves, or with other women and their children, was pretty much hidden. But in Mary's paintings we are invited to share those special moments.

Can you find the line of composition in this portrait? Composition is how an artist arranges things in a painting. How would your eyes walk through this painting? Investigate, and let's see what you discover. What did you find?

Let's all let our eyes walk together through this painting. Our attention is first attracted to the faces, because their skin tones contrast with the white sheets and pillows. Let's start

with the young child with those rosy cheeks. Now let's move down to her hand holding what she's eating, maybe a biscuit. Her elbow points us to the arms of the mother gently holding her daughter. The mother's hand touches the long line of her daughter's leg. What do we call a line that goes from side to side? **(HORIZONTAL)** Our eyes now travel from the daughter's feet that are pointing up to the mother's face. We have finished our walk. What was the shape of our walk? **(A CIRCLE)** Yes, Mary Cassatt created a circular line of COMPOSITION.

Remember how the Paris Salon accepted Mary's painting for exhibition for five straight years? That must have been thrilling for her. But then she had a setback with the next painting.

Click Next To Change Slide

4. THE CUP OF TEA

The Salon Jury of 1875 turned down a portrait of Mary's sister Lydia. Their comments were critical of the colors being too bright. This was a real disappointment for Mary, for the Salon had been accepting her portraits and displaying them in prominent places. She was so discouraged that she could hardly work at all for the next few months. She went to work on the portrait again and toned down the colors they hadn't liked. It looks like she added a lot of white paint to make the dress look paler. She submitted the picture again in 1876. What do you think happened? Did they accept or reject the touched-up portrait? This time they voted to accept it, but Mary felt no triumph because she had changed it against her better judgment. Never again did she submit a painting to the Salon.

If you were an artist, would you paint portraits of your family? **(YES)** Mary painted her family many times. She painted her private world, including her father, mother, brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews. Even her servants and their dogs. Mary painted her sister many times. She was the joy of Mary's life. They were very good friends, and loved being together. Mary never married, so she and Lydia lived together as adults.

How can you tell Lydia is not alone in this painting? **(ALL DRESSED UP, SMILING, LOOKING AT SOMEONE)** Does she look like she is comfortable and enjoying herself? **(YES)**

When we hang a painting on a wall in our home, what does it have around it? **(A FRAME)** Did you know a frame could be inside a picture, as well as around it? Let me show you the frame inside this portrait. **(POINT OUT ON SCREEN)** The flower stand at the top, the back of the chair on the side, and the arm of the chair on the bottom make a frame. What is missing in making the framing complete? **(THE RIGHT SIDE)** Cassatt left that part of the frame open towards the rest of the room that we can't see. That missing side invites our eyes to go where Lydia is also looking; into the room. What do you think we would see if we could really look into the room?

Many wealthy American friends of the Cassatt sisters went to visit them in Paris. Mary Cassatt introduced these rich Americans to the other Impressionist artists and encouraged them to buy their artwork, which they did. Americans became some of the first collectors of Impressionist art. These paintings were brought back to the United States, and many ended up in museum collections around the country after their owners died.

Do you think it would be hard to paint your family members over and over again and have your pictures turn out new and interesting? **(YES)** Let's see if Mary shows Lydia in a different way in the next portrait.

Click Next To Change Slide

5. LYDIA CROCHETING

Lydia was clearly the joy of Mary's life, but that joy had a sad ending. Lydia was very sick with a disease. During her illness Mary gave up all thoughts of painting to take care of Lydia full time. Mary was very sad when Lydia died. She gave this portrait to her brother so he could remember her.

Do you notice how pale Lydia's face looks? Mary shows her crocheting in the pretty garden and enjoying the fresh air. Don't you think she felt better just being in such a pretty place and having her sister Mary with her?

Would you like to go on another path with me through this painting? What white object catches your attention? **(HER HAT)** With what does it contrast? **(GREENERY BEHIND HER)** Now see if you can find something else that is white and also contrasts with green. **(HOUSE, WINDOWS)** Now, what in the picture leads your eyes to travel between these two white areas? **(THE PATH, OR ROWS OF FLOWERS)**

Mary Cassatt spent most of her life painting portraits. Besides using her family as models, she used friends, children of friends, and farm women. But nearly always she selected either women or children, as you've seen here today.

This will probably surprise you: Cassatt's best friend was not a woman. He was a man named, Edgar Degas **(day-GAH)**, and he was a famous artist also.

Mary was born in the United States but she went to France to study art. That's where she met Degas. They both had seen each other's work and liked it very much. Degas invited Mary to show her paintings in an exhibition he and other artists were planning. She accepted gladly. The artists that Mary Cassatt joined were called the IMPRESSIONISTS. These artists were painting in a new way. They did not carefully blend their colors on the canvas and their brushstrokes were short dabs and dashes. Some of these IMPRESSIONIST artists liked to paint outdoors, because they wanted to show color and light. But as we have learned today, Mary Cassatt painted beautiful portraits of women and

children. She was the only American ever to display her work with these famous master artists.

Would you like to see a portrait of Mary Cassatt painted by her best friend, Edgar Degas?

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)

6. MARY CASSATT (by Degas)

Her friends said she was always beautifully dressed in the latest fashions of the day. She was quite tall and usually wore dresses with high necks, as Degas pictured her in this portrait. Do you think hats were in fashion? **(YES)** Hats were worn everywhere, even at home sometimes.

Degas painted this when Mary was forty years old. Do you think she liked this portrait? If you thought she didn't like it than you were right! She didn't like it at all! Degas gave it to her and she later tried to give it away without letting him know. Nobody seems to know why she disliked it so. Perhaps it was because she was playing cards, which wasn't proper for women to do during that time in history.

Let me show you the painting Mary displayed when she joined the Impressionists, and they held their own exhibitions.

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)

7. AT THE OPERA

Can you tell me the setting of this picture? **(THEATRE)** Can you guess what the woman in black is watching at the theatre? They didn't have motion pictures then! She is watching an opera at a grand theatre in Paris. Cassatt loved the opera. She attended musical performances of all kinds in America. When she came to paint scenes at the Paris Opera, she was again doing what she did at home, painting what she knew best, painting what made her comfortable and happy.

Do you think Mary knew this woman? This was an unusual painting for Cassatt because the woman was a stranger - a model that posed.

I want you to let your eyes wander around the entire COMPOSITION. There is something funny about what she painted. See if you can find it. **(MAN LOOKING AT WOMAN THROUGH BINOCULARS WHILE SHE LOOKS AT SOMEONE ELSE THROUGH BINOCULARS)** Is either of them watching the opera? **(NO)** Their opera glasses would have been pointed down at the stage if they had been looking at the performance. Going to the opera was an important social event during Cassatt's time. You not only went to see the show but to see each other! Now let's look more closely at how Mary arranged this composition. Do you see what the lady and the gentleman are leaning on to steady their

opera glasses? **(VELVET-COVERED RAILING)** Notice how the railing seems to connect them.

What contrasts did Mary include in this painting? **(BLACK, WHITE, RED)** What differences can you point out between the foreground and background? **(BACKGROUND VERY SKETCHY, NO DETAILS)** Let's focus more closely on the woman in black as we step in to get a better view of Mary's impressionistic painting style. Before we do, take a good look at the woman's hand holding the opera glasses.

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)

8. AT THE OPERA - DETAIL

Now that we have a better view, let me show you something interesting about her hand. Notice the coloring. Can you tell why those colors and lines are there? She is wearing see-through black gloves. Isn't it interesting to see how Mary painted that impressionistic play of light on those transparent gloves? Do you think painting those transparent gloves was difficult for Mary? I'll let her answer that. Listen to her words, *"I doubt if you know the effort it is to paint! The concentration it requires to compose your pictures, the difficulty of posing the models, of choosing the color scheme, of expressing the feelings and telling your story. The trying and trying again and again and of the failures, when you have to begin all over again! The long months spent in effort upon effort, making sketch after sketch. Oh, my dear! None but those who have painted a picture know what it costs in time and strength!"*

Let's look at one of those sketches she mentioned. This one she did in preparation for the painting titled, *At the Opera*, that you have just seen.

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)

9. AT THE OPERA - SKETCH

This sketch is done in pencil only but you can tell which areas will be very light, darker, and finally, totally black. From her comments about the difficulty of painting, do you think this was her only sketch? (NO)

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)

10. YOUNG GIRL IN BIG HAT

Hats were very much in fashion during Mary Cassatt's time for both adults and children. Would you want to wear a hat like this today? It is so big you can hardly see the young girl's face! As Mary Cassatt became older, she started to lose her eyesight. It became difficult for her to paint with brushes and oil paints. She began to use soft chalk PASTELS. It gave her pictures a softer look, not as detailed. Unlike oil paints, pastels don't need to

dry. Can you find colored chalk marks in this picture? (BLACK LINES ON DRESS, END OF CURLY LOCKS, BACKGROUND COLOR, HAT BRIM, FLOWERS) You'll notice the colored chalk marks in the next picture done in pastels.

[Click Next To Change Slide](#)

11. MOTHER AND CHILD IN THE GARDEN

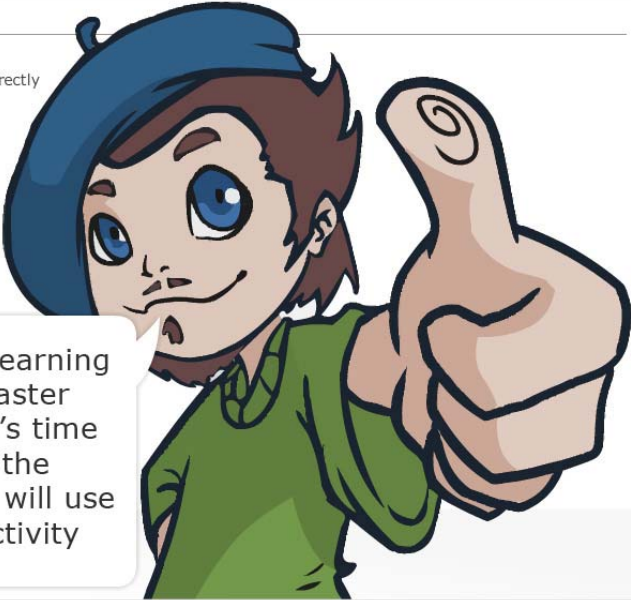
Where are the mother and child in this PASTEL painting? (**GARDEN**) She added flowers to the dresses to repeat the floral background. Now that you've learned how the artist painted, what do you notice in this painting that tells you it was done by Mary Cassatt? (**SUBJECT OF MOTHER AND CHILD, RELAXED AND INFORMAL, CIRCULAR LINE OF COMPOSITION, CONTRAST OF DARK AND LIGHT COLORS**) Mary Cassatt's eyes got worse because of cataracts. She had several operations on her eyes, but it did not improve her eyesight and she eventually went blind. The last ten years of her life were a little sad because she could no longer do any artwork. They were also lonely, because so many of her friends, like the artist Edgar Degas and family members, had already passed away. She died in France at the age of 82. Now that you are familiar with Mary Cassatt we are going to play a game to see how well you paid attention.

[Click Next To Begin Review Game With Pierre](#)

[Use the mouse to select the correct answer to each question.](#)

Lesson Finished

You have answered
10 out of 10 questions correctly



Did you enjoy learning about our Master Artist? Now it's time to practice the techniques you will use in your art activity

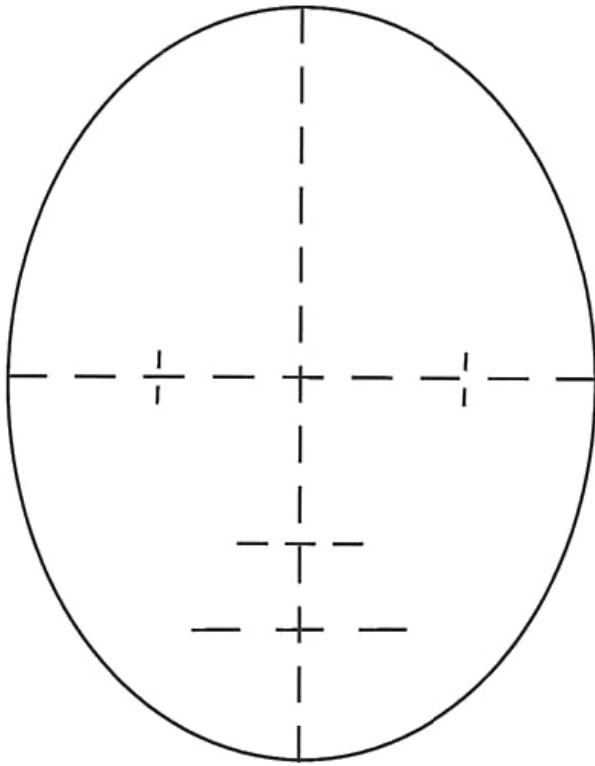
[Back To Units](#) [Return Home](#)

CONCLUSION - Read Pierre's final thoughts on Mary Cassatt.

When complete, click Back To Units to Exit

Step 2 - Learning From: Worksheets

In order to paint such beautiful portraits, Mary Cassatt had to study the features of the face. Follow the directions and you will learn some of her secrets.

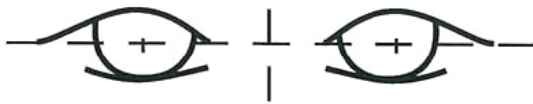


Lightly sketch a guide line straight down the center of the oval shape in the frame below.

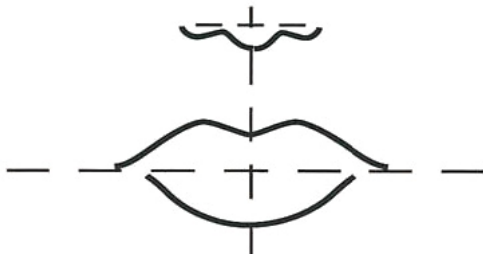
Divide it in half for the eye line.

Divide it half again for the nose line.
Divide it in half again for the mouth line.

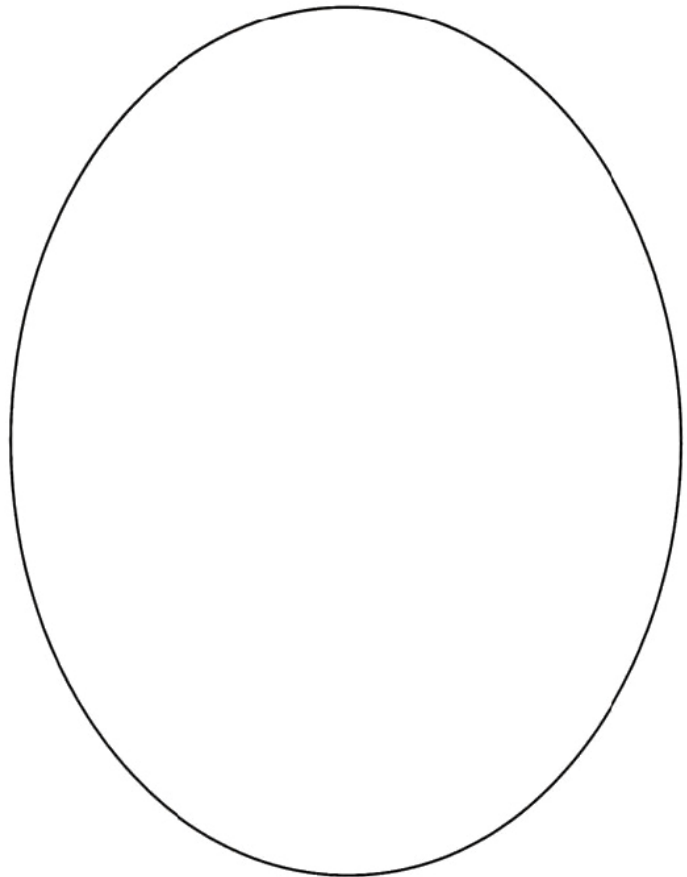
Draw eyes centered on the eye line.



Draw a hint of a nose on the nose line.

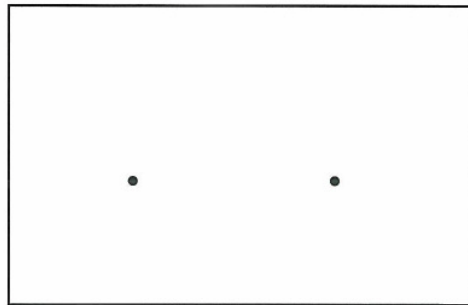
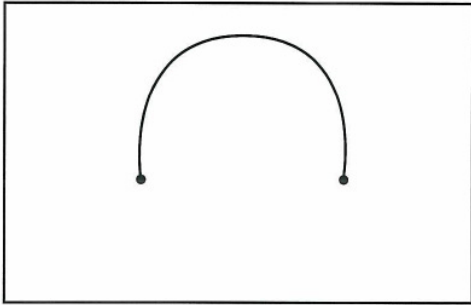


Draw a mouth on the mouth line.

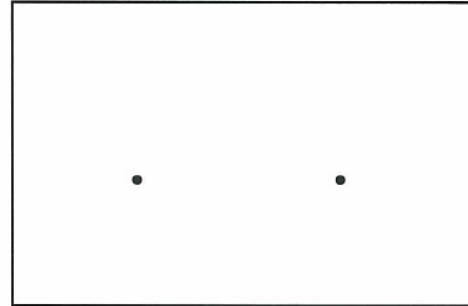
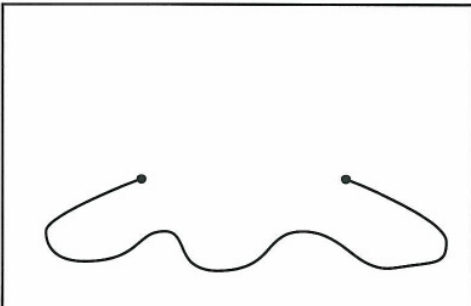


Drawing Hats

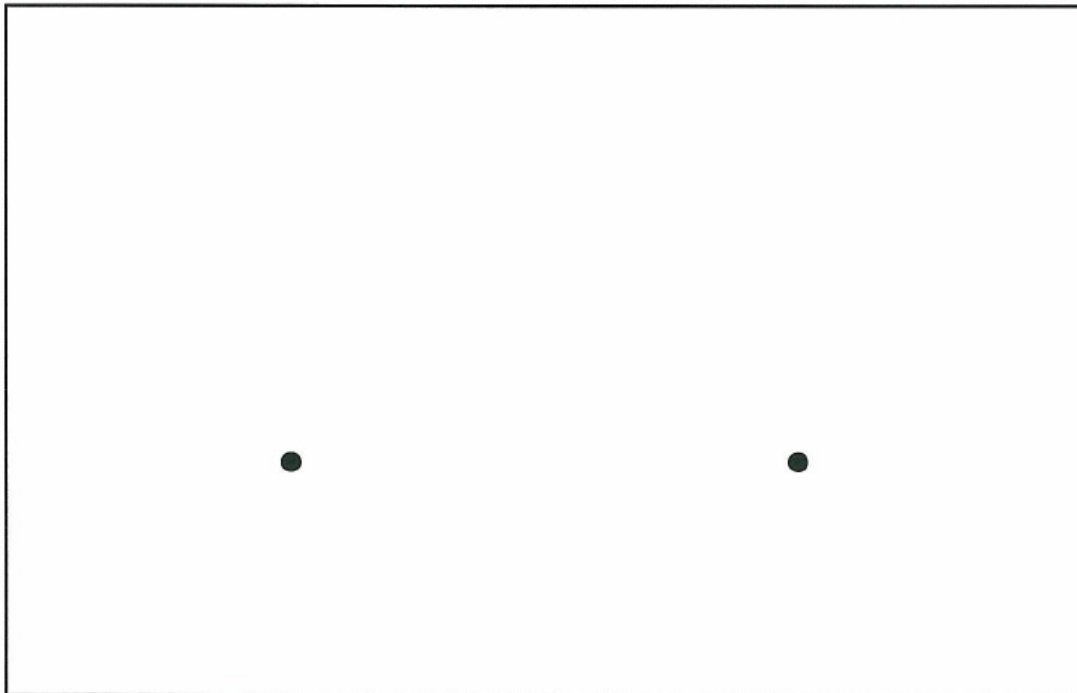
In the frame below, connect the dots with a curved line. This will be the top of the hat.



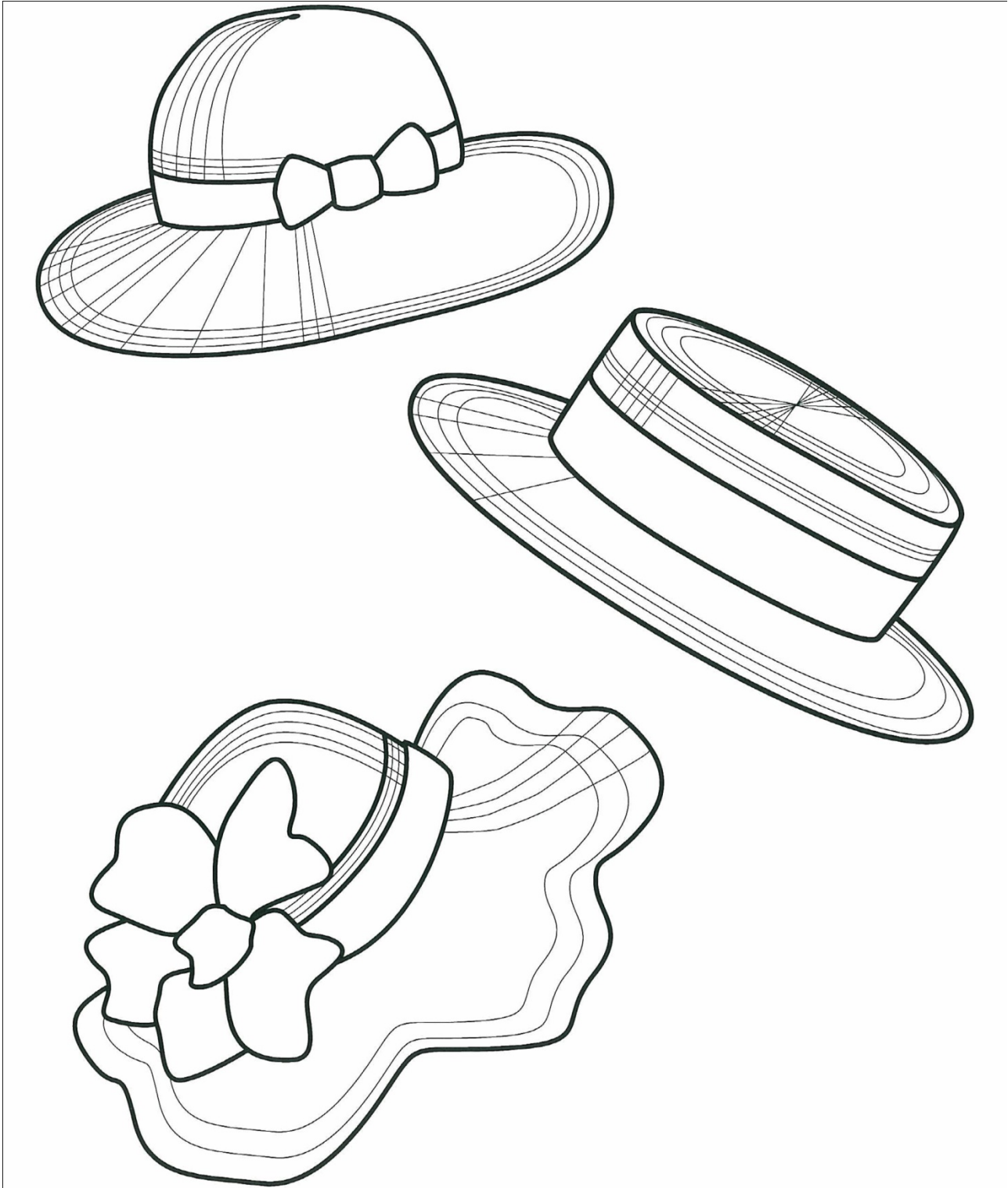
Now draw the brim of the hat. Start at one dot, draw a wavy line toward the bottom of the box, and up to the other dot.



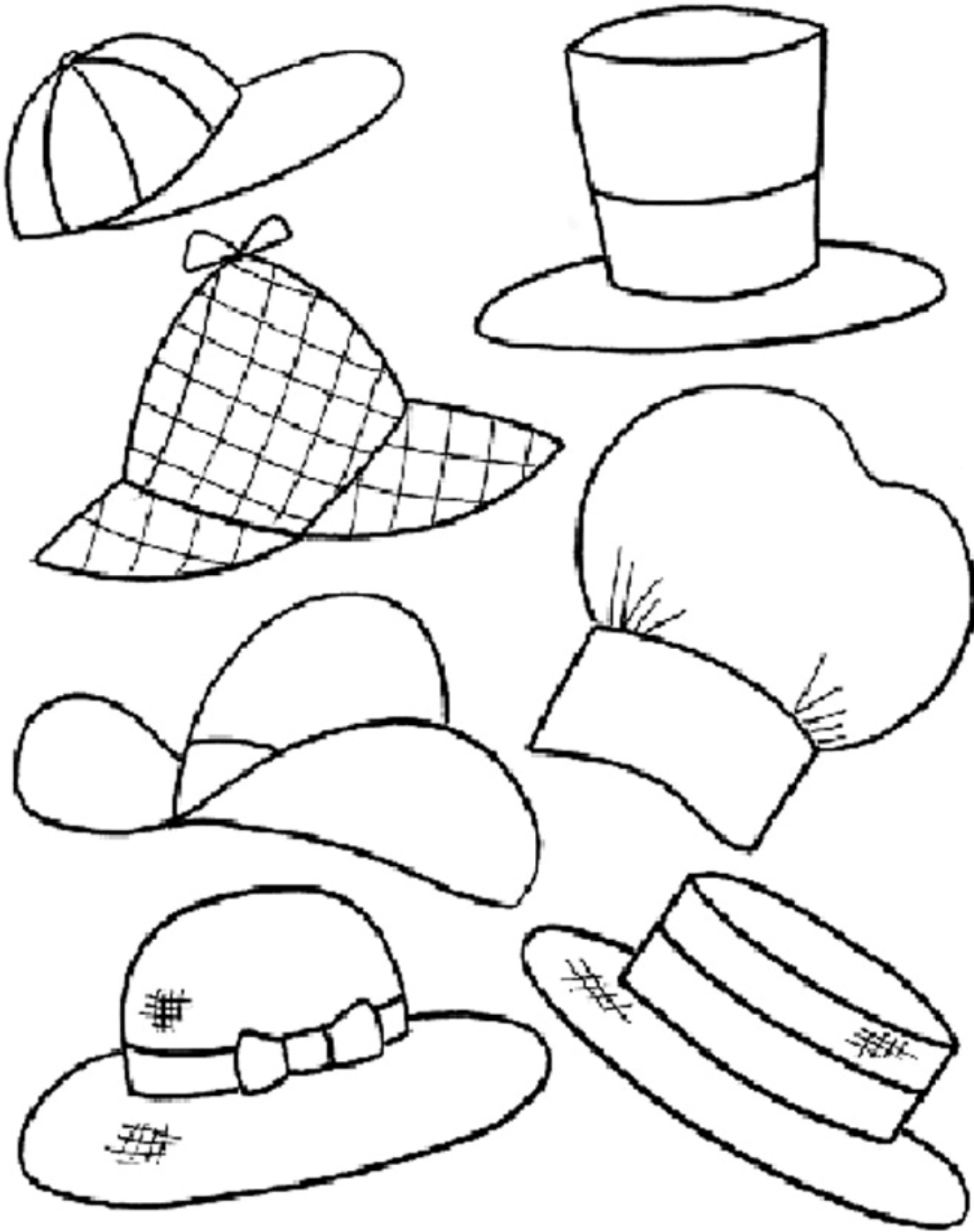
Use the two dots in the box below to draw the top and brim of a hat. Use your crayons to color and decorate hat.



Hats can be woven to show pattern.
Finish the hats to complete the patterns.



Save this page for your art activity.





The last few pages of this section contain the Art Activity for Mary Cassatt. This step-by-step outline will be a guide for instructing your child(ren) through the activity. The parent/teacher should review all steps necessary to complete this project before beginning any work.

Cut out the Artist Profile Slip below and attach it to the back of your completed art project.

Mary Cassatt

(kuh-SAHT) - American (1844 – 1926)

Mary Cassatt was an American who traveled to France to study art. It was quite an accomplishment for a woman, and an American at that, to exhibit with the famous Impressionists. She beautifully painted portraits of women and children.

ART ACTIVITY EMPHASIS: Portraits, Hats

MEDIA: Pastel on Colored Paper

Mary Cassatt

(kuh-SAHT) - American (1844 – 1926)

Mary Cassatt was an American who traveled to France to study art. It was quite an accomplishment for a woman, and an American at that, to exhibit with the famous Impressionists. She beautifully painted portraits of women and children.

ART ACTIVITY EMPHASIS: Portraits, Hats

MEDIA: Pastel on Colored Paper

Step 3 - WORKING WITH:

ARTIST

Mary Cassatt (*kuh-SAHT*)
(1844-1926) American

EMPHASIS

Pastel technique

ART ELEMENTS

Color, line

VOCABULARY

Pastel, stroke, pattern, portrait

MEDIA

Pastel

VISUAL

Print: *Young Girl In Big Hat* (page xxvii)

TECHNIQUE

Pastel strokes

SUGGESTED MUSIC

Impressionistic Music

MATERIALS FOR INSTRUCTOR AND CHILDREN

One 9" x 12" and one 6" x 12" sheet of construction paper in any of the pastel colors - pale green, pale blue, pale pink, pale purple (Include an assortment of each color within the room.)
One 6" x 9" sheet of skin-toned construction paper (peach, tan, or light brown)
One 12" x 15" sheet of black construction paper
One 12" x 18" sheet of newsprint
Paper Towel
Artist profile slip
One box of pastels
Scissors and glue
Pencil, red crayon, or red-colored pencil

PREPARATION

Construct an example to become familiar with the procedure. Place the art print where it can be easily seen. Put your demonstration papers and materials nearby.

SET-UP [5 minutes]

Distribute the following materials to each child:

SUPPLIES: Pastels

PAPER: One 9" x 12" sheet pastel-colored paper, one 6" x 12" sheet of pastel-colored paper, one 6" x 9" sheet of skin-toned construction paper, one 12" x 15" sheet of black paper, one piece of 12" x 18" newsprint, paper towel, and the artist profile slip.

ORIENTATION [5 minutes]

What did our artist, Mary Cassatt, like to paint? (**Portraits**) Mary Cassatt especially liked to paint portraits of women and children. What is her style of painting called? (Impressionism) Your Learning Packet gave you some guidelines for drawing portraits. Today you will work on the proportions of the head to make a portrait, and you'll also create a hat for your portrait using special pastel strokes. Let's get organized so that we can begin.

DEMONSTRATION AND ACTIVITY

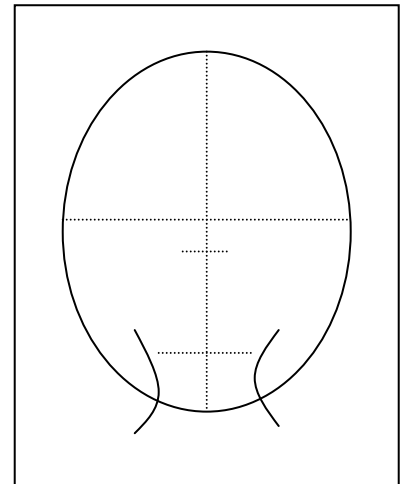
ORGANIZE YOUR WORK AREA [2 minutes]

1. Put your bright-colored paper out of the way.
2. Place your skin-toned colored paper vertically on top of your newsprint in the center of your desk.
3. Put your pastels, glue, scissors, paper towel and artist profile slip at the top corners of your desk.

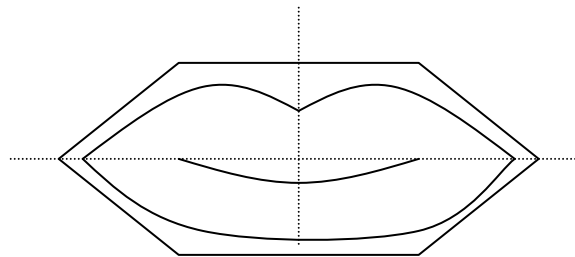
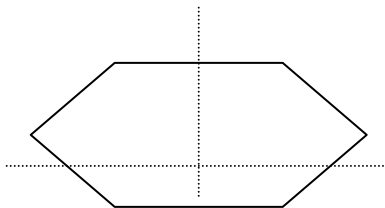
THE HEAD AND FACE [7 to 10 minutes]

Watch how to lightly sketch a head on the skin-toned paper: (Have the students repeat each step immediately.) Hold the pencil loosely and let it glide in an oval shape, several times around. Make it fill the top $\frac{3}{4}$ of the paper. Use guidelines for top and bottom of oval.

1. At the base of the oval, add the neck lines, gently curved.
2. Divide the oval in half lengthwise with a VERY light line.
3. Halfway between the top and the chin is the eye line. Draw it horizontally across the oval.
4. Halfway between the eye line and the chin is the bottom of the nose, and that's where to draw a light horizontal line.
5. Halfway between the nose line and the chin is the mouth line. Draw a light horizontal line there.



To draw the lips on the mouth line, try starting with an elongated hexagon shape divided in half horizontally and vertically. Sketch the shape of the lips. Add the details.



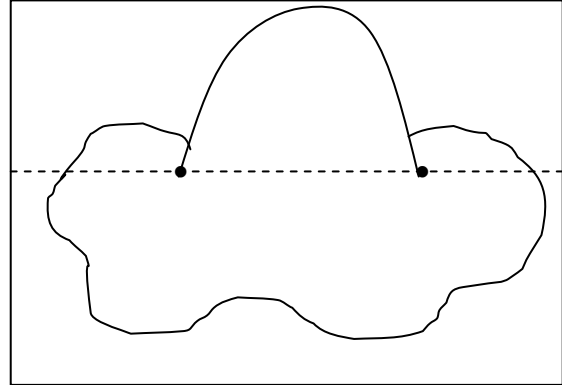
Carefully color the inside of the lip lines lightly with a red crayon or colored pencil.

Set this paper aside while we create a hat for our portrait using pastel strokes.

DRAW THE HAT [5 minutes]

Watch how to create a hat:

1. Place the sheet of bright-colored paper horizontally in the center of the desk and use your pencil to lightly draw a centered horizontal line.
2. Use your hand to “measure” the width of the head that is drawn on the skin-toned paper.
3. Make two dots centered on the horizontal line. Your hat will need to be at least that wide. Draw the crown of the hat and then finish by drawing the brim. Encourage the students to fill the entire sheet of paper.
4. Place the hat drawing out of the way.



PRACTICE WITH THE OIL PASTELS [5 to 10 minutes]

(Have the students repeat each stroke immediately on their newsprint.)

The Flat Stroke

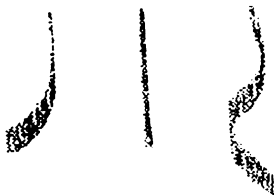
1. Hold a broken piece of pastel (with paper removed) on its side with your fingers on top.
2. Press the side of the pastel on the paper horizontally (demonstrate).
3. Hold your arm high above the paper to avoid smearing and draw the pastel down.
4. Put the pastel back into the box – not on the desk!



The Flat Stroke



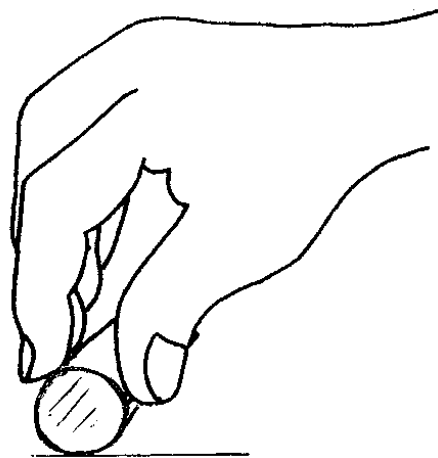
The Diagonal Stroke



The Edge Stroke



The Curved Stroke



The Edge Stroke:

Hold the pastel in the same way, on its side, but pull it sideways (demonstrate), to make a thin straight line.

The Diagonal Stroke:

If you hold the pastel at an angle and keep it that way while you pull it down the page, it will make a diagonal stroke (demonstrate).

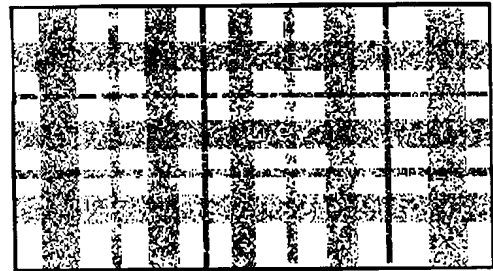
The Curved Stroke:

Hold the pastel the same way you did for the flat stroke, but draw it in a curve.

CREATE THE PLAID [10 minutes]

Now that you are so good at using pastels, it is time to create the fabrics for your portrait.

1. Place the 9" x 12" bright-paper hat drawing down onto the newsprint and use the practiced strokes to create a plaid. Create an interesting pattern for the hat. A plaid, geometric, or flowered pattern would work well (demonstrate). Make the pattern fill the page. Remember, a pattern is a shape or line that is repeated. (Students may also turn over the hat drawing to decorate it with a woven straw or ribbon design.)
2. Carefully cut out the hat.



ASSEMBLE THE PORTRAIT [3 minutes]

1. Arrange the head and hat pieces. The hat should cover the "eye area."
2. Carefully, glue the hat to the skin toned paper.
3. Some hats may extend off the background paper.
4. Students may decorate the hats with ribbons (curved at the crown), feathers or flowers. Encourage proper pastel strokes and contrasting colors. Hair or jewelry may be added.

MOUNTING THE ARTIST PROFILE SLIP [2 minutes]

(Profile slips for each artist are provided. They give a brief description of the artist, the technique, and the media used in the art activity. They should be mounted on the back of each art project after it is completed.)

1. Write your name on the front of the artist profile slip.
2. Using glue, mount the profile slip on the back of your artwork.
3. Encourage students to discuss their artwork at home using this artist slip of information.

CONCLUSION

Can you picture Mary Cassatt, her sister, or a child wearing your beautiful hats? Mary Cassatt would be proud of you!

This Concludes The Mary Cassatt Unit.