Intro to Impressionism

The Art Impressionism is an art movement from the late 1800s. Impressionist painters are most famous for using thick brush strokes and bright colors. In fact, impressionist painters rarely used black. Instead, they used darker shades of blue and purple. These bright colors, and absence of the color black, give the paintings lighter moods. Many of the impressionists used nature as their main theme. However, artists also used everything from cafes to people as main themes. Light was also very important to the impressionists. They would wait until the lighting was just right before starting their painting. Dusk and dawn were their favorite times of the day for painting because the low sun created deep shadows that made objects look more interesting.

The Artists

**Claude Monet** (1840-1926) Monet was on of the most famous impressionist artists. He was one of the first impressionist artists to paint a picture that did not look like a photograph. Instead, the painting, “Impression – Sunrise, Le Havre,” looked very fuzzy. Since no one had ever seen a picture like it, everyone disliked it. In fact, a journalist reported that one of Monet’s pictures drove a man insane, causing him to run into the street and start biting people! However, this is probably nothing more than a legend. Monet is most famous for his beautiful garden paintings.

**Edgar Degas** (1834-1890) Degas is most famous for his wonderful paintings and sculptures of dancers. He loved to sit in the theater and watch the ballet dancers rehearse and perform. He also loved to paint pictures of cafes and people working. Ironically, Degas eventually became blind.

**Vincent van Gogh** (1853-1890) Even though van Gogh is most often labeled a “post-impressionist,” his style is very similar to that of the impressionists. His paintings use very bright colors and thick brush strokes. Van Gogh is also well known for cutting off his ear and trying to give it to a woman. He was even placed into a mental hospital after he threw a knife at another artist.