

# DRAW LIKE DEGAS: THE ART MOVEMENT

Inspired by Edgar Degas, *Little Dancer, Fourteen Years Old*

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Grade Level Middle-High School

## OVERVIEW

This will be a study in the movement of the human figure inspired by the drawings of Edgar Degas. Students will focus on the gestures and contours of live dancers, capturing the complexities of human strength and beauty. They will use soft pastels on toned paper emblematic of Degas and learn to use line and color as an expressive form of communicating volume, light, and motion.

## ANTICIPATORY SET

The beauty of a ballerina is perhaps best captured by the artist Degas a master draftsman who brought to life the grace of drawing and the charm of color. Degas did not create portraits, but studies that addressed the movement of the human body, exploring the physicality and discipline of dancers through the use of contorted postures and unexpected vantage points. Like Degas we will capture the immediacy of the moment from live dancers using soft pastels.

## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn how to draw in gesture.
- Students will learn to capture movement.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of form and volume.
- Students will investigate the complexities of the human figure from live models.



Edgar Degas (French, 1834–1917), *Dancer (Battement in Second Position)*, 1874, charcoal heightened with white and pale yellow pastel on gray-brown laid paper, 17 3/4 x 11 7/8, Norton Simon Art Foundation, M.1977.05.D  
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## VOCABULARY:

- **Contour:** The outline of a figure or body; edge or line that defines or bounds a shape or object.
- **Form:** a three dimensional geometrical figure as opposed to a shape. The whole of a piece's visible elements and the way those elements are united.
- **Gesture:** A quick drawing which represents the essence of an object's or figure's position.
- **Line Quality:** List of attributes that define a line
- **Proportion:** relative size of parts of a whole
- **Pastel:** drawing medium composed of pure powdered pigment and a binder.
- **Sketch:** Quick informal drawing done from life, capturing the overall form, perspective, sense of volume, movement, and feeling. Sometimes suggests light and shade.
- **Vantage Point:** A position or standpoint from which something is viewed or considered. Point of view.
- **Volume:** size, bulk, and dimension of a particular object in relation to the space in which it occupies.

RESOURCES: [Degas Teaching Poster](#); Videos – ["Drawing Degas Dancer in Pastels," Judice](#) and ["Teacher demonstration: pastel Degas drawing," Dk Mercer](#). [Human Figure Proportions](#)

## **LESSON OUTLINE**

- 1) The beauty of a ballerina Students will be given the following:
  - two sheets of 18x24 toned sketch paper (newsprint)
  - One sheet of 18x24 toned Strathmore drawing paper (gray or tan)
  - Colored Pastels (red, blue, yellow, green, purple, blue, light, dark, and hot pink)
  - Colored Pastel Pencils
  - Eraser
- 2) Give students a small lecture and demonstration on the following subjects:
  - Materials: paper, pastels, drawing horse
  - Application: Mark making with pastels, value and line quality.
  - Composition: Picture plane and filling the frame
  - Technical Aspects: Proportions, vantage points, Building Form
  - Gestalt: Drawing gesture and full figure Sketches
- 3) Give students a handout of the proportions of the human figure and an example of a Degas drawing of a ballerina.
- 4) A set of five gesture drawings will be done in progression of the dancers on the sheets of sketch paper.
- 5) Full figure developed sketches will be completed of the live dancers on good drawing paper

## **EXTENSIONS**

The skills acquired in drawing can transcend into everyday life skill. Drawing teachings you to observe with acute consciousness, increase your spatial awareness, improve fine motor skills, and foster creative thinking. Drawing is a wonderful activity that explores your inner thoughts of the world around you!

## **CONTENT STANDARDS**

[NEBRASKA CONTENT AREA STANDARDS](#)

[IOWA CORE STANDARDS](#)