

## Joslyn Art Museum Comprehensive Study Lesson Plan

Created by Julie Daigle, Kristy Lee, Carter Leeka, Susan Oles, and Laura Huntimer.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter – 19<sup>th</sup> C. French Academic Art

**Focus:** Jules Breton and *The Vintage at Château Lagrange*

#### Objectives:

- Understand the concept of labor.
- Make connections between France and Nebraska.
- Develop the skills to criticize an artwork including the ability to compare and contrast while doing the critique.

#### *Instructional Strategies that Strongly Affect Student Achievement – Robert J. Marzano*

_____ 01 Identifying similarities and differences	_____ 06 Cooperative learning
_____ 02 Summarizing and note taking	_____ 07 Setting goals and providing feedback
_____ 03 Reinforcing effort and providing recognition	_____ 08 Generating and testing hypotheses
_____ 04 Homework and practice	_____ 09 Activating prior knowledge
_____ 05 Nonlinguistic representations	

**Resources:** Check out the **Teacher Support Materials** online for additional resources.

**Suggested Materials:** *The Rural Vision: France and America in the Late Nineteen Century* by Hollister Sturges (editor), academic and impressionism images, image of *The Sower* on NE State Capitol, "People Overruled Harsh Critics of Breton Work" article, Token Response Game, Concertina book materials, art materials, graph paper.

**Vocabulary:** Academy/Academic Art, accepted, conservation, criteria, criticize, glean, labor, musical terminology, peasants, refused, Salon, sower

#### Procedure:

- **Engage:** Nebraska & France. Is there a connection? Show students an image of the NE State Capitol and talk about *The Sower* on top. Next show an image by Millet (*The Rural Vision*, pg 59). Students should compare and contrast the two images. Then show images by Breton to compare and contrast with Millet.
- **Art Talk:** Rules & Rebels. Have students be jury members at a 19<sup>th</sup> C. French Salon and explain the criteria typical of artworks accepted in the Salon. Then show them images of academic and impressionism artwork, and using the criteria have students determine where the artwork is accepted or refused. Refer to the workshop presented by Norma Fuller at the March 2011 Third Thursdays for Teachers.
- **History:** What is Academic Art and who was Jules Breton? Refer to the talk presented by Jan Lund at the March 2011 Third Thursdays for Teachers. Also refer to the **Teaching Poster, Bibliography** and **Webology** in **Teacher Support Materials** for additional information.
- **Aesthetics:** Critics & the People. Hand out a copy of the article "People Overruled Harsh Critics of Breton Work." Show students the image the critics dismissed, but the public liked (*The Song of the Lark* in *The Rural Vision*, pg 55). Ask with whom they agree. Whose opinion holds more weight – critics or the public? Talk about how criticism of art is an on-going discussion (think about how the public reacted to Paley's *Odyssey* in Council Bluffs). For younger students, use the Token Response Game to explain criticism.

- **Production:** Concertina Book & Gleaning. Show students images of Breton's artworks. Talk about how he idealized the poor and working class in his paintings. Then take students through the concertina pocket book activity. Once completed they can sketch Breton's artworks, write, draw a map or many other things. Refer to the workshop presented by Mary Gallagher at the March 2011 Third Thursdays for Teachers.
- **Other:** Music & Art Telling the Story. Show students Breton's *The Vintage at Château Lagrange* and talk about music that celebrates the common man. Then have them bring in a contemporary song. They should explain why this music fit the image. Lyrics should be typed, and an explanation how the lyrics fit with the image should be included. In the writing, students should use musical terminology. Refer to **Music & Art in Teacher Support Materials**.
- **Close:** Critique & Analyze. Bring students to Joslyn with their concertina books. Review what they have learned about criticizing and analyzing art. Have students divide into small groups and select a painting to critique. They should record their analysis in their books. Move around the room sharing these critiques with their classmates. Present opportunities to compare and contrast two artworks as well.

#### Extensions:

- **Cultural Connections:** Labor. Have students interview someone who has had to work very hard in their life. They should write and then share this story or legend of labor. Another tie-in could connect to immigrants. Why would they move here to create a homestead in places with little resources?
- **Fine Arts 1:** Analyze Art. Just as Breton captured work, students should think of something they do to help out their family. Create a sketch or perhaps a watercolor of this chore. How does this chore differ from the work from Breton's period? How would we know about work of that time period had Breton not painted it? Talk about how everyone contributes in some way.
- **Fine Arts 2:** Clothing or Costume? Focus the discussion on the lush clothing Breton's subjects wore. Is that what peasants wore during this time period? Now take the sketch drawn for the Fine Arts 1 and draw it with lush clothing. The garments may be from that time period or contemporary lush clothing. Share drawings with the class.
- **Language Arts:** *The Song of the Lark*. Discuss with students how Breton's work influenced Nebraska author, Willa Cather. High school students should read the book. Middle school students should read sections. Elementary students should create poetry inspired by the image.
- **Math:** Fractions. Show students Breton's *The Weeders*. Students should analyze the image and make estimations in terms of fractions identifying the sky, ground and people. Then make a pie chart. Other ways to analyze this artwork is use graph paper or cut out the image and group.
- **Science:** Conservation. Have students study the image of conservator Jim Roth cleaning the painting (on teaching poster). What could be in his jars? Why types of solutions are used when working with painting conservation.

**Selected References:** Go online to **Teacher Support Materials** and review the **Bibliography** and **Webology**.

Handmade Book: A Concertina Pocket Book  
or A Place to Put Your Gleanings  
By Mary Gallagher

Supplies:

- Scissors, glue or glue sticks, pencils and rulers
- 9" x 24" white drawing paper - 1ea.
- 6 ¼" x 3 ¼" oak tag, tag board or card stock - 2 ea.
- 7"x 4" patterned, decorated or handmade papers - 2 ea. (My students tie-dye coffee filters using markers and a spray bottle, then they trim them to use as covers.)
- ½" x 10" ribbon - 2 pcs. ea.

Optional:

- 5 ½" x 5 ½" drawing paper (folded in half) to put in pockets
- Colored pencils, markers, etc. for drawing in the book

Steps:

- 1.) Measure and fold a 3" pocket along the length of the 9" x 24" drawing paper. Leave it folded throughout this process.
- 2.) Fold the entire paper in half.
- 3.) Make 3" accordion folds (fold back and forth) for the entire length. Use a ruler to mark your folding points. Set aside.
- 4.) Take two pieces of oak tag and two pieces of patterned paper. Fold the edges of one patterned paper around a piece of oak tag and glue down. Repeat for the other cover. (It helps to trim or "miter" the corners of the patterned paper so you don't have a bulky fit.) Set them aside to dry a bit.
- 5.) Take your folded white paper and keeping it folded, center and glue a ribbon across the front width and then glue the other one across the back.
- 6.) Attach the cover pieces to the front and back of the folded concertina.
- 7.) After it is allowed to dry, experiment with different ways of tying and displaying your book.
- 8.) Add notes, poems, drawings, etc.

Just a few suggestions for the classroom:

- Ask your students to get creative with found objects.
- Discuss ways to use this book in class.
- Students could develop and "trade" pocket inserts. For example, they could develop math story problems, maps of neighborhoods, car or fashion designs, poems, vocabulary, etc. and trade with each other.
- Students could display their books on a table for visitors to peruse.
- Take them outside and have them draw "small" things from observation. These can then be included in their books.
- Have your students draw small details of a masterwork - one for each pocket. Then they can research the artist and write a few sentences on the back page of the pocket. Artist's names and titles of the works can go right on the pocket.
- Think of one or two of your own!





—From Joslyn Art Museum's Permanent Collection.

**"The Vintage of Chateau Lagrange," by Jules Breton (1827-1906). Painted in 1864.**

## The Wonderful World of Art

# People Overruled Harsh Critics of Breton Work

By PHILIP GURNEY

Thirty years after Jules Breton died in 1906, the painting considered by many to be his masterpiece was sentenced to a museum cellar because it wasn't "good enough" to be shown. It was dismissed curtly, disapparring as "Salon art."

The familiar painting is "The Song of the Lark." It depicts a young French peasant girl who has been startled from her work in the fields by the lark's whistling.

Said a 1936 art critic, Peyton Boswell, editor of Art Digest: "The 'Song of the Lark' is a third or fourth-rate sentimental contraption little ahead of Millet's 'Angelus'..."

He praised the action of Dr. Robert B. Harshe, director of the Art Institute of Chicago, in taking the painting down. It had been at the Institute since the early 1900s, then went into storage under pressure of the "modernists."

"The Song of the Lark" had been put on display again during the Chicago World's Fair in the 1900's as the result of a popularity poll. The Chicago Daily News had asked people to vote for the best loved picture in the Art Institute. They picked Breton's "Lark."

Harshe's decision and Boswell's

championing it raised a considerable hue and cry among the traditionalists.

In substance they said, "If the people like the picture, then why not show it? If the painting was popular 30 years earlier, then it should be shown if only for its place in art history. And what's the matter with popular vote? Even though the taste is bourgeois, there are those who prefer the bourgeois to the sophisticated and jaded. Why should the modernists be allowed to impose their opinions on the people?"

These arguments still are used today by those who enjoy "representational" art in their debates with the "non-representationalists."

Jules Adolphe Aime Louis Breton was a Nineteenth Century French Salon painter, there is no question about that. But he should not be lumped with the "barroom nude" artists of that time who dominated the Salon.

Perhaps his art is too pretty,

too sentimental, a bit too sweet for some. But his art is too fine to ignore, and it has a truthness that makes it important. It also is pleasing to view, which accounts for the fact that he was one of the popular painters of the Nineteenth Century.

Breton stayed almost exclusively with one subject: The French peasant. Most of the time he painted the peasants at their work, and most of his figures were women. They dominate the majority of his canvases.

Jules Breton was born May 1, 1827, in Northeastern France at Courrieres, not far from Calais. His father was steward of an estate, a respected position, and once served as mayor of the town.

The boy's mother died when he was about four. He was the second oldest of four sons. The bringing up of the boys fell largely to the maternal grandmother, widow of a country doctor, and an uncle who had an encyclopedic knowledge.

Life at home was gay and joyous and young Jules played much in the fields where he learned to love the peasants whom his father oversaw.

Jules apparently got the artist's bug from watching an old painter who came each spring to repaint the decorations in the estate's manor. This inclination prompted him to take drawing when he was sent at age 10 to a near-by religious school.

He left there at 13—he had tried some cartooning that brought a whipping from the abbe—and was sent to study in Douai, where he took up drawing more seriously. At 16 he went to Ghent, Belgium, to take art courses at the Royal Academy and to study under an artist-friend of the family, Felix Devigne.

Fifteen years later he was to marry Devigne's daughter, who was 10 years younger than he.

After three years study at Ghent, Breton moved to Antwerp to study at the Academy of Fine Arts. In 1848, when he was 21 and France was in a revolution again, he went to Paris to study under Drolling.

The revolution brought financial ruin to the family, and its harshness was reflected in Breton's first major painting, "Misery and Despair," done in 1849 and exhibited at the Salon. The youth did not have to give up his painting, however, due to his own hard

work and that of his brothers and uncle.

(His father had died, did not see his sons go on to success. A brother, Emile, also became a painter, but of less stature than Jules. Another became a brewer.)

Jules Breton's first pictures won little public notice, though he was in the Salon again in 1850. His true debut is considered to be 1853 with financial success following in 1857 when he was 30.

His 1853 entry was "The Little Gleaner," his first composition taken from life in the fields of Artois, the Northeastern French province in which he lived. He said of the painting:

"I had that little gleaner pose for me one day upon a flowery bank near a field of wheat. She turned her face in the shadow, her bonnet and shoulder in the sun. I painted her with a secret joy. I will not say how enchanted I was with the harmony of that brown, vigorous profile upon the tawny straw, where the lilac blossoms ran; of those violet tones in the blue sky; of those little flowers and tender branches—all that enchanted me."

He used gleaners for subjects many times. They were the peasants who followed after the harvest to pickup grain that had fallen from the sheaves into the stubble.

Many critics say that his peasant women are too beautiful, that they do not look like people who spent their lives in early-aging toil.

But Breton saw beauty in them and much color, which he transposed to the canvas skillfully. He was a craftsman with the brush.

His success came in 1857 with the painting "The Blessing of the Grain in Artois." It showed a long procession winding its way through the full fields, the priests praying for full harvest and the peasants dressed in Sunday best.

It was a sensation among art-

ists like Corot, Gerome and Troyon. The painting was sold for 5,000 francs and placed in a museum at Luxembourg. Breton also received a second class medal, the first of many honors not only from France but also from Germany and England.

He was destined to receive the cross of the Legion of Honor and numerous medals for his paintings at exhibitions. In 1882 he was made a member of the Art Institute of France and of the Academy des Beaux-Arts in 1885.

His "Song of the Lark" was painted in 1885.

Joslyn Art Museum's Breton is typical of the artist's peasant subjects, but shows a change of scene.

In 1864 Breton was employed by the Comte Duchatel to go to his vinery estate of Chateau Lagrange at St. Julien. This is in Southwestern France's Medoc district, noted for its vineyards.

There Breton painted the grape harvest, or vintage. The large painting—5½ by 3 feet—is entitled "The Vintage at Chateau Lagrange."

It shows peasant women carrying baskets of grapes out of the vineyard to an oxen-pulled wagon. The women are wearing wooden shoes. Their clothing appears rough but clean. Their clothes are colorful with red skirts, blue aprons and bright headscarves.

The fine, careful brush strokes and smoothness of texture are those of a master craftsman. The painting is a favorite among visitors to Joslyn, where it hangs in Gallery 4. It came to the museum in 1932 as a gift of the Friends of Art.

Breton is considered an artist who combined realism and idealism and also succeeded in harmonizing landscape and the human figure on the same canvas. His figures are near-portraits.

## 'Friends of Art' Added Much To Cultural Development

The Friends of Art, which gave Breton's "The Vintage at Chateau Lagrange" for Omahans to see, was one of several art groups which have formed during Omaha's history.

Some have been study groups, some promoted exhibitions, others were directed toward painters. All have fostered art interest and enjoyment in this city. The Friends of Art had as its purpose the encouragement of art through purchase of paintings.

The group was organized in 1915 by 100 men, each of whom agreed to give \$25 a year for five years. In the 1915-16 season the Friends of Art had a membership of 180, with these officers:

John L. Webster, attorney, president; Thomas C. Byrne, president of Byrne and Hammer Dry Goods, vice-president; W. Herman Bucholz, vice-president of the Omaha National Bank, treasurer, and Charles C. George, president of George and

Co., secretary.

More paintings were purchased in succeeding years. In the 1917-18 season the membership had risen to 250. By 1920 it dropped to 150 and in that year the group dissolved—the five-year period was up.

Under the terms of its constitution the Friends of Art turned over its collection of 13 paintings to the Society of Fine Arts. They continued to be housed at the Public Library, which had exhibition space on its third floor.

The Society of Fine Arts sponsored an art gallery in the Aquila Court starting in 1925. It called itself the Omaha Art Institute and moved most of its paintings out of the Library. After Joslyn Art Museum opened in 1931 the Art Institute was dissolved by its members. Its collection and equipment, valued at \$45,000, were given to the Society of Liberal Arts.

## The Week in Joslyn

**EXHIBITIONS**—Contemporary American paintings from the museum's permanent collection are back on display in Galleries B, C and D with prints in Gallery A. Artist of the month is Sylvia Curtis, whose work is shown in the northeast hall, ground floor. Techniques of Printmaking on exhibit in Student Gallery, southwest hall, ground floor.

**HOURS**—Sundays 2 to 6 p. m. Tuesday through Saturday 10 a. m. to 5 p. m., Thursdays to 9 p. m. Closed Mondays, holidays.

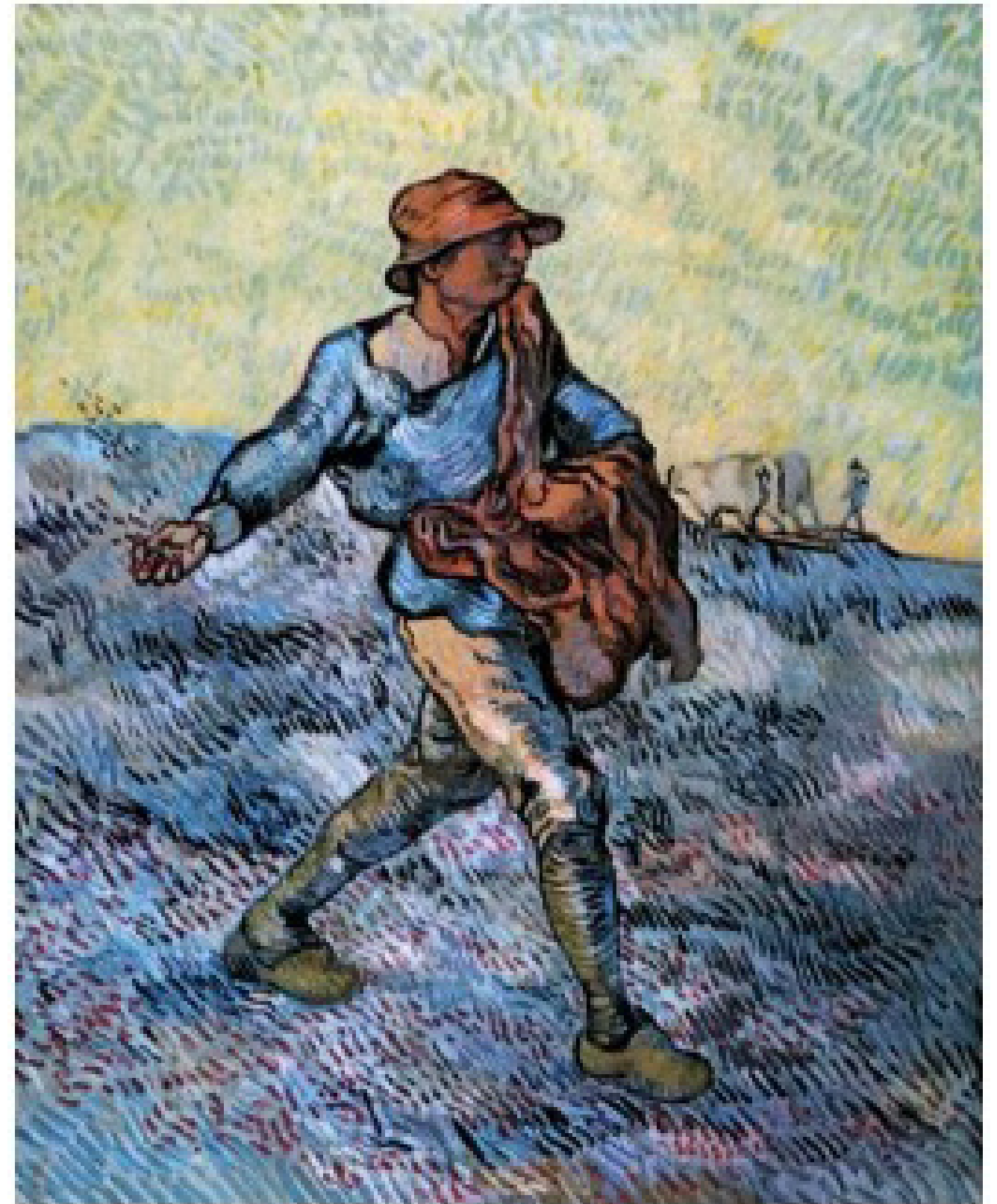




Jules Breton. *The Tired Gleaner*, 1880. Oil on canvas. The Cleveland Museum of Art



Jean-Francois Millet. *The Sower*, no date. Oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Vincent Van Gogh. *The Sower (after Millet)*, 1889. Oil on canvas. Sammlung Stavros S. Niarchos.