

# Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grand Jatte Project Georges Seurat

Volunteer:

Date:

Grade Level:

Artist: **Georges Seurat**

Print/Sculpture: **Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grand Jatte**

Art Vocabulary: **Pointillism, dots, divisionism, color mixing, pure color, melt, combine, arrange**

## I The Artist: **Georges Seurat**

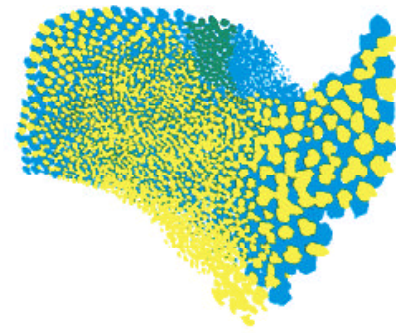
Georges Seurat was born in Paris, France on December 2, 1859. He began to draw at an early age, and when he was 16 (1875), he took his first art course with a sculptor. Several years later he enrolled at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and studied painting with Henry Lehmann. He remained there for 2 years, during which time he discovered a book entitled *Essay on the Unmistakable Signs of Art* by Humbert de Superville. Throughout his text, he discovered the relationship between lines and images and this became the inspiration for Seurat's entire career. He studied the science of light and color and used the science to his advantage as an artist.

Seurat left the Ecole in 1879, when he was 20-years-old, to perform his military services in Brest, a coastal city in France. While there he drew scenes of the beaches and the sea. He returned to Paris and the Ecole the following year, but soon left due to his unconventional style of art. The Ecole trained in the classical style and Seurat didn't fit in.

Seurat's first official exhibition in the Salon in Paris took place in 1883 when he was 23-year-old. The following year his painting was refused by the Salon's jury. **(Explain)** As a result, Seurat exhibited with the foundation of the Group of Independent Artists who promoted the development of modern art. His contemporaries were impressed by his views of color and studied his paintings as demonstrations of his ideas and techniques. His technique is known as **pointillism** (also **divisionism**). He varied the small strokes of the Impressionists and used small dots, lines or triangles of the same size on a white background. Each dot is a dark or light shade of one of 6 colors: blue, yellow, red, green, violet, or orange. Instead of mixing colors on the artist's palette, he put tiny dots of paint next to each other and let the viewer's eye blend them. Blue and yellow dots



beside each other look green when mixed with the eye. Red and green looks brown and black and white look gray.



**II The Painting:** Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grand Jatte (see below). Oil on canvas. Take a look at this painting.

**Describe the scene. Does it remind you of any setting in Riverside? In Chicago? Anywhere else?**

Seurat began working on *Le Grand Jatte* in 1884. To prepare for this painting, he did more than 200 drawings and oil paintings of elements of the scene.

These were then incorporated into, or used as a model for, the work. The composition is **planned** with **strong contrasts of dark and light**, creating striking **silhouettes** of the figures against the yellow-green grass.

**How does Seurat give a feeling of depth to the painting?** By diminishing the size of the figures as they move back in the painting.

**How many and what kind of pets do you see in the painting?** Monkey, 2 dogs.



These animals are carefully considered shapes in the work. The curved lines of the figures contrast with the horizontals of the shadows and the verticals of the trees. Color in large areas of a single hue, green, is varied from yellow to blue. Against the cool green background are the warm colors of the figures.

**Where do you see the strongest contrast of color?** (Red-orange parasol against green of trees in center of painting). Complimentary colors: red-green, blue-orange, violet-yellow are placed next to each other for the eye to mix and so to create greater variations of color than by mixing them on the palette. The arrangement of lights and darks is important as it allows for color and value contrasts.

**Can you see why Seurat has been called the “confetti painter”?** These tiny dots give the painting a look of shimmering light.

**How big do you think the original painting is?** It is actually 6.5 feet tall and 10 feet wide. The lady in the foreground is almost life-size!

**How long do you think it took him to complete this painting?** It took Seurat 2 years to complete this painting.

**Do you know where it is currently displayed?** The Art Institute of Chicago.

**Have any of you seen the original painting there?**

**Do you like this painting? How does it make you feel?** At the time of that the painting was first exhibited, it was not well accepted. Many laughed at the way he applied the paint saying it looked like “colored fleas.” Others described it as “bedlam,” “scandal” and “hilarity.” It was thought that everything was “too new” in this immense painting. The concept was bold and the technique one that nobody had ever seen or heard of before, so it was hard for people to accept. Eventually, the picture’s revolutionary character won out and Seurat inspired what is known as the Neo-Impressionism movement. *La Grand Jatte*, with its carefully planned color contrasts and structure, is one of the greatest paintings of our time. To give you an idea of the importance of this painting, one of the two small final preparatory oil paintings was sold in 1999. **Guess how much it sold for?** \$35.2 million! It’s hard to imagine the value of the work hanging in the Art Institute.

### III Composition of Artwork

Seurat uses Pointillism as discussed above. There is another example of Pointillism: The comics are done with dots of colored ink. You can use a magnifying glass and see the dots on these comics. (See last part of the attached document for an example.)

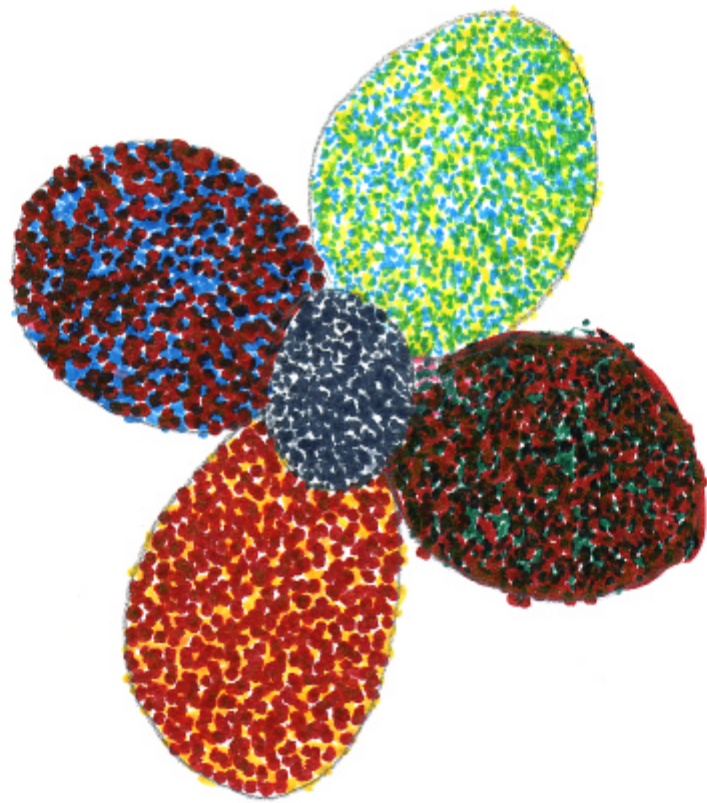
### IV Artist’s Materials or Techniques

Oil on canvas.

### V Students’ Self-Expression: Guided Activity

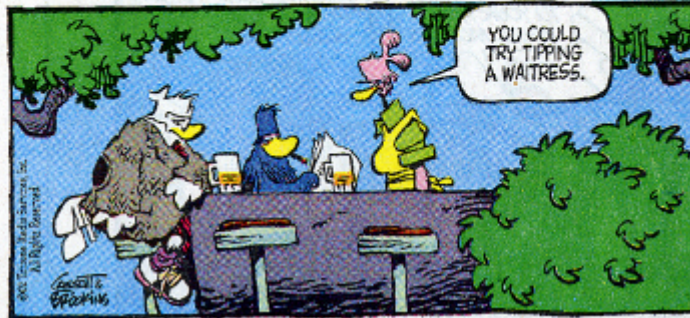
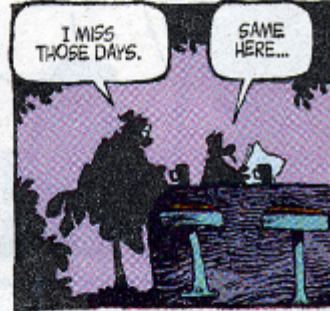
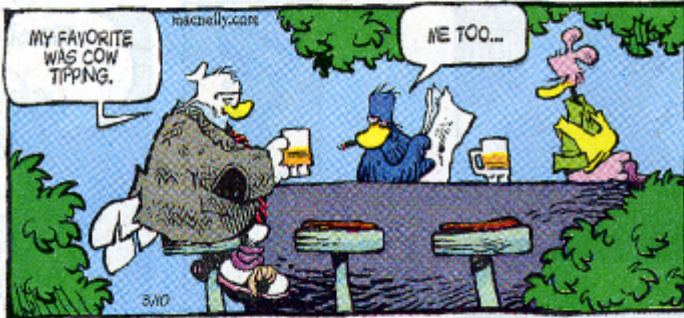
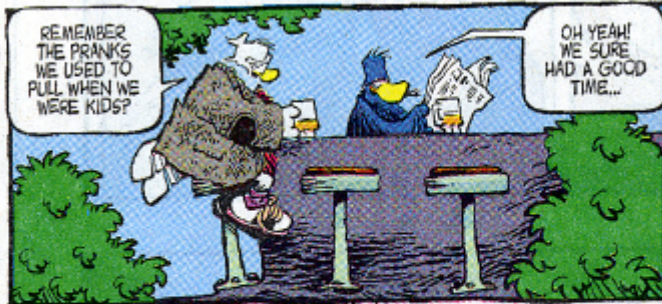
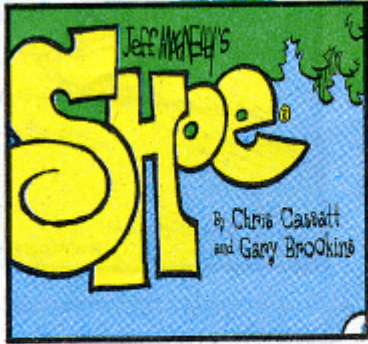
Create your own Pointillism masterpiece.

Use your magic markers to create a picture using the Pointillism technique. You may create a simple shape and experiment with creating different shades by combining various points of color. Or you may create a more elaborate picture – a landscape or portrait, for example.

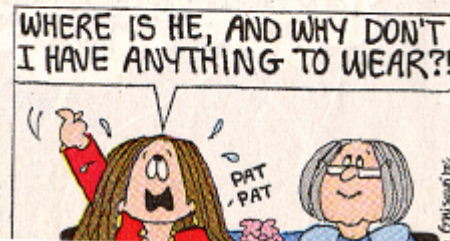
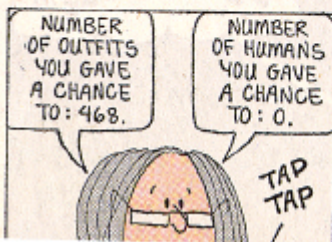
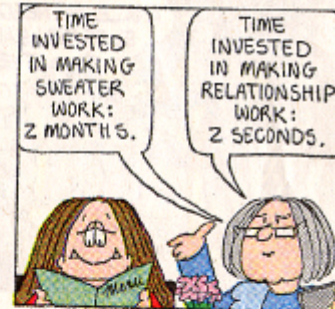
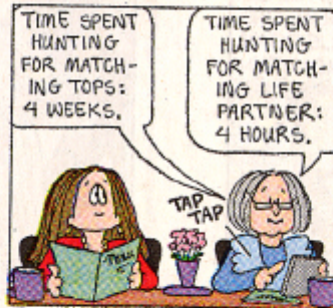




SHOE



CATHY



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CATHY



WHERE IS HE ???!

LET'S THINK ABOUT THAT. TIME SPENT SEARCHING FOR THE PERFECT SHOES LAST YEAR: 35 HOURS.

TIME SPENT HUNTING FOR MATCHING TOPS: 4 WEEKS.

TIME SPENT HUNTING FOR MATCHING LIFE PARTNER: 4 HOURS.

TIME INVESTED IN MAKING SWEATER WORK: 2 MONTHS.

TIME INVESTED IN MAKING RELATIONSHIP WORK: 2 SECONDS.

NUMBER OF OUTFITS YOU GAVE A CHANCE TO: 468.

NUMBER OF HUMANS YOU GAVE A CHANCE TO: 0.

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING SOMETHING BESIDES "WHERE IS HE ???"

WHERE IS HE, AND WHY DON'T I HAVE ANYTHING TO WEAR??!

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