

# Artists IN FOCUS

Edgar Degas: "Painter of Dancers" & Innovative Sculptor



## What We Learned:

- Edgar Degas was born in 1834 in France but in his lifetime, he traveled to Italy and America.
- He went to art school, copied old master painters in the Louvre, and was influenced by other artists of his day.
- Although he is known as one of the founders of Impressionism (visual impression of movement using light and color), he preferred to be called a Realist (artists who painted subjects from everyday life in a naturalistic manner).
- Degas enjoyed painting scenes of everyday life, and he especially enjoyed drawing dancers.
- He created paintings, pastels, drawings, sculpture, and even experimented with photography.
- Although the only sculpture that was ever put on display during his lifetime was *The Little Dancer*, more than 150 sculptures made of clay and wax were found in his studio after his death—many of those were eventually produced in bronze, but in limited quantity.



## Art Activity: Drawing a Ballerina

Edgar Degas is perhaps best known for painting ballet dancers. More than half of his works are of dancers. He loved capturing their movement, grace and power. He often went behind the scenes and painted them backstage as they were getting ready for the performance.

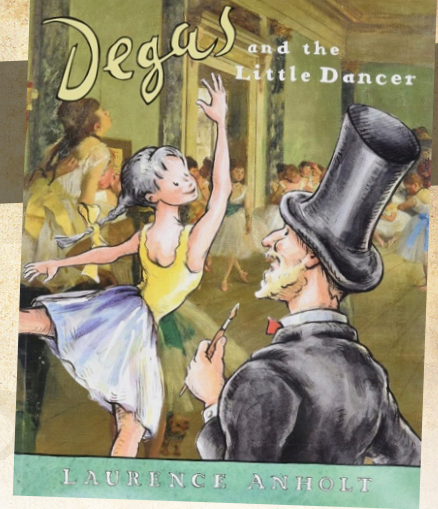
Degas preferred using pastels. He included them in the majority of his works—used alone or in combination with other media, applied dry, or crushed and mixed with water or as a binder into a paste. Degas frequently manipulated and experimented with pastel.

Like Degas, the students drew a ballerina using pastels.



# Book Nook

*Degas and the Little Dancer*  
by Laurence Anholt



## For Parents

Edgar Degas (1834 -1917) was born in France. He studied drawing in Paris and Italy. Degas was an Impressionist artist famous for his pastel drawings and oil paintings. He also produced sculptures, prints, and photos. Degas is especially identified with the subject of ballet dancers. The only sculpture he displayed during his lifetime was *The Little Dancer*, which is considered revolutionary in its realism. He along with other French artists started the Impressionist movement in art. Their focus was on light, color, texture, and everyday life. The paintings appeared like “impressions” of a scene or subject. Degas lived alone and never married. As a young man he began having eye problems and by the end of his life he was almost blind. He died at age 83, and his tombstone reads, “He loved drawing very much.”

**Please note:** As M&G's host location for *Homeschool Days*, Mack Library will feature books each month for parents to reference as resources. We hope these additional features will further support your teaching at home.

## Connections at Home: Popsicle Stick Ballerinas



### CRAFT SUPPLIES:

- Jumbo Popsicle Sticks
- Pipe Cleaners
- Cupcake Liners
- School Glue
- Paint Pens {or markers}
- optional materials - rhinestones, glitter, glitter glue

### DIRECTIONS:

- Flatten and fold cupcake liners in half and use a bit of glue to secure them to the center of their popsicle stick. This is the ballerina's tutu skirt.
- Once the cupcake liners are down, use paint pens and draw on a face, hair, and ballet shoes onto the popsicle stick.
- If desired, glue on a “hairbow” to finish the glamorous look.
- Wrap/bend a single pipe cleaner a few times around the center of the popsicle sticks to resemble the ballerina's arms.

# Coloring Page: *The Dance Studio*

Degas loved to paint ballerinas. He liked the movement and energy of the dancers. Here is his original *The Dance Studio*. You can copy his colors or choose colors of your own to finish the picture.



*Back Then:*

## Transportation in the 1800s

Degas traveled to Italy as a young man and then to America to visit family. Click on Degas' self-portrait to learn about the types of transportation that were available from 1856-1873 when the artist was living and traveling. Would Degas have been able to fly in an airplane, ride a train or in a car? Write a paragraph detailing the transportation available to Degas.



## Additional Resources

To learn more about Edgar Degas, click on the links below:

- Discover more about Degas' *Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer* sculpture in the MET collection: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/196439>
- For 10 Edgar Degas projects for kids follow this link: <https://artscraftsymom.com/10-enchanting-edgar-degas-art-projects-for-kids/?epik=dj0yJnU9dkhNMTE2UmxkWiICOHffXORNb0VvcnJuV2VMU0h2eEYmcD0wJm49aHk0OGhIM0hWTWMxX3RXciYzNnNGUSZOPUFBR2JfTFFZ>
- Edgar Degas study resources can be found here: [https://tablelifeblog.com/degas-unit-study/?utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=pinterest&utm\\_campaign=tailwind\\_tribes&utm\\_content=tribes&utm\\_term=1213018152\\_61480376\\_440068](https://tablelifeblog.com/degas-unit-study/?utm_medium=social&utm_source=pinterest&utm_campaign=tailwind_tribes&utm_content=tribes&utm_term=1213018152_61480376_440068)
- View a children's video about the life of Degas: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzL1nOXZI-I>
- Read Edgar Degas' Biography for Kids: <https://jusclassical.com/edgar-degas-biography-for-kids/>
- Kiddle Facts of Edgar Degas: [https://kids.kiddle.co/Edgar\\_Degas](https://kids.kiddle.co/Edgar_Degas)

Due to the changing nature of web resources, M&G strongly urges you as the parent to preview these sites before your child accesses them. The fact that these sites are available on this handout does not imply that M&G endorses their content from the standpoint of morals, philosophy, theology, or scientific hypotheses.

### M&G Educational Mission:

Through tours, events, and publications, the Museum & Gallery seeks to partner with educators in fulfilling all of the National Visual Arts Content Standards. By integrating art into the core curriculum, M&G's goals are to teach children to value the arts, to communicate through the arts, to become creative problem solvers through the inclusion of STEAM-related concepts and fully-developed STEAM units, to understand history and culture in light of the arts, to improve literary interest and understanding through visual storytelling, to critique the arts, and to develop an aesthetic awareness of the arts. Through fulfilling the mission, M&G is able to help develop citizens who have the ability to think, feel, and understand the world in which they live.

