



THE IMAGINATIVE WORLD:  
Prominent Women Artists



# VICTORIAN ENGLAND: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS



## WHAT WE LEARNED:

- We discovered that the artists covered today were all inspired by the various people, painters, and illustrators we've been learning about all year!
- We learned that during the early Victorian era, woman artists were thought of as amateurs—regardless of their skill.
- We explored the lives and art of five women artists: Kate Bunce, Marie Spartali Stillman, Emily Mary Osborne, Emma Brownlow, and Adelaide Claxton. Their imaginative work helped change the way Victorians viewed female artists.

## ART ACTIVITY: Botanical Drawings

The Victorians were obsessed with plants and flowers! In fact, this era was filled with expeditions to exotic lands. And the peoples' favorite souvenir was the plants native to those regions. Wealthy Victorians filled their greenhouses and conservatories with interesting specimens from all over the world. Furthermore, they developed a language of flowers. Each bloom was assigned a meaning, and bouquets of blossoms given to someone special spoke louder than words. Today, your middle school student chose specific plants to communicate a special message to you! They used a transfer method to draw these botanicals and finished them up with a few colored pencil techniques that they learned in class. We are so pleased with the artistic growth we've seen in our budding Middle School artists!



## FOR Parents

During much of the Victorian era female painters were generally considered novices—regardless of their skill. Kate Bunce, Marie Spartali Stillman, Emily Mary Osborne, Emma Brownlow, and Adalaide Claxton (the artists highlighted in this lesson) did much to alter that misconception. Through their talent and influence the Royal Academy recognized their artistic skill and the quality of their works, including them in their annual art exhibitions (and ultimately opening its doors to female students in the 1900s.) Wealthy patrons like Queen Victoria also began to take note, paving the way for women to enter the professional art world.

### A CLOSER LOOK: Marie Spartali Stillman

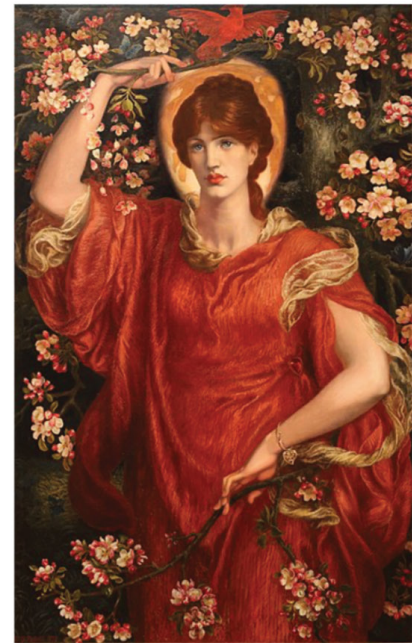
Both Kate Bunce (fig. 1) and Marie Spartali Stillman (fig. 2) were inspired by the Pre-Raphaelite painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Like Rossetti both artists were known for their meticulous detail, floral imagery, and storytelling power. Marie, however, also became one of Rossetti's figure models (fig. 3).



Kate Bunce, *Melody*



*The Thoughtful*, Marie Spartali Stillman



*A Vision of Fiametta*, Dante Rossetti

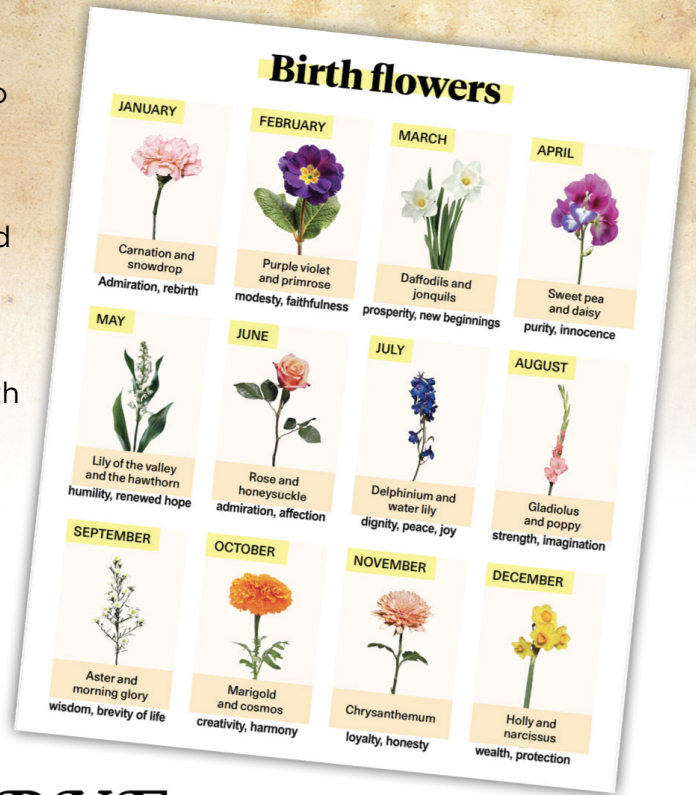
Take some time to examine these three artists' works. As you do, answer the following questions:

1. How are these works similar?
2. How do they differ?
3. Of the three characters portrayed which one would you choose to write a story about? Why?
4. Which of the three paintings do you consider the most visually "stunning"?
5. Was your answer to #3 the same as #4?

# CONNECTIONS AT HOME: Birth Month Flowers

“The tradition of birth month flowers dates back to ancient Rome, when people celebrated birthdays with floral gifts and offerings. . . Over time, certain flowers became associated with each month based on seasonal availability, birthstone colors, and regional growing traditions.” (Martha Stewart)

Take a look at the chart to the right to find the birth flowers for each person in your family. Then using what you’ve learned design a family garden. (Or think about “gifting” a family member with a birth flower bouquet for their next birthday.) To learn more about each month’s flower click [HERE](#).



## EMILY MARY OSBORNE: The Last Time



As we learned in today’s lesson, Emily Mary Osborne had a reputation as one of the 19th-century’s most important women painters. Her works brought attention to the plight of the *Nameless and Friendless* (title to the work we studied in class). Here is another of her powerful images titled *For the Last Time*.

Create a dialogue for the picture that explores the relationship between the two girls and hints at what will happen to each in the future. Remember the flowers in the painting can also provide some clues.

### BOOK Nook

*Women Illustrators of the Golden Age*  
By Mary Carolyn Waldrep



# ADDITIONAL Resources

- Learn more about floriography and [Flowers in the Victorian Era](#).
- See more of [Emily Osborne's paintings](#).
- Read more about [Emma Brownlow](#).
- See (and read about) [Emma Brownlow's Self-Portrait](#).
- Read about [The History of the Foundling Museum](#).
- Learn more about floriography by reading [The Victorian Language of Flowers!](#)

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.



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