

Where Art and History Meet

WHETHER ART IMITATES LIFE or life imitates art, as the saying goes, what better way to teach students history, culture, and current events, than by having them study photographs, sculptures, and paintings—without leaving the classroom? In a few keyboard clicks, teachers can access an easy-to-navigate Web site that includes works of art in the J. Paul Getty Museum’s collection. The Los Angeles–based institution has paired these objects with free lesson plans designed for elementary, middle, and high school students. There are more than 150 lesson plans grouped into 27 topics, including “Who’s Afraid of Contemporary Art?”; “Gods, Heroes and Monsters: Mythology in European Art”; “Artful Women”; “Neoclassicism and the Enlightenment”; and “Looking at Illuminated Manuscripts.” Students are asked to complete a variety of tasks, such as conducting research, writing papers, and making art of their own.

For example, the newest set of lesson plans, titled “Historical Witness, Social Messaging,” addresses a wide range of important historical ideas and events while also emphasizing how works of art—through symbolism, color, satire, etc.—both record and influence history. Each lesson provides the relevant historical



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context, with background information on each piece of art. For example, a lesson that can be adapted for kindergarten through fifth grade introduces students to the great disparities between working-class and wealthy women of the 19th century by comparing *The Milliners* by Edgar Germain



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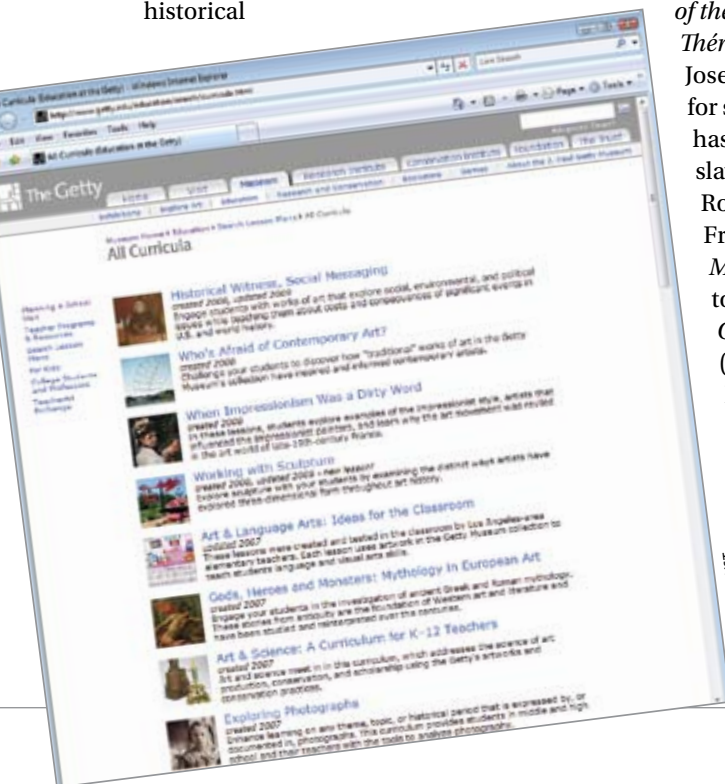
Hilaire Degas (top left) to *Portrait of the Marquise de Miramon, née Thérèse Feuillant* by Jacques Joseph Tissot (top right). A lesson for sixth through eighth grades has students write a paper on slavery in America and the Roman Empire, and compare Francis Harwood’s *Bust of a Man* (center right), from 1758, to *Grave Relief of Publius Curtilius Agatus, Silversmith* (center left), from AD 1–25. A lesson for ninth through twelfth grades uses *Man with a Hoe* (right) by Jean-François Millet and *Farm Workers, South of Tracy, California* (bottom right) by Dorothea Lange to introduce students to the history of labor unions.



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