**Topic:**

The content area topic for my text set is Impressionism. A huge part of French history and art is a period called Impressionism. It is a very distinct period of artistic expression that is widely represented in museums across the world. The name of the movement is actually derived from a painting that Claude Monet did, called *Impression, Soleil levant (Impression, Sunrise)*. Early impressionists were considered radicals of their time. Until the impressionists came along, art was considered something done only in a studio, but the impressionists created their paintings outside because they felt that they could better capture the beauty of nature. They did not receive approval from the art critics and at first received hostile reactions from the public.

All of the books in the text set discuss Impressionism as a time period and as an art movement. Some focus on specific artists and some have a broader focus. Students will learn about Impressionist works of art, the artists themselves, and historical background. They will be given the opportunity to pick their favorite artists and paintings.

Related Virginia Standard of Learning: FIII.6 The student will examine how the arts reflect practices and perspectives in francophone cultures.
Text set items:

This text set is intended for a 10th grade French class. These students have a basic understanding of the French language, but do not have a lot of perspective on the culture or history. These texts will give them a glimpse of French beyond French class.

Below grade level:

Gauguin by Michael Howard discusses the life of Paul Gaughin. This book introduces Gaughin with a history from the time that he was born to his early work and the paintings that make him famous today. This book is filled with several colorful pictures on each page with easy to read captions. It gives a glimpse into the man himself and is a great introduction to his most well-known paintings. **Readability: grade 7/8.**

http://library.thinkquest.org/J002591F/lmps%20and%20Post.htm is a website that gives basic background information on Impressionism. It explains painting from the artist’s point of view. It has several pictures of famous paintings. It also has several links that take the reader to specific artists or games that test the reader’s newly gained knowledge. **Readability: grade 9.**

Great Book of French Impressionism by Horst Keller tells the reader everything he wants to know about Impressionism. It starts with a brief history and moves on to the precursors of Impressionism. Then it describes several famous artists of the period and has many colored pictures of the paintings. **Readability: grade 8/9.**
At grade level:

*Van Gogh* by Bruce Bernard tells the story of Vincent Van Gogh. It describes his childhood, his difficult young adult years, his unreciprocated love, and his inspiration to paint. This book has several colored pictures on each page that help the reader comprehend the text better. **Readability: grade 9/10.**

*Women Impressionists* by Tamar Garb talks about the women who are often forgotten when discussing the Impressionist period. This book introduces several female impressionists with background information and pictures of their paintings. **Readability: grade 9/10.**

*Degas* by Keith Roberts tells the story of Edgar Degas with a lot of background information. It is noted that Degas is most well known for his paintings of dancers, but that he has done far more than that. There are also 48 color pictures of his paintings with detailed descriptions. **Readability: grade 9/10.**

[http://dmoz.org/kids_and_Teens/Arts/Painting/History/19th_Century/Impressionism/](http://dmoz.org/kids_and_Teens/Arts/Painting/History/19th_Century/Impressionism/) is a great website with endless information about many impressionist artists. It has a picture of probably every painting that each artist has ever done with wonderful descriptions. There are many links attached to each artist, giving the ability to gain different perspectives on each person. **Readability: grade 10.**

Above grade level:

*Monet* by Jude Welton goes into detail about Claude Monet, probably the most well-known impressionist. It tells how Monet went from a caricaturist as a
teenager to a landscape painter. It discusses his life in Giverny, where he did some of his most famous water lily paintings, and his eventual blindness. This book has several pictures on each page. **Readability: grade 10/11.**

**100 Impressionist Masterpieces** by Laurence Madeline describes one hundred different impressionist paintings found in the Musée D’Orsay in Paris. The book is broken up into three different sections: Impressionism from 1863-1874, Impressionism from 1874-1886, and Impressionism after 1886. Each section has a detailed description of the time followed by the coordinating paintings, each with descriptions. **Readability: grade 11/12.**

**Impressionism** by Jude Welton gives an overview of the period in history and in art with many descriptive pictures. It discusses the fact that Edouard Manet was actually the first impressionist but that his friend, Monet, whose name is so similar the two were often confused, received more of the recognition. **Readability: grade 11/12.**

**Impressionists in Winter** by Moffett, Rathbone, Rothkopf, and Isaacson introduces impressionism from a different perspective. The majority of impressionist paintings were done in spring or summer weather, but there are several winter paintings that deserve the recognition of an entire book. Monet, Pissarro, and Sisley were the main artists venturing out into the snow to capture the beauty of winter. **Readability: 11/12.**
**Determining Readability:**

The readability of these texts was determined using the Fry Readability Graph, the Flesch-Kincaid grade level assessment, and a qualitative assessment using several components from the Bader Textbook Analysis Chart. I found that the Flesch-Kincaid assessment almost always assessed the text one grade level above the Fry Readability Graph.

As I was obtaining the readability of each text, I continued to be shocked at how high a grade level they were being rated. One book that has more pictures on each page than words has a 12th grade reading level according to both assessments. This is why a qualitative assessment is also important. Font size and number of pictures must be taken into account when assessing a text’s readability, as well as conceptual level and writing style. Plus, the very topic of this text set causes the readability to be higher. The word “impressionism” has five syllables, so if that word is used numerous times in a paragraph it will raise the grade level when using assessments based on sentence length and number of syllables. However, once the word “impressionism” is introduced and understood, the fact that it is a long word would not really slow a reader down. Reading levels in this text set range from 7th to 12th grade. This offers each student an opportunity to read a text on his/her reading level and be able to grasp an understanding and love for Impressionism.
**Bibliography**


[http://dmoz.org/Kids_and_Teens/Arts/Painting/History/19th_Century/Impressionism/](http://dmoz.org/Kids_and_Teens/Arts/Painting/History/19th_Century/Impressionism/).


