



Jean François Millet

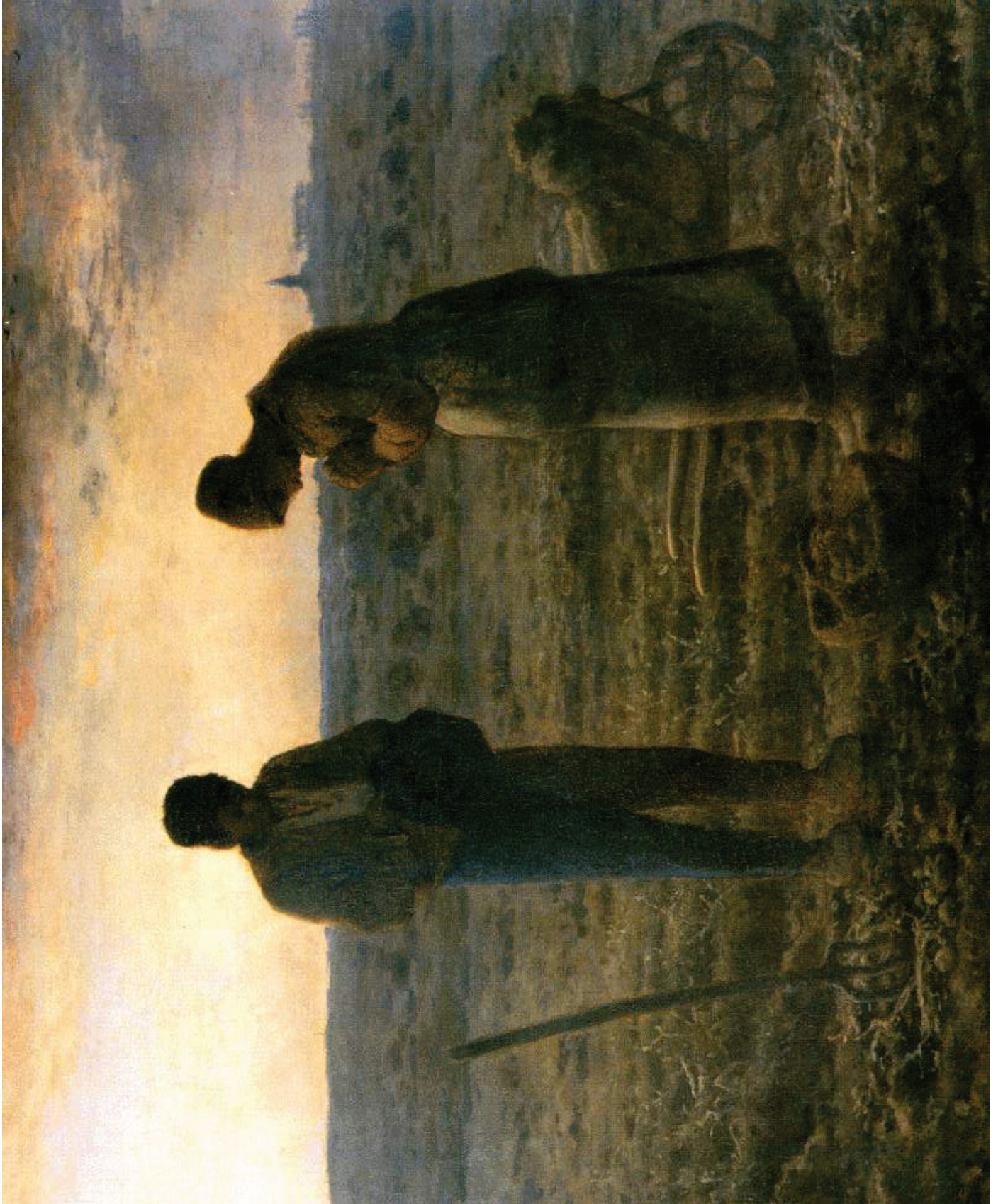
Picture Study

Kathy Weitz & Emily Cook

The images contained in this PDF are copyrighted, as per the person or museum who owns it, therefore we cannot offer them as a printed book. If you want the pictures in print, the copyright allows for you to print and bind them into a little volume for personal and educational purposes only.

The Angelus

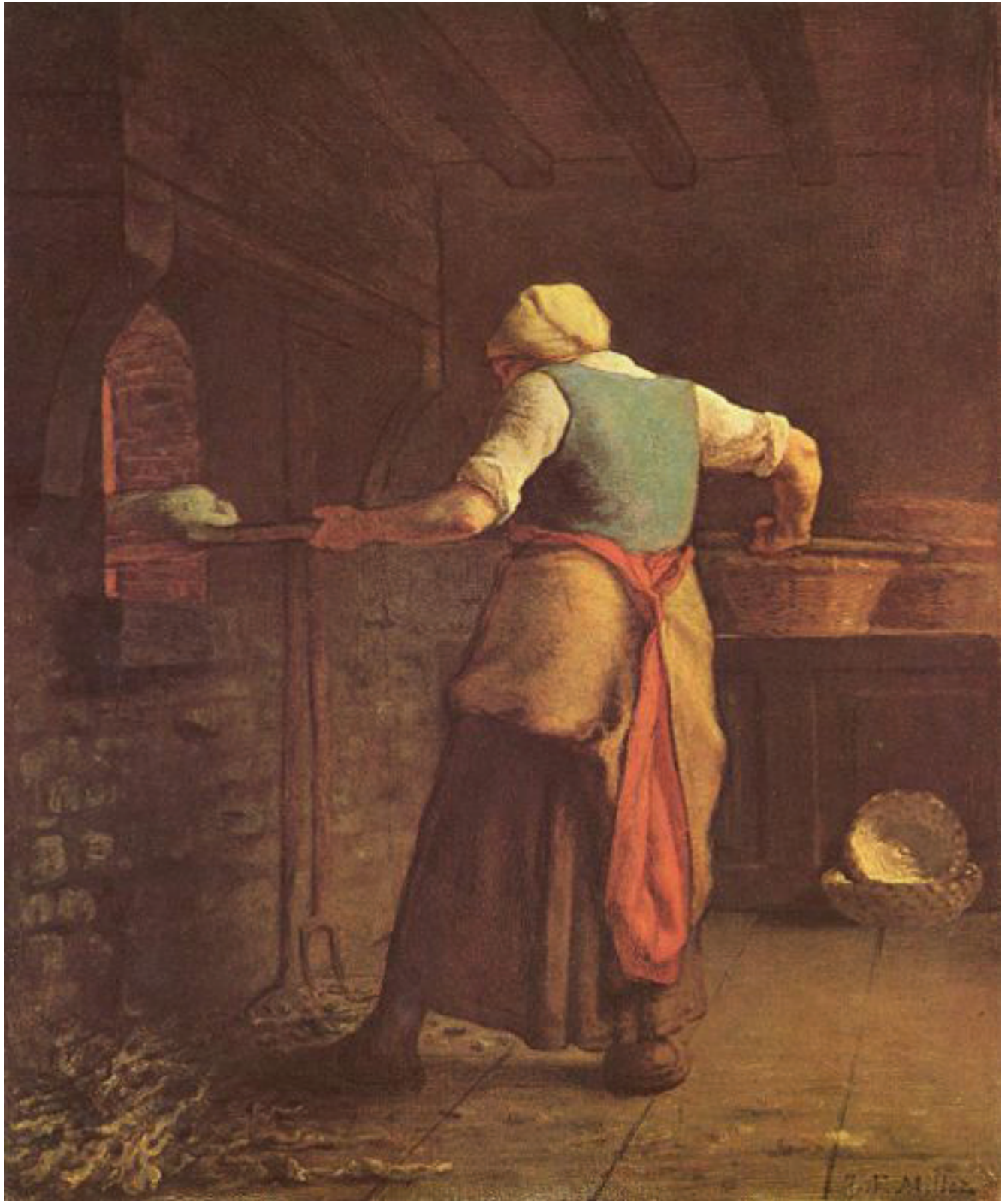
Jean-François Millet, 1857-59



The Gleaners
Jean-François Millet, 1857

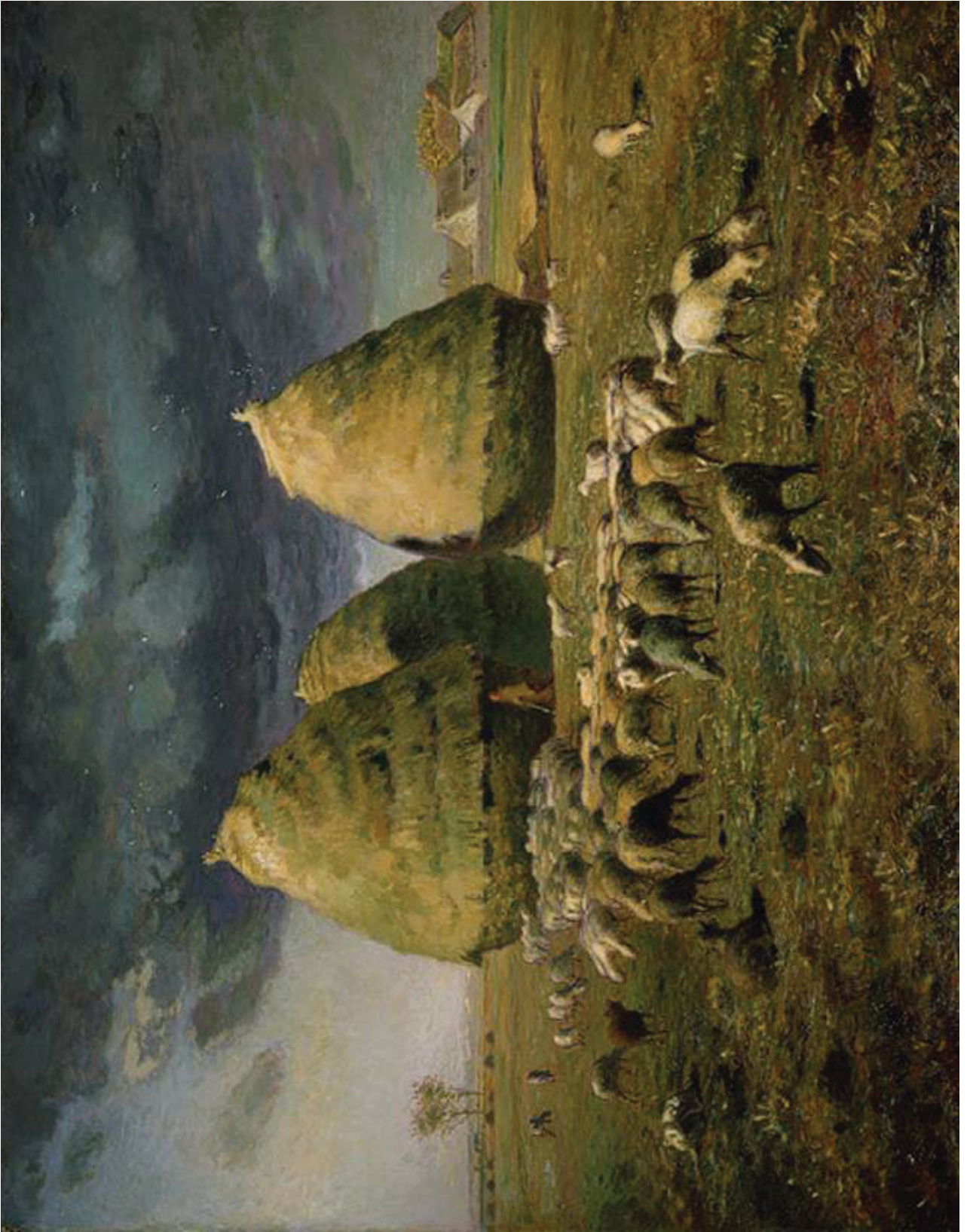


Woman Baking Bread
Jean-François Millet, 1854



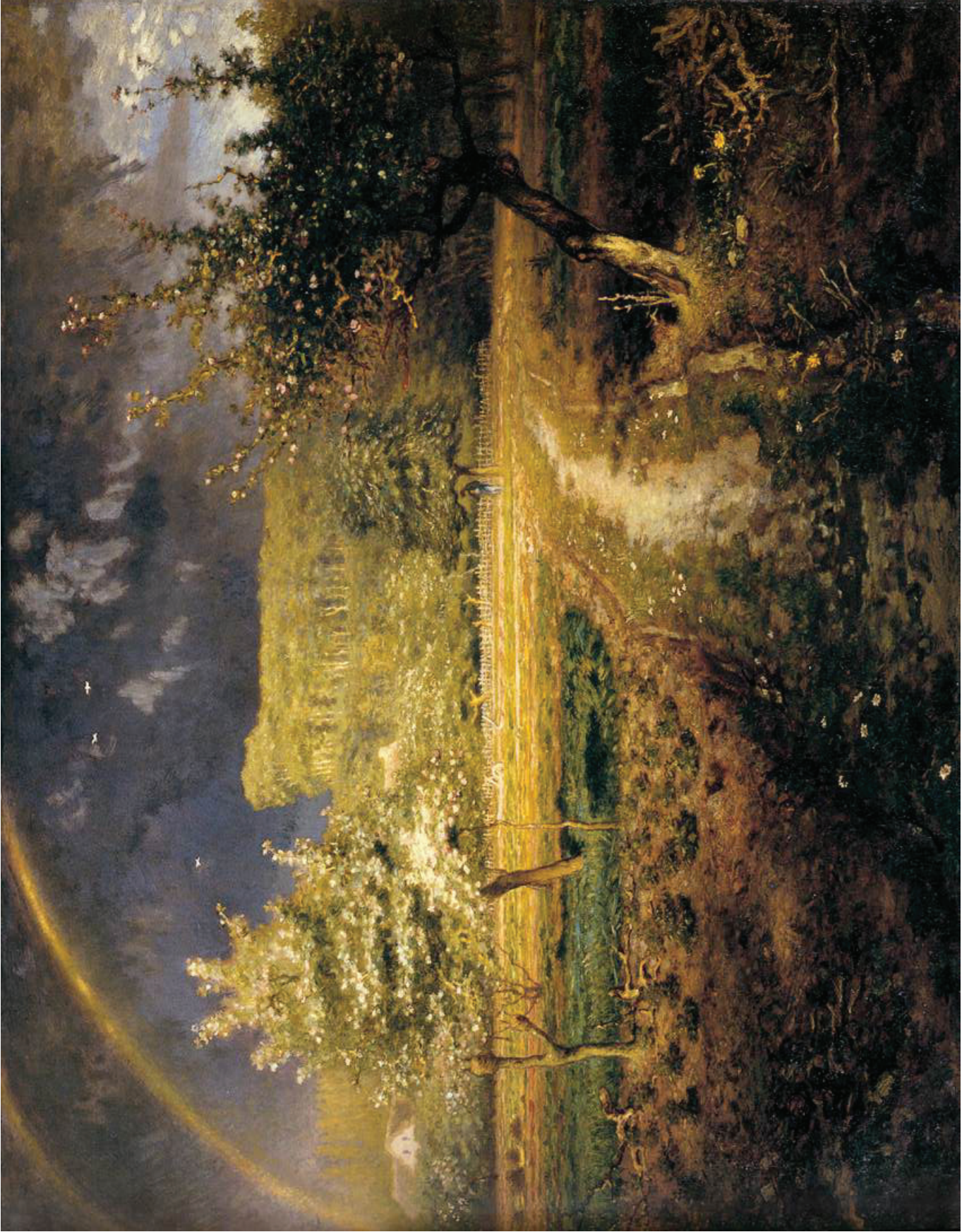
Haystacks: Autumn

Jean-François Millet, 1874



Spring

Jean-François Millet, 1868-73



The Sower

Jean-François Millet, 1850



JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLET

Jean-François Millet (1814-1875) was born to a peasant family in Normandy. He was educated under the village priests, and went to art school in Paris on a scholarship and stipend in his twenties. He began his career as a portrait artist, and married Catherine, with whom he eventually had nine children. His paintings are characterized by realism, rather than idealism. He was reported to have some socialist leanings, but he did not idealize the rural peasant life. Rather, he portrayed the world he knew from his childhood in a grittily realistic, yet hauntingly beautiful way.

Millet became a successful and recognized artist, received many commissions, and earned great financial rewards from his painting. He and several other men are part of what is called the Barbizon school of art. The name is taken from the region of France where they lived. He met and had some influence on Impressionists Pissaro and Gauguin. Millet's work was also the inspiration for much of Van Gogh's early painting. Millet's health failed in his later years, and he died in 1875.

ARTIST BIO NOTES

These notes are provided to aid the teacher's own background research on the artist and his or her works. This is not meant to be presented to students as a list of facts and dates. When you first introduce the artist, tell students where the artist fits into the timeline of history, and where the artist lived and worked. Add a few more details with each new picture, but the information you share should be short and simple unless your students ask questions or wish to know more. Keep the main focus of your Picture Study time on observation and narration of the details of the picture.

Note: if a footnote appears with a fact that is not a direct quote, the fact comes from ONE source only.

LIFE AND CHARACTER

- ◆ 1814, born to a poor family in Gruchy, France (Normandy). Grew up working the land.
- ◆ Educated in Latin and Literature.
- ◆ 1833, studied in Cherbourg.

- ◆ 1839, studied in Paris.
- ◆ 1840, moved back to Cherbourg.
- ◆ 1842, married Pauline-Virginie Ono and moved back to Paris.
- ◆ Around 1843, Pauline died from consumption.
- ◆ 1844, moved back to Cherbourg. Took Catherine Lemaire as a mistress. Several years later, he married her and had nine children.
- ◆ Around 1846, moved back to Paris.
- ◆ 1848, revolution in France. Millet did not get involved.
- ◆ 1849, after an outbreak of cholera in Paris, Millet fled to Barbizon near the Fontainebleau forest. He ended up living the rest of his days in Barbizon.
- ◆ 1870, Franco-Prussian war. Millet briefly took refuge in Cherbourg.
- ◆ In general, he had a difficult life. He mostly lived in poverty, having a difficult time selling his paintings. He was accused of being a socialist because of his perceived glorification of the peasant laborer.
- ◆ 1875, died in Barbizon at the age of 60.

TRAINING AND CAREER

- ◆ Around 1833 (age 19), studied with a portrait painter in Cherbourg.
- ◆ 1837, received a scholarship to study in Paris.
- ◆ 1839, lost his scholarship; first submission to the Salon in Paris was rejected.
- ◆ 1840, first painting is accepted by the Salon. Moved back to Cherbourg working as a portrait painter.
- ◆ 1842, back in Paris, Millet studied the art at the Louvre.
- ◆ 1848, his first painting of a peasant, *The Winnower*, displayed at the Salon.
- ◆ 1849, settled in Barbizon near fellow artists such as Theodore Rousseau, with

whom he helped found the Barbizon School.

- ◆ 1867, after years of rejection by critics, Millet finally triumphed with his display of nine paintings at the Paris Universal Exposition.
- ◆ 1868, commissioned to paint the four seasons for Frédéric Hartmann. Worked on these until his death, never finishing Winter.

ART STYLE AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- ◆ Famous for his sincere depictions of peasant laborers.
- ◆ Started with portraits and more erotic subjects and moved to naturalism.
- ◆ Early style was idyllic, with erotic characters against more lavish backdrops—paintings with the subjects of gods and goddesses or portraits of wealthy persons.
- ◆ In a way, he retained some idealism by portraying peasants as heroic.
- ◆ Barbizon School: naturalist paintings, mainly landscapes. Like Renoir being a unique impressionist because of his focus on portraits, Millet too set himself apart from his fellow artists with his powerful depiction of figures in nature.
- ◆ Later life: his lighter colors and looser brushstroke created stepping stones toward impressionism.
- ◆ Greatly influenced van Gogh's early art, especially with his subject matter (peasants).
- ◆ Struggled for years to gain acceptance from art critics. Finally achieved fame in France and international fame over 30 years after he began his career. Now he is one of the most renowned French artists of the 19th century.

ARTWORKS

- ◆ Spring: the first of his series on the four seasons. Displayed for almost 100 years at the Louvre, where Millet used to study the paintings of other great artists.
- ◆ *Haystacks: Autumn*: another painting in the four seasons series. This painting is

in the Metropolitan Museum of art in New York. Both this and Spring showcase Millet's later style (landscape painting, lighter colors, looser brushstroke) which influenced impressionists such as Monet.

- ◆ *The Angelus*: two laborers take a break to recite a prayer commemorating the Incarnation of Christ. "Angelus" is Latin for angel.
- ◆ *The Gleaners*: a good example of what Millet is most famous for—dignified depictions of laborers performing exhausting tasks.

HOW CAN I BE A PAINTER LIKE MILLET?

- ◆ Think of someone who works very hard. Paint them doing their work or paint them taking a quick break from their work.
- ◆ Make your own four seasons series by painting a landscape for spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

ARTIST BIO LINKS

http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/artist-info.1720.html?artobj_artistId=1720&pageNumber=1 (long, good detail)

<http://www.discoverfrance.net/France/Art/Millet/Millet.shtml> (medium, good overview)

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10310b.htm> (long, some good detail mixed into wordy narration)

<http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/painting.html> (scroll to find artworks by Millet with helpful descriptions and information)

PICTURE SOURCES

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean-Fran%C3%A7ois_Millet_Angelus.jpg

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Millet_Gleaners.jpg

<http://www.wikiart.org/en/jean-francois-millet/woman-baking-bread-1854>

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Haystacks_Autumn_1873_Jean-Francois_Millet.jpg

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean-Fran%C3%A7ois_Millet_\(II\)_-_Spring_-_WGA15693.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean-Fran%C3%A7ois_Millet_(II)_-_Spring_-_WGA15693.jpg)

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jean-Fran%C3%A7ois_Millet_-_The_Sower_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg