

BAM-AT-HOME

WOMEN IN AMERICAN IMPRESSIONISM: THREE MASTERWORKS FROM THE SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

CHILDE HASSAM (1859-1935)

Tanagra (The Builders, New York), 1918

(see larger image, pg. 7)



- List 10 objects you see in this scene...look carefully inside the room, and outside the window (zoom in on the larger image on page 6).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

- Write a sentence about this painting that uses at least 3 descriptive words.

There are symbols in this painting that the artist used to share a message with viewers. De-coding these symbols provides insight into the intentions of the artist. The statuette in the woman's hand is from Tanagra, Greece. Tanagra is the name of a grand, ancient city in Greece. The figure is a symbol of progress and knowledge. The blooming lilies in the window sill are symbols of growth.

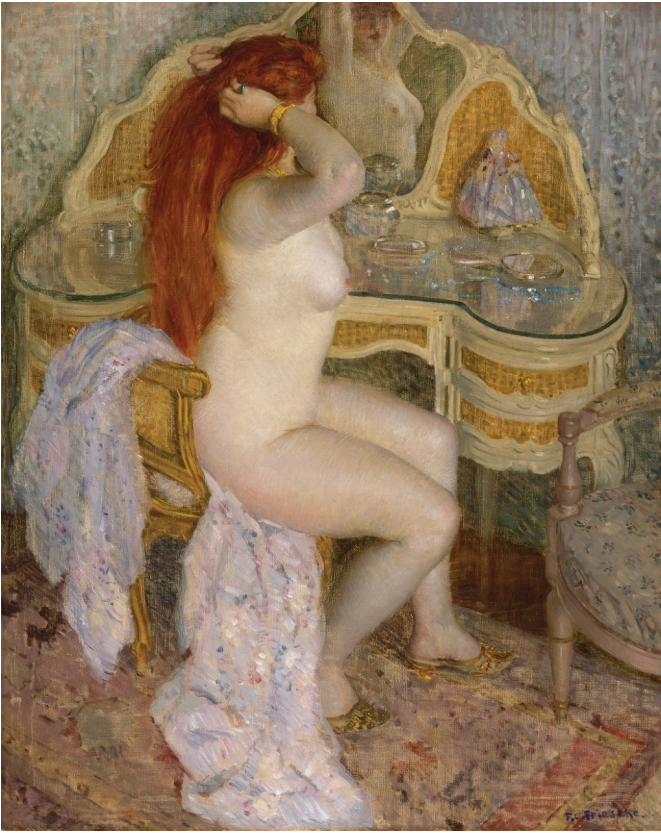
- How would you describe the woman's social class?
-What do you observe that makes you think that?
- What is the mood of the painting? What do you observe that makes you think that?
- What is happening outside the woman's window?
- Why do you think the painting might be titled, *The Builders, New York*?
- What things cause growth in a city?
- Is the growth of a city always good? What challenges can be created by the growth of a city?
- Do we face any similar challenges in the U.S. today?

This painting was completed in 1918 by artist Childe Hassam (*Child Hasum*). This is a portrait of a woman, and it is also a *portrait* of a city and of a specific moment in time. This was a year of many significant events including: the 5th and final year of WWI; a test run of the first pilotless drone in New York; Spanish influenza infecting people worldwide.

- What other significant events, advancements, or inventions from this time period do you know of from your studies?
- Knowing that these events are part of the context in which this painting was made, describe the tension Hassam is creating with this painting.

part 2, pg. 1

CHILDE HASSAM (1859-1935)
Tanagra (The Builders, New York), 1918



- What similarities do these two portraits share?
- What differences do you notice between the two portraits?
- How do they uniquely capture the times in which they were painted and the roles of women in society at that time?
- If you didn't know when they were painted, could you mistake these for modern-day depictions of women? Why/why not?

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CHILDE HASSAM (1859-1935) *Tanagra (The Builders, New York), 1918*

2020 celebrates the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in the U.S. These two paintings of women in the Gilded Age help us to understand how women were depicted in the past.

Take a close look at these two primary sources – one a women's suffrage poster from 1917, and one a political cartoon from 1894.



Women's suffrage poster, 1917.
(State Historical Society of Iowa).

CHILDE HASSAM (1859-1935)
Tanagra (The Builders, New York), 1918



A squelcher for woman suffrage, C.J. Taylor, N.Y. : Published by Keppler & Schwarzmann, 1894 June 6., chromolithograph, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.

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CHILDE HASSAM (1859-1935) *Tanagra (The Builders, New York), 1918*

- What is the message of the suffrage poster?
- What is the message of the political cartoon?
- How are the two messages similar? How are they different?



- How do these compare to contemporary political cartoons or posters?
- What can you tell about women's roles in society during this time period after reading all three, including both paintings?
- What do you think has changed in the past 100 years in the ways women are depicted?
- As adults, you will have the opportunity to vote in elections. Can you imagine a time when you would have been denied the right to vote based on your gender?
- What has changed in the U.S. government regarding the way women are viewed and treated?
- What would you like to see change?
- How can you make that change?

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CHILDE HASSAM (1859-1935) *Tanagra (The Builders, New York), 1918*

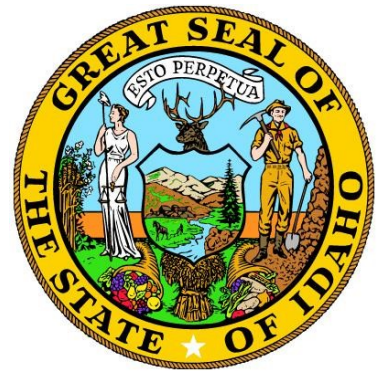
- Listen to or read this conversation with Cokie Roberts about the ratification of the 19th amendment and social change: <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/22/725610789/100-years-ago-this-week-house-passes-bill-advancing-19th-amendment>

- Does the interview change what you thought about women's suffrage? Why/Why not?

RELATED FACTS

Idaho has the only state seal that was designed by a woman artist (Emma Edwards, in 1890). In the seal, she drew the man and the woman the same size, symbolically representing their equality.

February 11, 1920	Idaho ratified the 19th Amendment
August 18, 1920	36 states ratified 19th Amendment, making women's suffrage legal in U.S.
August 18, 2020	100th anniversary of women's suffrage



In the next lesson, you will observe a third portrait of a woman from the Gilded Age and respond through a creative writing prompt.



Childe Hassam, *Tanagra (The Builders, New York)*, 1918, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.6.63