

TIME FLIES William Gerard Barry (1864-1941)

William Gerard Barry came from Carrigtwohill in County Cork. He studied at the Crawford School of Art from 1881 to 1883 and then went to the study at the Academie Julian in Paris. The tradition of Irish artists painting in France and Belgium was by then well established.

Artists came from all over Europe and the United States to paint in Brittany and Fontainebleau. Here, they painted in the open air, shared ideas and developed techniques in an atmosphere of solidarity. Barry sent a painting back to Ireland and won the Taylor Award. (It may have been this painting *Time Flies*.) He left what seemed like a blossoming career in Europe for travels in the Americas and the South Seas. He paid his way by painting portraits and landscapes, eventually settling in France.



Time Flies was painted in Grez-sur-Loing, a village in Fontainebleau that has a strong tradition of landscape painting; Corot had painted there in 1863 and an artist colony had grown in the area. The painting shows the influence of French Realism: such themes of youth and age were popular means of exploring the change in seasons, life cycles and figures in the environment. The soft evening sunshine permeates the glade and settles on the group of children. The matron contemplates the idyllic scene, enjoying this moment with the bittersweet realisation that her time is quickly passing. The barefoot

children are too happily engaged in their game to be bothered with such things.

DISCUSSION

- The title of this painting is *Time Flies*, what do you think this refers to?
- Do you think the artist feels optimistic or pessimistic about the notion of time going quickly? How does he convey his mood through the painting?
- Who in the painting represents age? Do you think this person is a benevolent figure?
- What time of day do you think it is? How can you tell? Why do you think the time of day is significant?
- Look at the clothes worn by the children and the matron, what can you tell about their lifestyle from this?
- How can you tell from the landscape that William Gerard Barry painted this in France? Why do you think France was a popular place for artists?
- The French Realists were very interested in working outside in the open air. They wanted to capture scenes of simple peasant life and often explored themes of youth and age.
- Do you know the work of the Impressionists? Can you compare this painting with an impressionist painting you know?

- The scene has a very relaxed air about it. Often horizontal lines in a composition give a feeling of peace and leisure, what horizontals do you see in this painting? Do they help to create this effect?
- Look at the composition of the painting, the trees, the shadows and the figure of the matron form an x that intersects just at the standing child's head, the light radiates outward from the lower angle to embrace the children. What effect does this have on our reading of the painting?



Compare and Contrast

Look at the painting *The Breadline*, 1916 by Muriel Brandt. Where do you think this scene was painted?

Look at the children, how would you compare the way they are composed and the style in which they are painted to the children in *Time Flies*?

HANDS ON

Take the title *Time Flies* and illustrate the words so that they convey the meaning; for example, you could turn the “i” in time into one hand of a clock, the “s” could be flying away, be imaginative!

Have a brainstorming session on how you could interpret the theme of youth and age. Half of the group should use figures in their plan, the other half should use non-figurative interpretations.

Discuss the idea that time flies. Imagine what you might be doing in ten years time, do you think these years will pass quickly? Ten years ago what age were you? Did time fly since then? Make a picture-graph of changes in this time.

Use your ideas to develop a poster on the theme. Use images and lettering from magazines. Work in groups or individually and do a sketch of your composition first. Try to get your layout to work to accentuate your interpretation of the theme. Discuss which are more effective, the figurative or non-figurative posters.