Cecilia Beaux (si-SEEL-yuh Boo)  
Cecilia Beaux was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to New England Quaker Cecilia Kent Leavitt and Frenchman Jean Adolphe Beaux on May 1, 1855. Her father was a silk manufacturer and her mother was a former teacher. Unfortunately, Beaux’s mother died from a fever shortly after her birth, sending her father into such as state of grief that he could not bear to stay in America. He returned to his home country of France, returning only once in sixteen years to visit his two daughters. Of course, they thought of their father as a stranger and could not establish any meaningful relationship with him.

Beaux and her older sister, Aimée Ernesta (Etta), were raised by her maternal grandmother and aunts Emily and Eliza. This group of independent women were strong role models for their nieces, instilling a strong work ethic, self-reliance and a love for art and music. Beaux’s aunt Emily eventually married William Foster Biddle who later became a major influence in her life and a financial supporter. Emily and William also provided exposure to the fine arts as they were both proficient musicians.

Beaux exhibited an early interest in art, and at age sixteen, she was given an opportunity, provided by Uncle William, to apprentice for a year with a distant relative and artist, Catherine Ann Drinker. Dutch painter Francis Adolf Van der Wielan provided Beaux with two more years of training. By age eighteen, Beaux officially began her artistic career teaching at Miss Sanford’s School and developing her own work in lithography and small portraiture. She later began work in lithography, drawing for magazines and illustrating scientific publications. She came to the conclusion that she did not care for commercial art that was well to the completed canvas. The Impressionists, while she didn’t care for their work, influenced a lighter and brighter color palette in her paintings than she had used in the past. This change brought more life into her portraits.

In 1876, Beaux attended classes at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and was mentored by William Sartain. Under his tutelage, she completed The Last Days of Infancy in 1883-84 (Les Derniers Jours d’Enfance) featuring her older sister, Etta, and nephew in a frontal likeness to Whistler’s Arrangement in Grey and Black, No 1: Portrait of the Artist’s Mother (1871) (6th Grade, SEPTEMBER). She began with preparatory work including a small compositional oil study of the background using family heirlooms, furniture and carpet. These items created a personal reflection of the subjects portrayed and therefore, were important to include. From the small study, Beaux created the final painting 45 3/4 inches high by 54 inches wide. This significant work, even though painted as a beginner, earned Beaux her first award at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts exhibition in 1885 and launched her career. In her usual ambitious way, Beaux painted over fifty portraits during the next three years, served as a juror in the Pennsylvania Academy exhibition, and received portraiture commissions from wealthy celebrities. Her painting, The Last Days of Infancy, was accepted into the Salon of Paris two years later. Realizing that a career as a professional and respected artist was attainable, she decided to advance her studies at the art Académies of Julian and Colorossi in Paris.

The thirty-three year old Beaux sailed to Paris where she studied and copied the art of the masters in the Louvre, was introduced to the Impressionists with whom she could not align herself artistically and took life drawing classes in which she approached her assignments with enthusiasm and keen ability to merge the subject with real life. The works of Rembrandt and Titian inspired her style. In Paris, she decided to be a portrait painter, finding people to be the most interesting subject. She possessed an innate gift for seeing and observing that surpassed her peers. Painting was intuitive, automatic, and vivid, but not at the expense of composition. Her ability to position the subject in a relaxed, life-like position and to mirror a personality carried over extremely well to the completed canvas. The Impressionists, while she didn’t care for their work, influenced a lighter and brighter color palette in her paintings than she had used in the past. This change brought more life into her portraits.

One year later Beaux returned to America and continued portrait painting. She devoted all her energy to her work, and made a decision not to marry. Beaux had watched too many talented female artists decades earlier, who had curtailed their artistic ambitions for marriage. Now, increasing professional opportunities for women were available and the preconceived roles of women were being re-defined. With the support of her family, Beaux decided to enter the professional artistic field with all the ambition she could give. She upheld a professional work schedule, expanding her clientele to Boston, New York and Washington, D.C. During the winters she worked in a New York studio, while summers were spent in her Massachusetts studio. Her professional career took off with an exhibit in the 1890 Paris Exposition. She earned two major awards in 1893; the gold medal of the Philadelphia Art Club and the Dodge prize at the New York National Academy of Design.
Discipline-Based Art Education
The following components are integral to students having a complete, well rounded art experience.

Art Aesthetics
Providing opportunities to develop perception and appreciation of visually expressed ideas and experiences.

Art Production
Providing opportunities to develop skills and techniques for creative visual expressions of emotions and ideas.

Art History
Providing opportunities to develop an understanding of the visual arts as a basic component of personal heritage.

Art Criticism
Providing an opportunity to develop an intellectual basis for analyzing and making aesthetic judgments based on an understanding of visual ideas and experiences.

ELEMENTS OF ART
- Line: A continuous mark
- Shape: Area enclosed by a line
- Color: Hue, reflection of light.
- Texture: Surface quality, real or implied
- Form: 3D shape or illusion of 3D
- Value: Graduated areas of light/dark
- Space: Illusion of depth

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN
- Repetition: Imagery repeating pattern
- Variety: Contrast/variation
- Rhythm: Issues of eye movement
- Balance: Even visual weight
- Emphasis/Economy: Dominance/minimalism
- Proportion: Compare size relationships

COMPOSITION
- Symmetrical: Mirrored imagery
- Asymmetrical: Random placement
- Radial: Mirror image from center point
- Repetition: Repeating pattern, motif

ARTISTIC STYLES
- Realism: Realistic representation
- Abstraction: Personal interpretation
- Non-Objective: No recognizable depiction

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN IN PICTURE BOOKS
Literature that relates to this lesson due to elements of art or story content are:

- Cecilia Beaux: A Modern Painter in the Gilded Age by Alice A. Carter
- Cecilia Beaux: American Figure Painter by Sylvia Yount, Kevin Sharp, Nina Auerbach, Allison Bechtel Wexler and Mark Bockrath
- Cecilia Beaux by Daniel Ankele, Denise Ankele and Cecilia Beaux

Beaux spent a few years exploring what is known as her “white pictures” in which lighter tones of white were the predominant color scheme. One such work, *Man with the Cat* (1898), also known as *At Home*, featured Beaux’s brother-in-law, Dr. Henry Sturgis Drinker, in a relaxed position placed in a domestic setting. This was a contrast to the formal portrait settings customary for the time. Drinker was a noted corporate lawyer and President of Lehigh University yet Beaux choose to portray the powerful man in a different light, especially reflected in the alternative title of *At Home*.

In 1895, Beaux accepted an appointment as the first female instructor at the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. She taught until 1915 when her sole desire was to paint. By the beginning of the twentieth century she had secured her standing as the most respected woman artist in America, one who could stand alongside prominent male peers. Soon, there were an increased number of commissions for professional female artists.

Beaux continued with her studio work until the mid-1920s when she fell on a Paris street and broke her hip, impairing her ability to walk. Cataracts were forming, blurring her eyesight. Her output of portraits diminished but her honors and awards increased at this time. She was granted membership in the National American Academy of Arts and Letters and given a gold medal for lifetime achievement. In 1933, President Roosevelt’s wife, Eleanor, honored Beaux as the American woman who had made the greatest contribution to the culture of the world.

Beaux died at her Massachusetts’ home and studio at the age of eighty-seven in September of 1942. She is buried in Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania, and is credited with proving that an artist’s gender is not a factor in ability.

About the Art
*The Last Days of Infancy* (Les Derniers Jours d’Enfance), was painted in 1883-85, oil on canvas, 45 3/4 by 54 inches, and is in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. It is a full length, double portrait of Beaux’s sister, Aimée Ernesta (Etta) Drinker (née Beaux) and her first-born nephew Henry Sandwith Drinker. The two figures are set among family heirlooms including furniture and Turkish carpet. Beaux made a sketch for this at her home in Massachusetts. Beaux joined other nineteenth-century artists who considered frames an important aspect of the overall aesthetic of the painting. Whenever possible, Beaux either designed her own frames or chose frames that enhanced her paintings.

**Directed Observation**
Show students an image of *The Last Days of Infancy*. Tell them it was painted, oil on canvas, in 1883-84 by Cecilia Beaux. Offer students biographical information about Beaux. After some time for thinking, encourage students to share what they see. Welcome all comments. The following questions are provided to help students use art vocabulary to talk about the work.

1. Show an image of James McNeil Whistler’s Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist’s Mother (1871) and compare/contrast it to *The Last Days of Infancy*. Discuss how one painting can influence another.
2. Identify the composition type of *The Last Days of Infancy*. (Asymmetrical). How does this type of composition differ from symmetrical and make the portrait more interesting?
3. Describe the emotional relationship between mother and child. How is it revealed?
4. The English title of this work is *The Last Days of Infancy*. Beaux choose not to title it using merely the names of the subjects. Explain why this title creates a more universal expression which better engages the intellect and emotions.
5. The subjects in *The Last Days of Infancy* are positioned informally rather than sitting upright in a formal pose. What different messages are presented in viewing an informal pose versus a formal pose? Which you prefer and why?

**Things to Do**

1. Search through photos of your childhood, if available. Choose one of you with a relative and use it as inspiration for a 2 or 3 dimensional work. Try to capture the emotion of the relationship.
2. Ask friends to strike a pose that is indicative of their friendship. Draw it.
3. Create a drawing of yourself at any age you choose up until your current age. Place some of your own possessions in the drawing, including furniture from your home to make it personal.
4. A photomontage is a combination of many photos. Search for examples of photomontages on-line. Create a photomontage of yourself.
5. Be a portrait photographer. Choose someone to be your subject for a photographic portrait. Consider the setting and props.