About the Artist
The following information is provided to give classroom teachers a comprehensive understanding of the artist and artwork. Use your judgment on what to share with your students based on their level of curiosity, observation/inquiry skills, comprehension and age-appropriateness.

Gustave Caillebotte
Gustave Caillebotte born August 19, 1848, in Paris, France, was the first of three sons of Martial Caillebotte and Céleste Daufresne. His father’s inherited wealth came from a large business that manufactured bedding for the military. The sizable income provided his family a wealthy lifestyle. Martial also served as a judge of the Commercial Tribunal and invested in real estate, including a vacation home to the south of Paris in the small town of Yerres. The beautiful gardens, pavilions, greenhouses and general countryside with sights of the nearby river were a welcome relief from the busyness of Paris. Young Caillebotte loved to draw and found this place filled with inspirational images including the local floral and fauna. In addition to drawing and painting, he and his family engaged in everyday recreational activities.

Art was an important activity for Caillebotte but law was his chosen profession. During his law schooling, he was called up for military duty in the Franco-Prussian war but his father was able to buy insurance to delay the process. Caillebotte continued with his schooling, earning a law degree and license to practice in 1870, the same year he was again drafted in the Franco-Prussian War. As a result of the war and subsequent establishment of a new French government, Caillebotte was emotionally scarred. He abandoned his law career and turned to painting, entering the studio of French Salon master Léon Bonnet. Under Bonnet’s tutelage, Caillebotte was exposed to a realist approach with a very light hand and looser brush strokes. Caillebotte’s skills improved and gave him high hopes of acceptance into the Ecole des Beaux-Arts (School of Fine Arts). While he was accepted, he was ranked in the mid-range of students attending and because of that, Caillebotte did not attend classes regularly.

Bonnet was a friend of painters Degas, Monet, Renoir, Pissaro, Cézanne and others who would come to be known as the Impressionists. The post war political climate was accepting of innovative artists but the work of the Impressionists was ill-received as lacking substance and execution. An Impressionist exhibition in 1874 attracted Caillebotte to attend as a viewer. It is at this point he realized his potential.

Caillebotte’s father died unexpectedly on Christmas Day in 1874, leaving the family fortune to his sons. Caillebotte immediately became the steward of a substantial fortune which supported his desires to be an artist. An 1875 rejection from the annual Salon exhibition solidified Caillebotte’s relationship with the Impressionists as they all shared rejection from the Salon. One year later he participated in the second group Impressionist exhibition with eight paintings, five of which are very famous today.

Within a year, Caillebotte’s twenty six year-old brother, Rene died, leaving Caillebotte in fear of a premature death himself. This fear prompted him to execute a will which provided generous support for the next Impressionist exhibition and he bequeathed to France a large number of Impressionist works he had previously purchased and collected from his friends. Caillebotte was not interested in buying work from his friends as a charitable act for them. Rather, he had such a great eye to evaluate the work as quality art and confidently knew it would maintain its value. His only request was that these works of art were a generous gesture which had a lasting impact on the collections in art museums today, especially the Louvre in Paris.

The subsequent years were driven with a high energy to produce work, probably driven by his fear of an early death. The 1877 Impressionist Exhibition was a success in the quality and cohesiveness of work exhibited. In his usual generous manner, Caillebotte financially and physically supported the exhibition, publicized the event, hung the artwork and purchased some of his peers’ work. Caillebotte also submitted his own paintings to this exhibition, which were well received by critics.

Being associated with a specific artistic movement may require conformity to shared perspectives. However, Caillebotte maintained his own identity and uniqueness serving his own vision and subject matter. Differing from the Impressionistic approach, Caillebotte chose to paint on large canvases, was committed to painting modern, urban life in Paris, painted in a tighter format with smoother brushstrokes and often used darker grey tones. He delighted in the perspective of streets and buildings and the people who walked among them.

His mother, Céleste Caillebotte, died in 1878 leaving Caillebotte to mourn again and deal with the family estate including selling many homes. Three years later, Caillebotte purchased a home in Petit-Gennevilliers on the banks of the Seine River and took up boating. With the fear of death constantly on his mind, he turned his attention from painting to gardening and yachting.
Discipline-Based Art Education

The following components are integral to students having a complete, well-rounded art experience.

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

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

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

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

ELEME NTS 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

ELEME NTS OF DESIGN IN PICTURE BOOKS
Children’s literature that relate to this lesson due to elements of art or story content are:
- Caillebotte and His Garden at Yerres by Pierre Wittmer
- Gustave Caillebotte: Parisian Impressionist with a Passion for Water by Gustave Caillebotte
- Gustave Caillebotte: The Unknown Impressionist by Anne Distel

REFERENCE/BIBLIOGRAPHY

Caillebotte died in 1894 at the age of forty-five. Some accounts say the cause of death was a stroke and others suggest pulmonary congestion. Caillebotte’s funeral was held in the church of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette where his half-brother, Alfred, was the vicar. The size of the crowd left some standing outside the church. He was buried in Paris at Père Lachaise Cemetery. Caillebotte never married, though he had a long relationship with Charlotte Berthier. His will dictated a generous monthly payment for the remainder of her life.

Renoir, executor of Caillebotte’s will, informed the French government of the bequest of sixty works to the Louvre in Paris and the museum in Luxemburg. The works were accepted but would not be exhibited because the Impressionists’ works were considered undesirable. Renoir found this unacceptable and, after many attempts including extensive press coverage, an agreement was eventually secured. The majority of those works were exhibited, marking the first time Impressionist paintings were presented to the public in French museums.

About the Art
Paris Street; Rainy Day was painted oil on canvas by Gustave Caillebotte in 1877 and is 83.5 x 109 inches. It was hung in the Art Institute of Chicago and was considered a modern history painting when rendered. Caillebotte completed considerable preparatory work, first sketching, then modifying the sketches while experimenting with the composition before the painting was started. Assuring the design was well-planned and the architectural perspective was correct. Finally, the work was painted with the utmost precision. This approach differed a bit from the Impressionist approach that approached painting more casually with looser composition and brushstrokes.

Directed Observation
Show students an image of Paris Street; Rainy Day and tell them it was painted in oil by Gustave Caillebotte in 1877. Invite students to quietly study the work. 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. Caillebotte painted this Paris scene after the Franco-Prussian war ended and a new, restored Paris was forming. The new ruler sought to prepare Paris for the future and in doing so, he eliminated many of the narrow Paris streets and built expansive roads in the heart of the city. They are appreciated today but, when they were first built, Parisians, who were used to the crowded and intimate streets where people socialized, felt these new expansive roads made people feel apart from one another, empty and void of social interaction. Describe the many ways Caillebotte conveys emptiness or loneliness in Paris Street; Rainy Day. (Grey colors, lack of conversation, lack of greenery/nature, hard surfaces, isolation under umbrella, the rigid vertical lamp post, and large area of cobblestone.)

2. Discuss how the left side is balanced by the right side. How is this done?

3. Discuss how one paints surfaces to look wet. Compare and contrast the two wet surfaces: cobblestone and sidewalk.

4. If you were to convey “emptiness” or loneliness in art, how would you do it?

5. Look at additional paintings of Caillebotte and discuss his theme of transitioning into a modern world.

6. Discuss Caillebotte as a patron of the Impressionists and how his actions impacted the works of art we see in museums today. Consider the world of art if he had not been such a generous patron. Everyone has opportunities to be a patron of the arts. How so?

Things to Do

1. People react to changes in different ways. Think of a time you had to deal with change and share how you initially felt about the change. Consider two- or three-dimensional art forms and create a work of art that conveys the emotional reaction you had to the change in your life. Like Caillebotte, create a large scale work so the emotional content is “in your face” and the viewer feels physically present in the work. Create sketches of your ideas. Once the image is determined, sketch variations of the imagery to work out the best composition and features. If rendering a two-dimensional work, use poster board or bulletin board paper.

2. Many of Caillebotte’s works, such as View of Rooftops (1878), Boulevard Haussman, Snow (1879/81), or Young Man at His Window (1875), share a “bird’s eye view” from a balcony with the city below. Find a similar type of location near you—from a hilltop, building or parking garage and draw or paint the scene.