Valadon was determined to identify a father for Utrillo, a difficult task since she had had so many affairs. Among the possibilities were artists for whom she modeled including Renoir and Toulouse-Lautrec, as well as Boissy. One other possibility was Miquel Utrillo, a Spanish journalist and painter with whom Valadon had an affair years earlier. Miquel Utrillo came forward in 1891 and offered to adopt the eight-year-old Suzanne, to the unmarried, eighteen-year-old Suzanne Valadon. Some accounts say the artist Maurice Boissy was his father since Suzanne gave him the same first name and he was born after Valadon and Boissy had had an affair. Valadon was a model and artist whose lifestyle left Utrillo in the care of his grandmother, Mamam Madeleine, who had to deal with her grandson’s fits of nervousness and excessive sensitivity. Fits of rage, inner sadness and lack of interest in playing with other young people were characteristics that worried Mamam Madeleine. She also feared that the lack of love from his mother weighed heavily on her grandson. Utrillo often felt abandoned and neglected by his mother who spent her days and nights as she pleased rather than with him.

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A few years later, Mousis built a home in the northern suburbs of Paris, taking Valadon and Utrillo away from their beloved Parisian environment. Utrillo struggled adjusting in the suburbs. He had trouble being accepted by classmates who often bullied him. The remedy was to send him to boarding school where his teachers looked after him. At age thirteen, Utrillo graduated from the Pluminard boarding school and enrolled in high school where he won praise for his math skills and ethics. However, he later confessed to cheating on tests. He began to skip classes and hung out with drunks who shared their liquor with him. In 1899, Utrillo decided to leave school to “find” himself. He picked up odd jobs from time to time but it was just a matter of time before his employers dismissed him.

Valadon, now living back in Paris, often rescued Utrillo from the drunken beatings he received after fighting with young men in the streets. He was treated for alcoholism at an early age and was often in such a depressed state that medical personnel feared he’d take his own life. Valadon decided to teach Utrillo to paint to build up his self esteem. While Utrillo first resisted, he finally recognized this opportunity to spend time with his mother for the first time in his life. She taught him Impressionist painting and was rather pleased with his ability. His drawing ability, however, needed more work so she persevered until he learned to draw as well. While he had his usual childish outbursts from time to time, evidenced by destroyed canvases and sketch books, finally Utrillo developed a great sensibility to oil painting and managed to tap into his talent while the alcoholism which had so often dragged him down lessened.

By 1903, Utrillo had produced over one hundred painted canvases using a variety of signatures including Maurice Valadon, Maurice Utrillo, V. or M.U. Valadon, but which always referenced his mother, Suzanne Valadon. He often set up his easel in Paris or its suburbs. Utrillo soon began to believe in himself and found his painting ability worthy. He completed almost seven hundred paintings by age twenty-seven. Most importantly, Utrillo painted his own way, denying the influence of his well known artist mother and the Impressionist style.

Paintings executed between 1907 and 1910 were the beginning of his White Period, often buildings that were predominately white. He continued to select images around Paris as his focus without an allegiance to any particular art movement. One such interest was the addition of plaster to his paint to add a slight texture and mimic on canvas the rough, exterior walls he painted.

At this time in his career, Utrillo sold a few paintings through an art dealer who placed them in his store window. Utrillo sold other paintings directly to people he met on the streets. Word soon got out that Utrillo’s paintings were gaining popularity, so Clovis Sagot bought some sketches to display in his gallery with the hopes he’d make a fortune. Another key supporter was Louis Libaude, a man of many interests who encouraged art critics to view Utrillo’s paintings. Upon viewing them, each critic purchased one painting and praised Utrillo’s talent in his news columns. Libaude was Utrillo’s art dealer and paid Utrillo a monthly stipend for the privilege.
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:
- Maurice Utrillo by Alfred Werner
- Maurice Utrillo by Jeannine Warnod

REFERENCE/BIBLIOGRAPHY

Utrillo’s alcoholism continued to play a major role in his life on many levels. He often sold his paintings for a low price or bartered them in exchange for drinks. His on-going drinking suppressed his loneliness and low self-worth, constant thoughts which caused him daily torment. A few years later, life began to improve for Utrillo as he was able to focus on his art. He was producing quality landscapes on a consistent basis. He shifted from landscapes to still lifes of flowers, fruits and inanimate objects. However, his new life was short-lived as his need for drinking returned with a vengeance, requiring staying in an asylum. Utrillo’s mother had to ask his art dealer to trade several of his paintings for money required for treatment, which proved to be temporarily successful.

Drinking severely strained Utrillo’s relationship with his mother. An additional pain was his mother’s 1914 marriage to one of Utrillo’s friends, Andre Utter, who was twenty-one years younger than she. Lapses into alcoholism forced Utrillo to be committed into an asylum again.

Despite the ugliness of the World War I and living in an asylum, Utrillo produced some twelve hundred paintings, many of which found their way to bistros all around Paris. His identity as a fine artist became widespread and encouraged many Parisians to buy a work by the famous Maurice Utrillo. Not many artists become wealthy in their lifetime but Utrillo was one of the lucky ones. His income provided him a comfortable country home. Unfortunately, his comfort was short-lived.

The remainder of Utrillo’s life was spent in and out of asylums or under house arrest. With the prodding of his mother, the fifty-two year old Utrillo met and married widow Lucie Pauwels who proved to be a calming figure in his tormented life. For the remainder of his life, Utrillo continued to paint, but without his former genius.

Utrillo died on November 5, 1955, of pulmonary congestion. He was buried in the Saint-Vincent cemetery which he had often painted.

About the Art
Place des Abbesses in the Snow (also known as Square Abbesses in the Snow) was painted by Maurice Utrillo, oil on canvas, in 1917. The painting measures 26 x 32 inches and is in a private collection. It features a lovely, triangular area where the road, Place des Abbesses, meets the #12 stop on the Metro Line in the Montmartre district of Paris. Utrillo commonly included a cathedral or church in his paintings of Parisian cityscapes as he was a devoted Catholic. Utrillo used the impasto style of painting, meaning the application of thick, toothpaste-like paint onto the canvas. Such thick paint causes more reflection of light and adds a textural quality to the surface.

Directed Observation
Show students an image of Place des Abbesses in the Snow by Maurice Utrillo. Tell them it was painted, oil on canvas, in 1917. Offer students biographical information about Utrillo. After some time for thinking, encourage students to share what they see. Welcome all comments. The following questions help students use art vocabulary to talk about the work.

Things to Do
1. Utrillo’s painting is on the left and a 1904 postcard is on the right. Utrillo was said to paint images from postcards. What do you think?
2. Compare Utrillo’s painting above to this recent photograph taken nearly one hundred years later (below). What has changed or stayed the same?

1. Many on-line resources teach skills in perspective drawing. Once understood and practiced, try drawing an interior hallway in your school or an exterior scene of a street lined with buildings.
2. Utrillo was an artist of his beloved Paris and of the Montmartre area in particular. If you could create a body of work of a particular place you love, what and where would it be? What time of day or in what season would you like to capture it?
3. Discuss the difficulties of Utrillo’s neglect as a child, his mental instability and alcoholism. What role did these play in his art and what role did art play in helping him cope?