

# UNDER THE YOKE (BURNING THE BRUSHWOOD)

## Classics on tour 2017 – Tips for schools and groups

The Ateneum's most beloved classics – Helene Schjerfbeck's *The Convalescent* (1888) and Eero Järnefelt's *Under the Yoke (Burning the Brushwood)* (1893) – will go on tour to eleven Finnish art museums as part of Finland's centenary celebrations. The *Convalescent* will be on display in Mariehamn, Tampere, Kokkola, Kemi, Inari and Rauma. *Under the Yoke (Burning the Brushwood)* will be on display in Turku, Hämeenlinna, Lappeenranta, Joensuu and Jyväskylä.

These paintings from Ateneum Art Museum can be used as a source of inspiration and as material for instruction in not only art but in other subjects as well (history, languages, literature). We suggest that the pictures be used as inspiration for free association, as anchor points for lessons in Finnish and world history, and to provide a link to the viewer's own personal life.



### EERO JÄRNEFELT (1863–1937)

#### *Under the Yoke (Burning the Brushwood)*, 1893

Oil, 131 x 164 cm

Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Yehia Eweis

The painting depicts an old method of agriculture. Burning existing vegetation used to be a common method for making soil fertile for cultivation. The picture, which Järnefelt partly painted outdoors, shows peasants toiling at a slash-and-burn site in Savo. Later the artist also used photographs he had taken of people and landscapes as reference. One of the photos

was of Johanna Kokkonen, a 14-year-old girl who participated in the burning; she served as the model for the little girl in the painting. The title of the painting is an allusion to a line in the *Kalevala* about a little maid servant.

The European trends of realism and naturalism were eagerly adopted in Finland. Instead of the former idealising manner, subjects were now depicted without trying to conceal poverty or deformity. When this painting was exhibited, its poignant motif sparked a debate about the rights of the poor. This painting is Järnefelt's most famous work and an icon of the golden age of Finnish art, and one of the period's most socially critical depictions of common people.

[#undertheyoke](https://twitter.com/undertheyoke)



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## TIPS FOR POINTS OF DISCUSSION

You may choose some of the following questions for points of discussion when looking at the painting or an image of it.

1. What thing in the picture caught your attention first?  
Why do you think it is that way?
2. What is going on in the picture?
3. What do you think might have happened before?  
What might happen after?
4. If you had to give a title to the picture, what would it be? Find out the title that the artist himself gave to the picture: what does it tell you?
5. Look at the person / persons in the picture: What can you tell about them by looking at their face, expression, gestures, pose or clothes? What do you think they could be thinking?
6. Can you tell where and when the painting was made? Give your reasons.
7. What is beautiful (and the opposite: what is ugly)?
8. Is there something in the picture that reminds you of your own life?  
Can you see something familiar in it?
9. How are the objects and the people positioned in the picture?  
Are they shown directly from the front or side, or from a low or a high angle?
10. How has the artist used lights and shadows – how do they affect the mood of the picture?

## DOWNLOAD, TWEAK, ANIMATE!

Images of the paintings can be downloaded from the Finnish National Gallery Flickr page at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/finnishnationalgallery/>

You are free to use the images in any way you like. The only limit is your imagination!

**FOR MORE TIPS:** [www.klassikotkiertueella.fi](http://www.klassikotkiertueella.fi)

New short films about the paintings can be viewed online at our website. The site also contains information and up-to-date news about the tour.

**#classicsontour #undertheyoke**