

THE CONVALESCENT

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.



HELENE SCHJERFBECK (1862–1946)

The Convalescent, 1888

Oil, 92 x 107 cm

Finnish National Gallery / Ateneum Art Museum

Photo: Finnish National Gallery / Yehia Eweis

This picture was painted in St. Ives in Cornwall, England. Helene Schjerfbeck visited the region twice in the late 1880s. The sitter in the picture was a vivacious girl of about six to whom her exasperated teacher was only too glad to give leave to sit for artists. The painting was included in the Paris Salon the year of its completion under the title *Première verdure*, or 'first greenery'.

A sick child was a common subject in art at the time, but Schjerfbeck's painting is also about recovery and the return of vitality. The brushwork is lively and the treatment of light is reminiscent of impressionism. The painting was praised in Paris. The reception back home was initially controversial – the picture was considered excessively realistic. However, the Finnish Art Society decided to purchase it, and soon after its completion the painting was acceded to Ateneum's collection.

Helene Schjerfbeck had an exceptionally long and productive career. She began art studies at the age of 11, and by the time she died at 83 she had painted well over a thousand pictures. Her path as an artist ranged from history paintings in the 1870s to modernist movements in the 1940s.

#*theconvalescent*



ATENEUM



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 in the picture: What can you tell about her by looking at her face, expression, gestures, pose or clothes? What do you think she 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. Composition: how are the girl and the objects positioned in the picture? Are they shown directly from the front or side, 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

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 #theconvalescent