

**Discus and comment on the representation of women in Realist and/or Impressionist painting. Refer to at least two paintings, each by a different artist.**

**Both Impressionist and Realist artists depict women working or doing chores, for example ‘the Gleaners’ by Millet shows women stooping in the fields to glean the leftovers from the harvest. Pissarro also depicts a woman doing a daily chore in his painting ‘woman hanging up the washing’, the woman in the painting is, as the title suggests, hanging out the washing. Realist and Impressionist painters also show women relaxing, sometimes in their bathrooms. ‘The Bath’ by Berthe Morisot shows a girl arranging her hair in her bathroom.**

**The painting ‘the gleaners’ by Millet shows women working in a field. Picking up the leftovers from the harvest was seen to be one of the lowest jobs at the time and yet these women were the focus of the picture. Before this, servants and lower working class people were portrayed as being inferior, but in this picture the light in which they are bathed illuminates them and makes them seem noble whilst they are working. Behind the women, the field is also bathed in light so that the women are silhouetted against the lighter field giving a soft feel about the painting. This painting gives working class women of the time integrity and makes them look like honest hardworking people.**



**The painting ‘woman hanging up the washing’ by Pissarro, depicts a woman doing a daily household chore. There is also a child in the picture beside the woman which shows her maternal side and shows the traditional role that women were expected to play- they were expected to do household chores and look after the children. She is wearing very simple clothes in the picture which may mean that she is in fact a nanny or a servant working for a richer family and looking after their children as opposed to her own. The fact that the picture is painted in bright and happy colours suggests that the woman in the painting actually enjoys her job and, as with ‘the gleaners’, the light in the pictures is used to give the subject integrity and doesn’t portray her as being subservient to her employers. The fact that the subject is portrayed in such a bright and happy manner suggests the artist views the subject to be more important than say a higher class person. The woman does not appear to be tired or worn out in the picture and looks quite calm and serene, which is similar to ‘the gleaners’ although the gleaners would have actually looked tired from the back breaking work that they had been doing.**

**There are other Impressionist and Realist paintings which show women in their bathrooms or grooming themselves. 'The Bath' by Berthe Morisot, shows a girl arranging her hair in the bathroom. This woman does not appear to be glamorous or particularly rich as she is dressed only in simple clothes. The pale colours make the scene seem very relaxed and the girl in the picture appears to be very serene.**

**I think that Realist and Impressionist artists both present women as doing household chores and looking after children, or grooming themselves which are things that would be considered stereotypical for women. They also mainly paint lower class women but paint them with a kind of respect that they would not have received in society then.**