

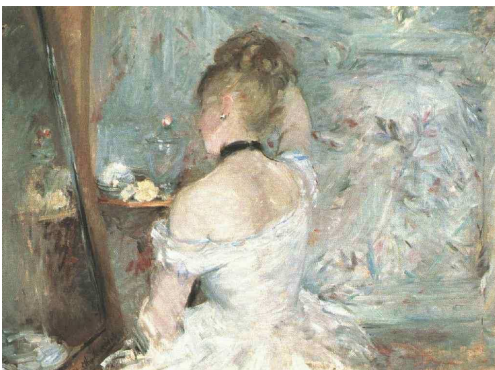
Discuss and comment on the representation of women in Realist and/or Impressionist painting.

In both impressionist and realist art, we mainly see women presented as either working and doing chores, for example 'The Gleaners' by Millet and 'Woman hanging up the washing' by Pissarro, or relaxing, often in front of mirrors or bathing, for example 'Lady at her toilette' by Morisot and 'Nude before a mirror' by Sickert. Women impressionist painters, such as Berthe Morisot, especially focused on the painting of women because at the time, women were not expected to be alone in a room with a man other than their husbands, so the subjects they could paint were limited. Some impressionist painters focused on the painting of women for a period of time, such as Sickert, who from 1905, paid special interest to the painting of nudes.



Camille Pissarro's painting 'Woman hanging up the washing', presents a very typical image of women, especially for the times. She is doing chores and along with this, while she does them there is a child near her, we assume it is her child or one that she is looking after. The subject has not been glamorised in any way. She is wearing dull, ordinary clothes and doing common work, although the background is quite lush, suggesting she could be a maid of some sort. Most paintings depicting women doing work have similar ideas to 'Woman hanging up the washing', for example Millet's 'The Gleaners'. The women are working doing common tasks that need to be done, they have not been glamorised or made to look particularly beautiful or relaxed. They are wearing common clothes and seem to be focused on what they are doing. Both these paintings, along with many realist and impressionist paintings showing women at work are of the working class, but

the painting style does not create a dark, unhappy image of working class chores. 'Woman hanging up the washing' looks bright and sunny and the subjects of 'The Gleaners' do not appear to be tired or worn out, so although the women are not glamorised in these paintings, they are not made to seem sad or tired either, which is what we might expect.



Other Impressionist and Realist paintings show women relaxing or bathing, sometimes also nude. Morisot's 'Lady at her toilette' 1875, shows a woman in front of her mirror. This woman does appear to be very glamorous, wearing a big formal looking dress, jewellery and a very stylish hair do. She seems rich and upper class. We do not see her face, but from the way she is shown and the painting style, we almost automatically assume she is pretty and young. The

colours used are pastels, making the scene very calm and relaxed. Manet's 'Olympia' is another famous depiction of a woman relaxing. She looks very glamorous, even though she is naked, the way she is sitting, her jewellery and the fact the her maid



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is bringing her flowers, all make her look very sophisticated and feminine.

Overall, we can see two main ways that Impressionist and Realist artists presented woman, either working class women doing chores and working, or higher class women, sitting in front of mirror or relaxing. Either way, the images are never painting in a dark, unhappy style; the colours used are always bright and calm. The artists always seemed to present women in a positive way. Paintings such as 'The cradle' also show their maternal side. The nude paintings were not done in a sexual way, more of an insight to the intimate life of a woman, so the viewer feels like they are seeing something personal.