



**“A painter paints to unload himself of feelings and visions.” Pablo Picasso**

# 1 Early Years in Paris

Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881–1973) was one of the most inventive artists of all time. He continually searched for fresh ways to represent the world, and he is admired for his experimentation with different styles, materials, and techniques. The years 1901 to 1906 are often described as Picasso’s Blue and Rose periods because he was exploring the way color and line could express his ideas and emotions.

Born in southern Spain, Picasso studied at art academies in Barcelona and Madrid. He first visited Paris, then the center of the art world, in 1900 at the age of nineteen, and he was captivated by the vibrant city and its museums and art galleries. Four years later Picasso settled in Paris, and France became his adopted home.



# 2 Why So Blue?

Being an immigrant to Paris, Picasso sympathized with the city’s poor and hungry people, with their struggles and their sense of isolation. He also felt great sorrow over the death of his best friend. These feelings literally colored his works. From 1901 to 1904 Picasso experimented with using dark, thick outlines to create figures and shapes on his canvas. He filled in the outlines with lighter and darker tones of blue. *The Tragedy*, one painting from his Blue period, shows three unnaturally tall, thin figures on an empty beach.

**Consider:** How might the people be feeling?

left: Pablo Picasso at Montmartre (detail), Place Ravignan, c. 1904, Musée Picasso, Paris. Réunion Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY (photo: RMN-J. Faujour)

above: Pablo Picasso, *The Tragedy*, 1903, oil on wood, National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Collection © 2013 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

# 3 Feeling Rosy

A few years later, Picasso began to paint with lighter and more delicate colors, such as rosy pinks, reds, and warm browns. He also discovered a new subject of interest: the circus. He was fascinated by the clowns and acrobats who performed in the Cirque Médrano, which was based in Montmartre (his neighborhood in Paris). Picasso felt a strong connection with these *saltimbanques*, or street performers. They were all outsiders who worked here and there, making art. The entertainers who appear in his paintings and drawings, however, are not shown performing. Instead, Picasso presents them in quiet, unexpected moments. These years, from late 1904 to early 1906, are called Picasso's Rose or circus period.

**"Colors, like features, follow the changes of the emotions." Pablo Picasso**

*Family of Saltimbanques* shows a circus family in a sparse setting. A harlequin, or jester, wears a diamond-patterned suit. He holds the hand of a young girl in a pink dress carrying a basket of flowers. A large clown in a red costume and two young acrobats—one holds a tumbling barrel—complete the circle. A woman with a hat decorated with flowers sits off to one side.

**Wonder:** What is the relationship among the people?

**Compare:** How are these two paintings similar? How are they different? Which words best describe each painting?



Pablo Picasso, *Family of Saltimbanques*, 1905, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Collection © 2013 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

try this

## Watercolor Resist Painting

To better understand how artists communicate feelings, experiment with color and contour line to create a “moody” watercolor resist painting.

**You will need:**

**Crayons**

**Watercolor paints and brush**

**Watercolor paper**

In the works from his Blue and Rose periods, Picasso explored line and color. He used dark, heavy outlines—called contour lines—to define the figures and shapes in his paintings. He then limited his palette to only a few colors so he could focus on the emotional quality of the scene.

Ask your family or friends to strike a pose for you. Take some time to study the poses. Try tracing the outlines of the figures in the air with your finger. On a piece of watercolor paper, use a pencil to draw the contour lines of the figures and objects you see. Trace over your lines with a crayon. Press hard to make the lines thick.



top: Pablo Picasso, *Juggler with Still Life*, 1905, gouache on cardboard, National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Collection © 2013 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

bottom: Pablo Picasso, *Le Gourmet*, 1901, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Collection © 2013 Estate of Pablo Picasso / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Next, decide which mood or emotion you wish to communicate in your painting. Choose two colors that might best express that feeling. Use this limited watercolor palette to paint over the crayon lines. Cover the entire paper with color. Create light and dark shades by adding more or less water to the paint. Mix the two colors together to create a third color.

**Discover:** The lines made with the wax crayon will show through, or resist, the watercolor. This results in a painting made of both lines and colors.

