

CONNECT THE DOTS WITH SEURAT

Blog 'n' Craft Blueprint



A Sunday on La Grande Jatte
Georges-Pierre Seurat — Oil on Canvas — 1885–86

“The inability of some critics to connect the dots doesn’t make pointillism pointless.”

— **Georges-Pierre Seurat**

Meet the talented artist who connects the dots for a very ‘grande’ visual experience! THEN have oodles of fun connecting the dots using markers, cardstock, and your own fond memories from the great outdoors.

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Georges-Pierre Seurat is the artist often credited with being the father of Neo-Impressionism, and the innovator of a highly unique painting technique called Pointillism. Using tiny dots — or points — of pure color, Pointillists, like Seurat, intentionally encourage the viewer’s eye to optically blend the points of color for a brighter and more brilliant visual art experience. You have undoubtedly heard of Pointillism before.

• Although ‘Pointillism’ is the modern-day term widely accepted for this popular style of painting, Georges-Pierre Seurat favored referring to it as ‘chromoluminarism.’ According to him, the more

technical term better described the intense focus on the actual science of color and light within his artwork.

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In fact, the word ‘Pointillism’ was made up by art critics in the late 1880s in mockery of the works of Georges-Pierre Seurat and those who painted with the tiny dots of color. No doubt, this too is why Seurat rejected the term to describe his artwork.

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In response to the name given his new style of painting by the art critics — and in defense of his new technique — Seurat once said, “The inability of some critics to connect the dots doesn’t make pointillism pointless.’ Way to go, Mr. Seurat — that sure was telling them!

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To fully understand Pointillism, we must take a quick look back to the art movement immediately preceding it — that being Impressionism. A popular late-19th-century art movement, Impressionism gave the world great artists like Monet, Renoir, and Degas. Within their works of art, the Impressionists provided us a mere glimpse of their visual reality by painting a fleeting moment in time through the effects of light on color.

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Following on their heels were the Neo-Impressionists or ‘new’ Impressionists — sometimes referred to as Post-Impressionists — who

embraced the same complementary color and everyday-life themes as the Impressionist movement. However, they firmly rejected the idea that they were painting a fleeting moment in time. Neo-Impressionists chose to blend art with science by considering the scientific basis of color and the physiology of vision when they created their works of art. Generally speaking, they took a much more scientific and systematic new-world approach to their art when they painted light and color.

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Pointillists also seemed to be mimicking the process of a significant 19th-century invention — the camera. A camera systematically breaks down images into arrangements of colored dots. Similarly, Pointillists systematically applied colored dots to create imagery upon their canvases.

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Rather than mixing colors on a palette or directly on the canvas — as did the Impressionists before them — Pointillists applied dots of pure color onto the canvas. This painting technique was their attempt at coaxing the viewer's eye to connect the dots and process the colors in the mind as a part of the visual experience.

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By requiring the viewer to combine the colors optically, Pointillists believed they were scientifically achieving the maximum luminosity possible for the visual experience.

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Georges-Pierres Seurat debuted Pointillism to the world around

1884. Although the art world widely criticized his style at the time, there was one particular art critic who did not mock Pointillism. His name was Félix Fénéon, and he revered the new form of art. He took a great interest in Seurat's movement and ardently promoted the original group of artists who were working to connect the dots. Fénéon is even credited with dubbing the group 'Neo-Impressionists' in 1886.

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We are going to have fun exploring a very famous oil painting by Pointillist Georges-Pierre Seurat. The work of art is named **A Sun-**

cartoons. It has been parodied by Sesame Street and can be seen in, **Looney Tunes: Back in Action**, when Daffy Duck and Bugs Bunny jump into the painting to evade their arch-nemesis, Elmer Fudd!

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Not only is this one of Seurat's most famous pieces — but it is also his most substantial. **A Sunday on La Grande Jatte** — sometimes referred to as **A Sunday Afternoon** — measures 81-3/4 X 121-1/4 inches, or approximately 7 feet by 10 feet. Its large size and the fact that literally millions of dots create the visual experience makes this painting all the more



day on La Grande Jatte.

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You are most likely familiar with this famous painting. **A Sunday on La Grande Jatte** is probably one of the most iconic examples of Pointillism and one of the most reproduced paintings in the world! It has been featured in movies and tv shows, as well as in animated

remarkable. What's also pretty amazing is that this painting took Seurat, who was only 26 years of age at the time, nearly two years to complete.

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At first glance, Georges-Pierre Seurat's **A Sunday on La Grande Jatte** seems a warm portrait of men, women, and children of all

ages enjoying a sunny day in a lovely park. See if you can find and count all 48 people in Seurat's work of art — don't forget the people in the boats!

- Upon second glance, however, the figures don't seem to be having much fun. The rigidity of their stances make them seem stiff and emotionally detached from the events happening around them — almost frozen in their 19th-century

prominent — because they are in the foreground and they are almost as tall as the entire canvas! However, they are no more interesting to look at than the river to the left with its assortment of yachts, steamships, and rowing boats. And the center of the painting also holds its own with a flurry of activity. Almost directly in the center of the canvas, we see a little girl who appears to be running. She is by far the most active



moment in time. This icy quality certainly chills the warm day for the observer of the artwork.

- Seurat has carefully designed this work of art to achieve what is known as artistic rhythm. He uses this principle of design so that the overall composition remains interesting for the viewer, and the eye does not rest in one place — rather, it keeps moving around the artwork.

- The man and the woman in the right-hand corner are the most

figure in the painting. While all the others seem to be standing rigidly still, she seems to be having fun! Running in the park certainly is fun!

- One might consider the rhythm within the composition of **A Sunday on La Grande Jatte** to be quite logical. However, we can also spot a few places where Seurat's general composition is a bit illogical. Let's play a game of *I Spy in the Art* to find a few oddities within this famous piece of artwork!

- I spy with my little eye — a teeny-

ny-tiny dog! Do you spy this small furry friend? The teeny-tiny dog is to the left of the couple in the foreground. You'll also notice a monkey there and a larger dog! What makes the teeny-tiny dog illogical is that he looks out of proportion to the monkey, the larger dog, and even the woman's dress. It seems Seurat wanted to give new meaning to the terms 'miniature dog' or 'toy breed'!

- I also spy with my little eye — sailboats, and steamships on the Seine River. Do you see all the boats? What's illogical about the boats is that the wind seems to be blowing in two different directions. It is seen blowing in one direction for the sailboat and the steamship in the foreground — left-hand side — of the canvas. However, look at tiny the boats in the far background. The wind is seen blowing the steam and the sail in the opposite direction. There must have been some crazy crosswind that day!

- And finally, I spy with my little eye — lots of shadows on the ground. All the shadows are different sizes. Oddly, their sizes seem to be nonsensical! A giant shadow — in comparison to the other shadows cast by the trees — appears in the foreground of the painting. We can only assume there must be one giant tree — not visible to us — that is providing shade for seven people, two dogs (albeit one is teeny-tiny), and a monkey. In contrast, notice the other trees cast shadows that only provide shade for one or two people.

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I Spy in the Art is a really fun way to discover fine art — now let's take an even closer look at this painting — literally! Enlarge the art on your screen or if you're using the printable PDF — Blog 'n' Craft Blueprint — hold it very close to you. Look at the painting close up and then take a few steps away from the screen or hold the paper farther away. You should notice that when you're close to the art, you can see all the many points or dots; however, when you step away from the painting, the dots and the colors seem to blend together.

- The following fun, hands-on artsy craft will have you connecting the dots like a Pointillist.

- It would be quite challenging to create an entire landscape — an outside drawing — like George-Pierre Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*. Perhaps you could start with something you would see in the out-of-doors — like a fish, a bird, a flower, or a tree.

Pointillist Marker Art



Create **Pointillist Marker Art** for hands-on fun with Neo-Impressionism!

MATERIALS

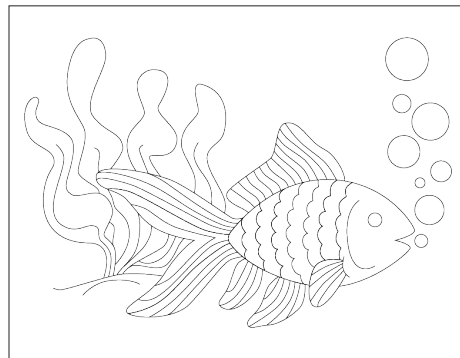
- 8-1/2" x 11" White Cardstock
- **Marker Art Template** (see **Blog 'n' Craft Blueprints** in the **Seurat** section)
- Colored Markers
- No. 2 Pencil



Everything you need to create **Pointillist Marker Art**!

DIRECTIONS

***Age Option:** A printable pencil sketch — **Marker Art Template** — for this activity can be downloaded from our website in the **Seurat** section of **Blog 'n' Craft Blueprints** and printed out onto white cardstock. Younger children may have an easier time filling their drawing with dots using a broader tip marker, while older children may prefer the details they are able to attain using a finer tip marker. Using bingo dab markers and plain white paper is the perfect way for toddlers to enjoy the **Pointillist Marker Art** activity alongside older siblings.



If you choose to create your own

drawing: using the No. 2 pencil, sketch the design for your Pointillism marker art very lightly onto the piece of cardstock.



Starting with the lightest shades from your palette, simply touch the cardstock with the tip of the markers to make small dots of color. The dots don't need to be perfectly shaped or spaced, just make lots of dots — filling the spaces between the pencil lines on your drawing.

- It's important to start with the lightest shades in your palette because it's always possible to cover lighter marker with darker

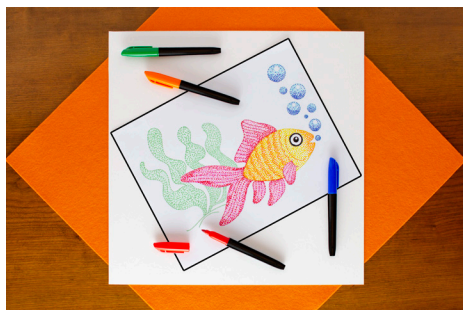


shades. However, the opposite does not hold true. Fill in all the areas with the lightest shades. Now to create color blends, add medium shades of colored dots to all areas previously filled with the lightest shades. For example, add peach to yellow — as was done on the fish's body. Or turquoise blue to the light blue — as was done to the water bubbles.

- To create some shading, add the darkest shades of the color to



very specific spots. Notice that bright orange was added to specific areas of the fish's face and scales. Dark blue was added to the bottom of the bubbles. Red was added to the fish's fins.



Keep adding dots upon dots upon dots, until you are satisfied with your color blending results. Then add specific details to your art — for instance the eye on the fish.

- Once you've completed your artwork, hang it on your refrigerator door. And try this — as you did with ***A Sunday on La Grande Jatte***, look

at your marker art up close. Then, take a few steps away from the work of art and observe it again. As with Seurat's Pointillism masterpiece, you should see oodles of tiny dots when you are close. But when far away, you'll notice that your eye magically and harmoniously blends the tiny marker dots to form a rainbow of different colors in your artwork.



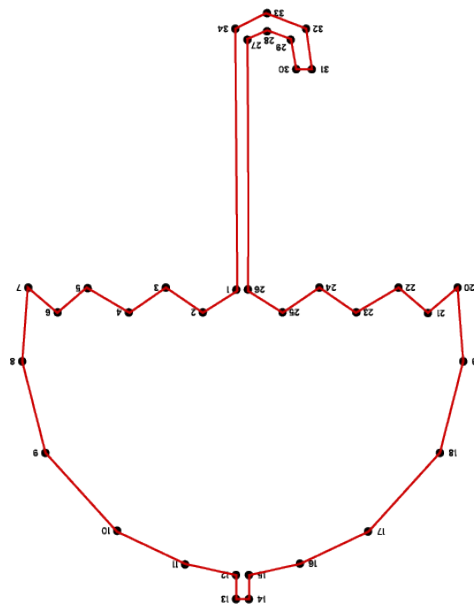
Now you can say with the utmost confidence, "I can connect the dots, just like Georges-Pierre Seurat, the famous Neo-Impressionist painter!" Not to mention you'll have lovely **Pointillist Marker Art** to proudly display.



SHARE YOUR CREATIVITY!

Post a picture of your artsy craft on social media using **#fineartfunart**.

CONNECT THE DOTS SOLUTION




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CONNECT THE DOTS WITH SEURAT

Dot-to-Dot for Neo-Impressionist Fun

Connect the numbered dots to reveal an object seen throughout the masterpiece titled, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*, painted by the father of Neo-Impressionism, Georges-Pierre Seurat.

www.arttoknowwithmommyo.com

