

TIME TO PLAY



Yohanan Simon
Kite Flying
Watercolour, gouache, pen
and ink on paper
1952



Gilbert Solomon
Sliding on the Round
Pond
Oil on panel
undated

CONTENT AND IDEAS

What is happening in these two pictures?

- In *Kite flying*:
 - three children leap in the air on a path
 - a man on a hill behind them is flying a kite
 - three sailing boats are out at sea
- In *Sliding on the Round Pond*
 - two boys are sliding on the ice
 - birds fly overhead and sit on the ice behind them

Where are the pictures set?

- *Kite flying* is set near a coast:
 - with the sea and a beach in the background;
 - strips of vegetation and two hills in the midground
 - a sandy/dusty path in the foreground.

(This is probably near Haifa, in Israel, where the artist was living at the time.)

- *Sliding on the Round Pond* is set on a frozen pond, but the scene is so close up, you can not tell where this might be. (However, it is more likely to be set in Hampstead, London, where there is a Round Pond.)

What is the weather like in *Kite Flying*? How can you tell?

- The weather is hot and sunny. You can tell because:
 - The three children wear summer clothes – shorts and t-shirts – and have bare feet.
 - The earth on the nearer hillside looks red and parched
 - the plants that cover the ground are yellow, as if withered from lack of water
 - There are palm trees in the distance, which grow mainly in hot places.
- It is also windy. You can tell because:
 - the three boats have open sails, which must be catching the wind.
 - The kite is high in the air, which happens only in windy weather.
 - The kite flyer leans back, holding the kite tight to stop it from flying away in the wind.
 - Some of the trees are shown slanting at angles, as if swaying in the wind.

What is the weather like in *Solomon's picture*? How can you tell?

- The weather in *Solomon's picture* is cold and gloomy.
 - the two children wear thick suits, caps and scarves to keep them warm.
 - the background is bare and icy.

Which way is the wind blowing in Kite Flying? How can you tell?

- The wind is blowing from the left-side of the picture.
- You can tell because:
 - the kite and its string are angled from left to right.Notice how the string almost exactly follows the (invisible) diagonal line that bisects the picture, which emphasises the kite's apparent movement.
- one of the trees on the left sways towards the right
- the tree on the right has branches windblown to the right



What time of day is it in Kite Flying? How can you tell?

- It is sunset.
- The sun glows red in the sky as it begins to set.
- As the sun sinks, its rays turn the sky (or is the low clouds?) orange
- The high clouds then stand out in grey and blue (or is that blue sky behind the clouds?).

How do these pictures make you feel? What makes you say that?

FORM AND COMPOSITION

How have the artists shown that the people are moving?

- In Kite flying:
 - All three children stand with one foot on tiptoe and the other in the air, i.e. off balance
 - Their bodies lean at an angle. The kite flier also leans back at an angle.
 - The children's arms are raised upwards towards the kite/sun – as if caught in mid action.
 - The kite flier also leans back at an angle. He is in silhouette, which shows his action even more clearly.
- In Solomon's picture:
 - The front boy leans forward with his legs bent as if sliding one foot forward.
 - The boy behind leans backwards with his arms and legs straight, as if trying to balance, as the boy in front pulls him along
- The diagonal and zig zag shapes made by the two boys create a rhythm, helping to evoke a feeling of movement.



Activities

- Ask children to stand in the poses of the children in the two pictures. Let the rest of the class direct their actions. Which pose is easiest to stand in? Discuss why that might be.
- Ask children to make quick outlines of these poses or the poses in the actual pictures.
- Point out that in both pictures, the shapes of the children make diagonal lines, indicative of movement.

How has Simon shown a feeling of space and distance in his picture?

- Kite flying is divided exactly in half at the horizon between the sea and sky.
- The horizon is slightly curved, like the curve of the earth, suggesting that you have a wide open view, of the scene, perhaps from the top of a hill, and that the sea is quite far away.
- People, trees and other objects that are faraway are shown smaller than those in the foreground.
- The artist has painted several different coloured strips of land between the hills and the sea, suggesting a wide expanse of land.



- The dark tree stump and the two tall trees, which stretch from almost the bottom of the picture to the top, help give the effect of 'pushing back' the hills and the sea into the far distance. This technique, much used by landscape painters of the past, is called repoussoir.
- Notice how your eye is led in a zig-zag journey from one tree to another, to the top of each hill and finally to the boat far out at sea.
- The tree stump and the children overlap the red hill. The red hill overlaps the orange hill. The orange hill hides part of the land, beach and the sea. This overlapping makes you feel that the tree stump and the children are far nearer to you than the sea.



How does Solomon make you feel part of his picture?

- The two boys take up almost the entire picture space. They look as if they have just slid into the picture from the left and will soon be sliding out of the picture to the right.
- The close viewpoint makes you feel as if you are standing on the ice in front of them, watching them pass close by.

TECHNIQUE AND MATERIALS

How would you describe the colours the artists have used? Why did they choose these colours?

- Solomon used a narrow choice of dark colours to suggest a cold, gloomy winter's day – mainly sombre browns, ranging from the dark brown of the boys' clothes, which make them stand out, to the alternating light and dark brown bands of the pond, which create areas of light and shadow. Notice how the artist added more white to create the lighter shades of brown.
- Solomon added tiny touches of red, such as the birds' beaks and the boys' red faces and hands to give a little warmth and energy to an otherwise gloomy scene.
- Simon used strong, bright, cheerful, strongly contrasting colours to give the feeling of a very hot day. The strong turquoise strip of sea suggests the cool of the water, in contrast with the heat of the hills, sand and path, which are painted in a range of hot colours – oranges, rich brown and pink
- Find places in Simon's picture where he has used complementary colours side by side to make both colours stand out even more.

An explanation of complementary colours

- The three primary colours are red, yellow and blue.

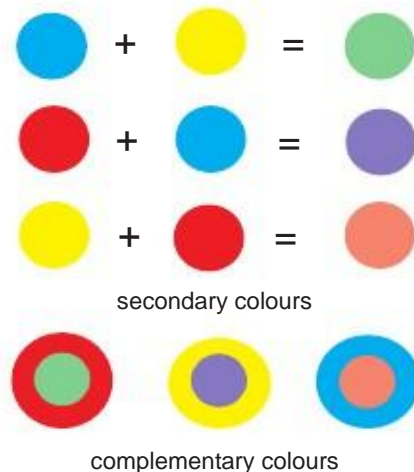
- Two primaries can be mixed to make secondary colours:

yellow + blue = green
 red + yellow = orange
 red + blue = purple

- The complementary colour of each primary is the mix of the other two:

red's complementary is green (blue + yellow);
 yellow's complementary is violet (red + blue)
 blue's complementary is orange (yellow + red)

- Placed next to one another, complementary colours look stronger and stand out more.



- Spot the vegetation painted in totally unrealistic colours – bright red, yellow and blue.
Why might the artist have done this? What effect does this have?

Look at other pictures showing people at play. There are many different themes to choose from, such as:

Skating

Hendrick Avercamp A Winter Scene with Skaters near a Castle c.1608 (National Gallery, London)
Sir Henry Raeburn The Reverend Robert Walker Skating c.1784 (National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh)

Rowing

Gustave Caillebotte Skiffs 1877 (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC)
Mary Cassatt The Boating Party 1893-94 (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC)
Thomas Eakins The Biglin Brothers Racing 1872 (National Gallery of Art, Washington DC)
William Roberts The Boatpond 1956 (Cecil Higgins Gallery, Bedford)

Football

Rober Delauney L'Equipe de Cardiff 1913 (Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven)
Nicholas de Stael Football Players series 1952
William Roberts The Football Match
Henri Rousseau The Football Players 1908 (Solomon G. Guggenheim Museum, New York)

Seaside

William Roberts The Seaside c.1966 (Arts Council Collection)
Philip Wilson Steer Girls Running, Walberswick Pier c.1888-94 (Tate collection)

Swimming

David Hockney Le Plongeur (Paper Pool 18) 1978 (Bradford Art Galleries and Museums)
Leon Kossoff Children's Swimming Pool, Autumn Afternoon 1971 (Tate collection - also online)

It is also worth cutting photographs of different sports out of newspapers and magazines for children to study and draw inspiration from.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Yohanan Simon

Yohanan Simon was born in 1905 in Berlin, in Germany and studied medicine for a year before enrolling at the art academy in Frankfurt, where he was taught by Max Beckman (the expressionist painter). In the late 1920s, he travelled to Spain and later to France, where he studied painting with Andre Derain (one of the founders of Fauvism). He worked in Paris on two magazines as a graphic designer. He emigrated to Palestine in 1936 and was a member of the Gan Schmuël kibbutz from 1937 until 1953, when he moved to Tel Aviv. During the 1950s, he travelled extensively in South America, Europe and the USA. Influenced by his travels, his style became more abstract and his colours brighter and hotter. In the 1960s, he had solo exhibitions in Germany, the USA and Switzerland. Simon died in 1976.

Works by Simon can be found online at:
www.engel-art/il
www.lionsgallery.com

Gilbert Solomon

Solomon was born in 1891 and studied at the Slade School of Art from 1907-1911, after which he spent two years in Paris. He returned to England to serve in the Royal Air Force during World War I. In World War II, he was Art Director for the Design Section of Civilian Camouflage. He was Vice-President of the Royal Society of British Artists. Solomon died in 1954.

Other work by Gilbert Solomon in the Ben Uri collection
Hay Wagons

Work by Gilbert Solomon in the Imperial War Museum collection
The Mist Curtain: RE8 (16th Squadron) attacked over Lens 1918