

The Republic and its Images

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Presentation

Both terms should be explained:

1. The Republic

From an historical perspective, the 19th century is considered as the period when, despite the difficulties, the Republican regime was finally established in France. It was preceded by two main "attempts": the First and Second Republics.

- The First Republic was inaugurated on September 21, 1792. It was born of the 1789 Revolution and followed the fall of the Monarchy on August 10, 1792. It was to be replaced by the Napoleonic regime which was followed by the Restoration.
- The Second Republic was born of the Revolution of February 22-24, 1848 in Paris. It was inaugurated on May 4, 1848 and ended with the coup d'état by the Prince-President Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte – the future Napoleon III – on December 2, 1851.
- The Third Republic, inaugurated on September 4, 1870, after the defeat in Sedan and the fall of the Empire, went through unsettled beginnings and imposed itself progressively:
 - in 1871, the Assemblée Nationale held a Monarchist majority.
 - in 1873, after the fall of Thiers, Mac-Mahon's election to the presidency and the government of the Duc de Broglie instituted "l'Ordre Moral": a royalist reactionary movement that attempted to restore the monarchy. Yet the return of the pretender to the throne, the Comte de Chambord, was a failure.
 - January 30, 1875: the Wallon amendment determined the mode of election of the president "of the Republic".
 - the 1875 constitution: a compromise.
 - March 1876 and October 1877: the Republicans won the legislative elections.
 - January 1879: Mac-Mahon resigned. Jules Grévy, a "genuine" Republican, was elected president of the Republic.
 - 1880-1884: the great Republican laws were set up: on public liberties, schooling, the institution of the main Republican symbols, etc..

2. Images

Two meanings of the word apply here:

- Images = allegories = symbols
- These symbols have become permanent. They are therefore still valid today and are the object of a consensus. The Republic has five symbols:
- the tricolour flag: appeared during the Revolution, it was defended by Lamartine in 1848 as opposed to the red flag. It was the element responsible for the failure - in 1871 and again in 1875 - of the Comte de Chambord's return as king of France. It was therefore a permanent feature throughout the 19th century except during the Restoration.
 - the national anthem: "La Marseillaise". Born of "la Patrie en danger" in 1792, it became the national anthem in February 1879.
 - the national celebration: Bastille day, on July 14. It commemorates the storming of the Bastille, symbol of royal absolutism, in 1789 and the celebration of the Federation on July 14, 1790. July 14 prevailed, not without opposition, as the national celebration in 1880.
 - the motto: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.
 - the figure of Marianne: France is one of the few countries in which the figure embodying the political regime is official and at the same time so popular that it was given a first name and the features of a woman, nowadays represented by those of different pop singers or cinema stars. Since the end of the 19th century, as well as embodying France Marianne has also stood for Liberty, the Republic, and the Revolution.
 - Images: events and (real) personalities which became symbols. Contrarily to the permanent symbols of the Republic, these images embody values which are specifically related to the establishment of the Third Republic during the years 1880-1890:
 - the "good" kings of France – "kings" in the wide sense of the term - : Charlemagne, Philippe-Auguste, Saint Louis, Henri IV, Louis XIV, Napoleon...
 - the patriot heroes, who defended the fatherland: Vercingétorix, Joan of Arc, Bayard, Thiers "the liberator of the territory" in 1871...
 - the revolutionary heroes: Danton, Robespierre, Marat, the young Bara...
 - the Republican heroes: Gambetta "the commercial traveller of the Republic", Jules Ferry...
 - the "modern" heroes: Pasteur, Victor Hugo...
 - the events that made modern France: the Verdun partition (843), Bouvines (1214), the Villiers-Cotterets ordinance (1539), Rocroi (1643), July 14, August 4 and August 26, 1789, Valmy (1792), Austerlitz (1805)...

Objectives

The objectives of a visit to the Musée d'Orsay on the theme "The Republic and its images" are as follows:

1. studying history in an art gallery

- From an educational point of view, museums – especially fine art museums like the Musée d'Orsay – are essentially considered as places to study art history, to cover the art sections of the curricula and textbooks. This may be true, but this visit demonstrates that some purely historical themes may be tackled in a museum because of their fundamental relationship to images. "The Republic and its images" has the advantage then, of corresponding to the chronological circuit of the Musée d'Orsay whilst being relevant to various aspects of school curricula.
- The visit has to be adapted to the level of the pupils: usually pupils of the upper secondary level should understand the two meanings of the word "images" addressed here and make connections with the corresponding artworks. Yet teachers of the lower secondary level may judge, according to their knowledge of their pupils' abilities, whether it would be better to follow the whole visit or only the first part covering the permanent symbols of the Republic.
- Although it might be of interest to mention the artistic movement from which each work stems (Academic painting, Impressionism etc.) this is by no means necessary and there is a risk that such information would blur the objectives. If one is thinking of undertaking a complementary study - art history and history together – a useful work to look at it is *La rue Montorgueil pavoisée (Rue Montorgueil Decked Out With Flags, 1878)* by Monet either later in class or on a separate visit to the Museum.

2. citizenship and Republican studies (for French pupils)

- This objective is perhaps the most awkward to define; whilst to impose such a mission on the visit may strike some as being outdated, others will find it over topical.
- Nevertheless, introducing pupils to the major symbols of the Republic should have a unifying effect, encouraging in them a sense of identity as the future citizens of one country and, it could be argued, there is much value in this.
- This aim is served perfectly by the Musée d'Orsay collections because it was during the 1880's that the Republican emblems were ultimately defined and institutionalised.
- In plunging pupils into the past, the visit also enables a clearer understanding of:
 - the origins of certain symbols and therefore, of their connotations and value.
 - the shifting relevance of certain symbols: some, having been highly significant in the past, are now obsolete whilst others, having undergone a sea-change, are today charged with new meanings. In this way the visit also aims to sharpen pupils critical awareness.

3. learning to see

- Understanding an artwork: painting, sculpture, architecture, drawing, etching..., or even an illustration, requires the application of a method. Although there is no standard method, whatever method one follows, one should always begin with a silent moment of attentive observation. A reference grid may also be used to structure the visit or may have been defined before coming to the museum. Learning to see involves a genuine educative process and should be practised regularly. Methods can be devised by the school's history department, in collaboration with the visual arts and literature departments.
- In looking at an artwork, one also needs to ascertain its meaning and the different superimposed or intertwined meanings which are not always obvious at first glance. This, which would be valid for any visit to the Museum, is of crucial importance for this particular circuit which is all about symbols.
 - the pupils will therefore learn how to identify the different signs and their signification: for instance, nowadays the Phrygian cap is little more than an item of historical costume, whereas in its day, it was loaded with political significance.
 - the pupils will learn about events and their significance: for instance the anticlericalism inherent in *The Excommunication of Robert the Pious* by Jean-Paul Laurens (1875).

4. choosing an approach to the visit

- Any visit should be prepared beforehand in class.
- In the museum, the teacher may lead their pupils, explaining the different artworks themselves.
- They may equally prepare a worksheet allowing the pupils to go round independently. For instance:
 - identification exercise: finding the pieces which cover the same theme (for example the female figure of the Republic); compare them; analyse a few of them.
 - questionnaire: localise the artworks pupils should see on a floor map. Have the pupils analyse the works using a reference grid.
 - tutor's follow-up: before or after one of the above structured visits, teachers may make a commentary on one or more artworks which they consider worth analysing in depth or which seem more challenging, etc...
- Finally – this alternative being more appropriate for upper secondary pupils – having prepared the pupils in advance, the teacher may organise an official guided visit.

Before the Visit

In preparing for the Musée d'Orsay visit, various possibilities are open to the teacher, which can be employed either separately or together, according to the level of the pupils.

- Identify the Republican symbols starting with the contents of our pockets and moving gradually outwards to encompass the most public spaces. For example:

- coins, postage stamps, crests on passports...

- the tricolour flag, the Republican motto...

- the monuments: the bust of Marianne in the town hall, the monument to the war dead, and monuments dedicated to heroes and famous people (from the merest inscription up to the sculpted groups on public squares).

One can make a comprehensive catalogue of the symbols; including description, identification of ornamentation and explanation of their meaning.

- Study the Republic and its institutions, comparing them – and this is especially relevant in 19th century France – with the other political regimes (the Monarchy, the Empire...), and identify the role of the revolutions in the 18th and 19th centuries.

- Analyse two famous paintings, often reproduced in school books:

- Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Guiding the People*,

1831, Musée du Louvre. This painting depicts a contemporary event: the “Three Glorious Days” of July, 1830. Different representatives of the people of Paris are shown, guided by an allegorical Liberty..

- Isidore Pils, *Rouget de Lisle Singing La*

Marseillaise, 1849, Musée des Beaux-Arts de

Strasbourg. This painting commemorates the creation of the national anthem during the winter 1792, at Dietrich's in Strasbourg.

The Visit: list of artworks

N.B.: in the case of a guided visit, this list of artworks is indicative only. The guide conducting the group is free to choose works supporting their demonstration.

- François Rude : *Le buste de la Marseillaise (Bust of La Marseillaise)*, plaster cast, 1898

- Pierre-Jean David d'Angers : *La République française (The French Republic)*, 1839, replica

- Honoré Daumier : *La République (The Republic)*, 1848

- busts of Marianne of the 1880's

- Auguste Rodin : *Bellone*, 1879

- Alexandre Falguière : *Le triomphe de la Révolution (The Triumph of the Revolution)*, wax sketch, 1882

- Louis-Oscar Roty : *La Semeuse (The Sower)*, wax model, 1887

- Jules Dalou : *Le forgeron (The Blacksmith)*, plaster, sketch for *The Triumph of the Republic*, 1889-1899, place de la Nation in Paris

- Jules Dalou : *Figure nue*, esquisse en terre pour la République du groupe *Le triomphe de la République (nude figure – clay sketch for “the Republic” The Triumph of the Republic)*, 1889-1899, place de la Nation in Paris

- Claude Monet : *La rue Montorgueil pavoisée (Rue Montorgueil Decked Out With Flags)*, 1878.

- Jean-Paul Laurens : *L'excommunication de Robert le Pieux (The Excommunication of Robert The Pious)*, 1875

- Jean-Joseph Weerts : *La mort de Bara (Bara's Death)*, 1880

- Édouard Detaille : *Le rêve (The Dream)*, 1888

- Jean-Paul Aubé : *Monument à Gambetta (Monument to Gambetta)*, plaster sketch, 1884

After the Visit

Following the visit to the Museum, there are several ways open to the teacher to continue the study in class.

- Make an assessment. For instance:

- have pupils memorise Republican images and symbols.

- have pupils explain the meaning of the word “symbols”, giving examples based on the visit and its preparation.

- Further the study in different directions. For instance:

- search for other fields where symbols are predominant.

- integrate “The Republic and its Images” in the broader concept of democracy and its universal values.

- undertake a comparative study of Academic and Impressionist painting (and if necessary go back to the Musée d'Orsay for another visit on this art history theme).

- Study the history of taste.

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The Republic and its Images

• The Visit: the artworks

Part 1: Figures of the Republic

1. François Rude: *Le buste de La Marseillaise* (*Bust of La Marseillaise*), plaster cast, 1898

- Location: in the entry hall, on the right
- This bust represents one of the most famous figures of the Republic: La Marseillaise (or the spirit of war). It is part of a winged figure which dominates a sculptural group of soldiers: *The Departure of the Volunteers of 1792*.
- Context: this is one of four high-reliefs adorning the pillars of the Arc de Triomphe at the end of the Champs Élysées in Paris: a monument initiated under the Empire, in 1806 and completed under the July Monarchy, in 1836.
- Note the aggressive and warlike iconography of this bust:
 - her expression, shouting: "She is uttering cries of rage", contemporaries remarked, taken aback
 - the armour adorned with the protecting gorgon,
 - the Phrygian cap decorated with two war horses and a hydra. At the time, the Phrygian cap was an ambivalent emblem: for conservatives it immediately conjured up the "Terror" and the most negative aspects of the Revolution, whilst it was a rallying sign for left-wing Republicans.

2. Pierre-Jean David d'Angers: *La République française* (*The French Republic*), 1859, replica

- Location: ground level, beginning of the Opening on history, or replica in the young visitors' hall.
- This bronze figurine was made by the artist to demonstrate his own Republican sentiments and therefore was neither a State nor a private commission.
- Context: the statuette was executed while the July Monarchy was already under crisis, at a time of growing Republican sentiment.
- Identify all the references to the Revolution in the statuette: the short tunic, the rifle, the laurel wreath, the Phrygian cap, the chains and the yoke she is stamping under her left foot, the egalitarian triangle on the small shrine at the back...
- Read the caption "Liberty, dear Liberty, fight alongside your defenders": another allusion to the Revolution.
- Explain the meaning of this statuette.

3. Honoré Daumier: *La République* (*The Republic*), 1848

- Location: upper level, first gallery on the right in the Galerie des Hauteurs.
N.B.: at this juncture, being out of the logical circuit of the Musée d'Orsay, this piece could be explained using a photograph and then seen in the flesh at the end of the circuit, after Monet's *Rue Montorgueil Decked Out With Flags*.
- This work which is actually a sketch – was executed by Daumier for the great competition to choose the figure of La République, in the Spring of 1848.
- Context: The Second Republic needed a representative image and in the euphoric and fraternal context of the February 1848 Revolution,

neither Rude's *La Marseillaise*, nor David d'Anger's *La République* were judged peaceful enough to be suitable. The Republicans therefore launched a competition to find the official image of the Republic. It was open to painters, sculptors and engravers but most importantly, it was truly open to all artists, young or old, established or unknown. There was to be no Salon type jury judging the entries according to criteria mostly related to the technique and subjects. 700 pieces were entered including 450 paintings, 175 sculptures, 51 projects for medals and 41 emblematic drawings. Daumier was among the 20 artists on the short list. But the competition came to nothing due to the political crisis of June 1848 and to its inability to identify a truly consensual artwork.

- Define Daumier's stance: what signs has he endowed his Republic with? What are her attributes? Compare her with the two figures above.
- What can be said about the slogan Daumier assigned to his Republic: "The Republic Feeds and Instructs her children"?

4. *The Republics* of the 1880's and 1890's

- Location: middle level, galleries and terraces on the Seine side.
- Background: the politicians of the Third Republic understood the crucial importance of using images in a multiplicity of media to publicise the Republican ethos. A veritable cult of the Republic was instituted. From 1880 to 1900, 221 public monuments were erected, 90 of which directly featured the Republic.
At the end of the period, the Republican idea had been so well assimilated by the vast majority of French people that the figure with the Phrygian cap was an interchangeable symbol of both the Republic and France.
- Examples in Paris:
 - *The Republic* by Léopold Morice on the place de la République, erected in 1884 following a competition in 1879.
 - *The Triumph of the Republic* by Jules Dalou on the place de la Nation: a life size model was made in 1889, and the finished monument in 1899. Rich iconography.

Besides these monuments, a plethora of small and medium sized objects were made: medals, busts, bas-relief profiles... in bronze, wood, wax... that could be used in domestic settings: a private cult of the Republic had developed alongside the public show.

- The pupils should look for:
 - small images of Marianne. Describe the iconography and symbols. Work out their purpose from their sizes.
 - *Bellone* by Auguste Rodin: originally, this figure was Rodin's entry to the 1879 competition for the commission to make the bust of "the Republic" for the 3rd arrondissement town hall in Paris. Considered too aggressive, it was rejected and given the new title of *Bellone*. Explain why this happened.



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1. François Rude : *Le buste de la Marseillaise*, plaster cast, 1898
2. Pierre-Jean David d'Angers : *La République française*, bronze, 1859, replica
3. Honoré Daumier : *La République*, 1848
4. Léopold Morice : *La République*, on the place de la République in Paris, 1879-1884
5. Auguste Rodin : *Bellone*, 1879

- *The Blacksmith* by Dalou: the plaster sketch for the figure pushing the right-hand wheel of the chariot of the *Triumph of the Republic*. The figure embodies "labour".

- *Nude Figure, The Republic* by Dalou: clay sketch for the *Triumph of the Republic*.

- *The Triumph of the Revolution* by Falguière: wax sketch for the temporary plaster group installed from 1882 to 1885 on the top of the Arc de Triomphe on the Champs-Élysées. The final sculpture was never completed. Describe the iconography of this group.

5. Claude Monet: *La rue Montorgueil pavoisée* (*The Rue Montorgueil Decked Out in Flags*), 1878

- Location: upper level, Galerie des Hauteurs.
- Context: on June 30, 1878, a celebration in honour of peace and the Republic was held as part of the festivities for the World Fair (May 1 – October 31, 1878).
- Observe the painting: the colours, brush strokes, organisation, construction, atmosphere.
- Contemporary visitors, often think this painting shows a 14th July celebration, but was it? What was, in fact, Monet's true intention? Where was he standing in relation to the festive crowds? Was his main concern merely commemorative? (whatever it was, Monet has certainly recorded his contemporaries' love of flamboyancy and overt display).

N.B. As the only Impressionist painting, this work may be difficult to place in the overall context of the visit. The point in including it is to show the pupils the difference between the way a painting is understood nowadays and the artist's outlook at the time.



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- Louis-Oscar Roty : *La Semeuse*, wax model, 1887
- Jules Dalou : *Le forgeron*, plaster sketch for *Le triomphe de la République*, 1889-1899, place de la Nation in Paris
- Jules Dalou : *Figure nue*, clay sketch for the Republic of the sculpted group *Le triomphe de la République*, 1889-1899, place de la Nation in Paris
- Alexandre Falguière : *Le triomphe de la Révolution*, wax sketch, 1882
- Claude Monet : *La rue Montorgueil pavoisée*, 1878

Part 2: images and values of the 3rd Republic

1. Jean-Paul Laurens: *L'excommunication de Robert le Pieux* (*The excommunication of Robert the Pious*), 1875

- Location: middle level, first gallery on the Seine side
- The event: Robert, king of France (996-1051), son of Hugues Capet, was excommunicated from the Church for marrying a cousin with whom he was related "to a degree prohibited by the Church".
- Political context: the government of "l'Ordre Moral" was trying to impose a restoration of the monarchy a stance with which the Church increasingly allied itself (through processions, the laying of the foundation stone of the Sacré-Coeur in Paris...).

Under the Third Republic, school textbooks chose to retell the story of the excommunication, illustrating it with a drawing reminiscent in iconography of Laurens' painting.

- Observe the painting: the composition, the setting, the facial expressions, the moment chosen by the painter...
- Why did Jean-Paul Laurens choose to depict this "secondary" episode of French history? He wanted to show the Church's abuses of power and draw parallels between its attitude around the year 1000 and its anti-Republican attitude of the 1870's-1880's: this is an anticlerical painting (the word appeared in the 1870's). It defends the values of secularism.

2. Jean-Joseph Weerts: *La mort de Bara* (*Bara's Death*), 1880

- Location: middle level, first gallery on the Seine side.
- The event: during the Vendée wars of 1795, the young Bara chose to die shouting "Long live the Republic" rather than acclaiming the king. The event was embellished to make Bara a martyr of the Revolution, the Bara cult having been initiated in December 1795 by Robespierre himself who most certainly invented Bara's dying proclamation. The cult spread throughout the beginning of 1794 until 9th Thermidor, year 2 (the date, according to the French Revolutionary calendar, of Robespierre's execution by guillotine).
- Context: the commanders of the Third Republic understood the importance of images and the necessity to have the courage to hold up the Great Revolution as the origin of the Republic and so resuscitated the cult of the early Revolutionary heroes.
- Observe the painting: the threatening Vendees, the critical moment of the scene, Bara's shout. Compare this with David's painting (1794) in which Bara is dead, naked, holding the tricolour rosette close to his heart.
- J.J. Weerts's intention was to stimulate the cult of the Revolution amongst the French youth of the day. A parallel should be drawn with the re-



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popularisation of Republican songs: see the second verse of the “Chant du Départ”.

- Pupils should be reminded that the Eiffel tower was erected to celebrate the centenary of the Revolution.

3. Edouard Detaille: *Le Rêve* (*The Dream*), 1888

- Location: middle level, first gallery on the Seine side.

- The event: this is not an actual historical event as its title shows. It is, in fact, a double dream, a twofold hope for the art-viewing public of 1888: a young, well equipped and well commanded army... and a return of the revolutionary and Napoleonic legend with its victories. The painting was exhibited in the middle of the Boulangist crisis with resounding success.

- Observe the painting: the two levels of narration, the atmosphere of dawn, the attention paid to details...

- Detaille’s intention was stimulate the patriotic spirit and desire for revenge in the French people and particularly in the young.

4. Jean-Paul Aubé: *Monument à Gambetta* (*Monument to Gambetta*), plaster model, 1884

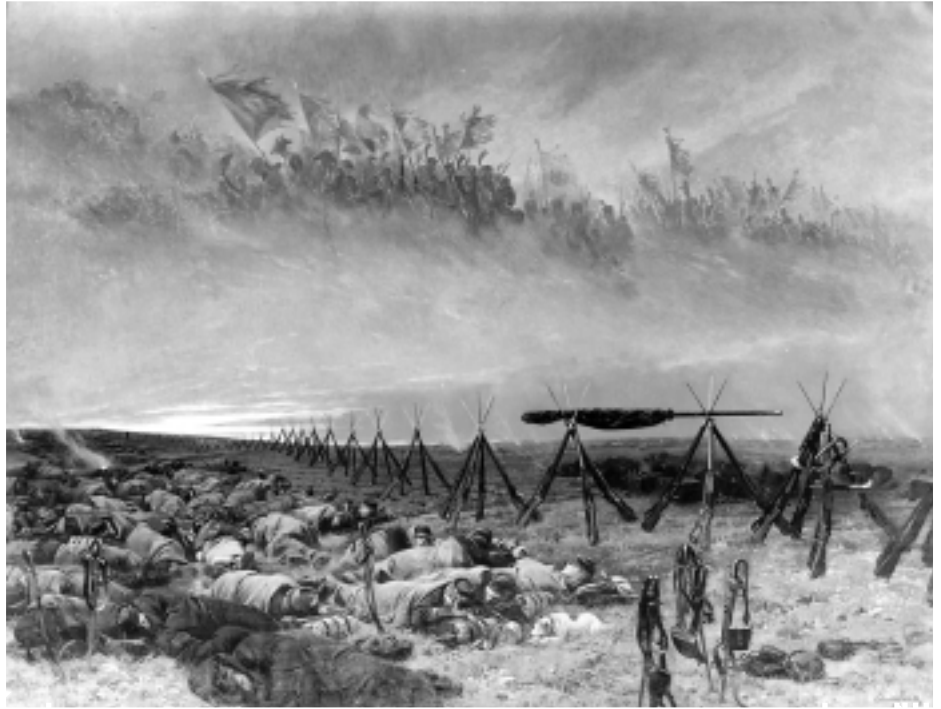
- Location: middle level, former lounge of the Hôtel d'Orsay, Arts and décor of the Third Republic.

- The Hero: Léon Gambetta (1838-1882), was a Republican whose political career began at the end of the Second Empire (he took the defence for Delescluze), grew with his animation of the resistance during the 1870 war and ended with his forming the constitution of the “Great Ministry” in 1881.

- Context: the monument to Gambetta was originally erected in the Napoleon Court of the Louvre (where the pyramid now stands) during the first years of the definitive establishment of Republican power. What is left of the monument now stands behind the town hall of the 20th arrondissement.

- Observe the model of the monument: the allegorical figures, the importance given to the text and the four speeches, the manner in which they have been engraved...

- The message carried by the work: Gambetta, a Republican who died aged 44, is a contemporary hero, a model Republican spirit.



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