

Name: _____

In the 1970s and 80s, Canadian artist Mary Pratt looked at her kitchen counter and saw "explosions of light." While others saw groceries or dinner messes, Pratt saw masterpieces. She painted everyday objects—like cracked eggs, jars of jelly, or fish—with such intense detail they look "more real than real." This style is called Hyperrealism. By capturing how light glows through a jar or sparkles on foil, Pratt proved that even the simplest parts of our daily lives deserve to be treated as high art

Look closely at the painting and list what you see.

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Pratt often paints light reflecting off surfaces. Find three places in the painting where the artist used bright white to show a "glint" of light. What material is that light hitting (glass, water, plastic)?

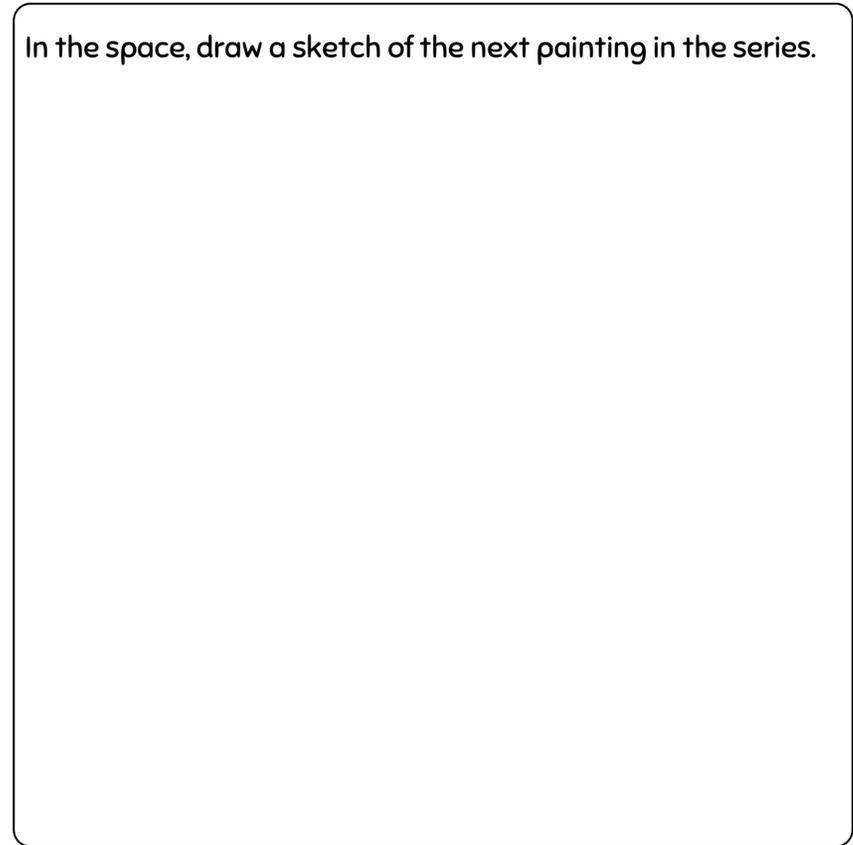
Imagine you could reach into the painting and touch the object. Describe how it would feel. Is it sticky, sharp, cold, or smooth? Use three descriptive "texture" words.

THE EVERYDAY EXTRODINARY



Why do you think Pratt chose to paint this specific object? Does the painting make the object look "special" or "boring"? Explain your answer using what you see.

In the space, draw a sketch of the next painting in the series.



Teacher's Guide: Mary Pratt's "The Everyday Extraordinary"

This guide is designed to help you lead a classroom through a visual exploration of Mary Pratt's work, focusing on how she finds beauty in the domestic world. In addition, this guide focuses on the technical "magic" of Hyperrealism—moving beyond just "drawing well" to capturing the physics of light. Suggested grades 4 to 6.

Phase 1: Leading the Discussion

Use the "See, Think, Wonder" method to help students slow down and look closely at the light and textures in Pratt's work.

See: Ask, "What do you see?" (Focus on textures: crinkly plastic, wet scales, glowing jelly, shadows, reflections). **See:** Ask, "Is this a photo or a painting?" (Wait for them to look for brushstrokes—Pratt hides them so well they are almost invisible).

Think: Ask, "What do you think happened right before this picture was painted?" (Someone was cooking; the sun just came through the window).

Wonder: Ask, "Why would an artist spend so much time painting something we usually throw away or eat?"

Teacher Tip: Explain that Mary Pratt often took photos of her subjects because the light would change so fast. She wanted to "freeze" a single second of beauty forever.

Phase 2: Analyzing Art Elements & Principles

Use these points to explain how Pratt transforms a "boring" object into a powerful painting:

Light (Value): Pratt is famous for how she paints light. Notice how the light seems to glow from inside the objects, like a jar of jam. This creates a sense of "radiance."

Texture: Look at how she paints surfaces. You can almost feel the "crinkle" of plastic wrap or the "coldness" of a silver tray. She uses tiny brushes to capture every detail.

Composition (Close-ups): Pratt often zooms in very close on her subjects. By filling the entire canvas with just one or two items, she makes small things feel monumental and important.

Colour (Saturation): Her colours are often very "juicy" and bright. She uses bold reds and yellows to make the viewer feel the energy of the kitchen.

Phase 3: The Worksheet Questions

Note: Teachers, you can provide students with a printout of a Mary Pratt painting (like "Red Currant Jelly" or "Service Station") to reference.

- **Visual Evidence:** Mary Pratt often paints light reflecting off surfaces. Find three places in the painting where the artist used bright white to show a "glint" of light. What material is that light hitting (glass, water, plastic)?

- The Senses: Imagine you could reach into the painting and touch the object. Describe how it would feel. Is it sticky, sharp, cold, or smooth? Use three descriptive "texture" words.
- Perspective: Why do you think Mary Pratt chose to paint this specific object? Does the painting make the object look "special" or "boring"? Explain your answer using what you see.
- Reflection: Look around your classroom or your kitchen at home. What is one "everyday" object that you think would make a beautiful painting if the light hit it just right? Why?

Phase 4: Historical Context for Teachers

- Mary Pratt (1935–2018) lived much of her life in Newfoundland, Canada. At a time when many artists were painting abstract shapes or grand landscapes, Mary chose to focus on the domestic sphere—the world of the home. She turned the "hidden" work of many women—cooking, cleaning, and preparing food—into high art. Her work reminds us that we don't have to travel far to find something meaningful; beauty is often sitting right in front of us on the dinner table.
- The Struggle for Recognition. For a long time, Pratt's work was overshadowed by her husband, Christopher Pratt, who was also a very famous painter. In their early years, the art world often gave Christopher more credit and attention, while Mary was seen primarily as a "wife and mother" who painted in her spare time. Despite this, Mary remained dedicated to her craft, eventually proving that her "kitchen table" subjects were just as powerful as his grand landscapes.
- Camera Obscura: Historically, artists used this device to project a scene onto a surface to trace it. It was the "great-grandfather" of the camera.
- The Light Box: Pratt took this a step further. By using a light box to project 35mm slides, she could analyze the way light "exploded" through a jar of jelly or a piece of plastic. She wasn't just copying a photo; she was using the light box to see things the human eye usually misses.



Pratt, M. (2003). *Basting the Turkey* [Painting]. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, ON, Canada.
www.gallery.ca/collection/274852/By-original/uploader/User:leopard_fair-use_https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=601019

Pratt, M. (2003). *Basting the Turkey* [Painting]. Collection of Michael and Inna O'Brian.

Retrieved from: www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/mary-pratt/style-and-technique/#capturing-light

Basting the Turkey is perhaps one of Pratt's most iconic works. It perfectly demonstrates the Hyperrealist techniques you've introduced to your students:

- The "Frozen" Moment: By using her light box and a camera, she captured the turkey at the exact second the hot oil made the skin glisten and "bubble."
- The Detail: Notice the tiny pinfeathers and the reflection in the aluminum foil. This level of detail was once assisted by the camera obscura in art history, but Pratt's use of modern photography allowed for this almost clinical, "hyper-real" focus.