

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Family  
Guide

Let's Look at

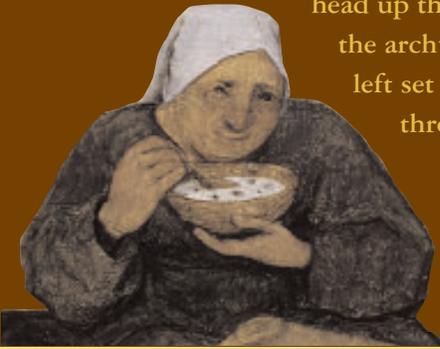
# The Harvesters

by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

in the European Paintings Galleries



You can find this painting in the EUROPEAN PAINTINGS GALLERIES on the 2nd floor. Starting in the Great Hall, head up the Grand Staircase and through the archway at the top. Go through the left set of glass doors ahead, and walk through several galleries until you see the painting on your left.

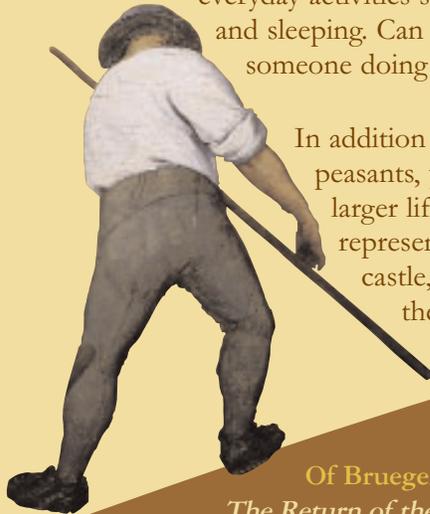


Pieter Bruegel the Elder  
(Netherlandish; active by 1551, died 1569)  
*The Harvesters*, 1565; oil on wood  
Rogers Fund, 1919 (19.164)



PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER created a number of “Seasons of the Year” (sometimes called “Labors of the Months”) paintings. The “Seasons” were a traditional theme showing the yearly cycle of man and nature. People performing seasonal activities, such as hunting or gathering hay, appear in each part of the cycle.

This painting probably depicts a scene in July or August. It shows an event in the daily life of the working class—peasants harvesting wheat. Some people are working and others are engaged in everyday activities such as eating, drinking, and sleeping. Can you find an example of someone doing each of these activities?

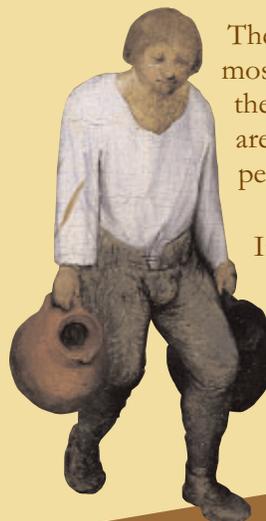


In addition to the local life of the peasants, you can also see the larger life of the world beyond, represented by the church, castle, houses, and boats in the distance.

The painter has also given us a sense of the weather. How has he shown the summer heat? Do you think the grayish color in the upper right-hand corner shows a change in the weather?



The landscape takes up most of the painting, and the peasants fill a much smaller area. Which seems more important, the people or nature?



If you were standing in the middle of the field, what would you hear? What would you smell?

### DID YOU KNOW?

Pieter Bruegel the Elder was the most important member of a well-known Netherlandish family of artists. They were active for four generations during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Of Bruegel’s six *Seasons of the Year*, five survive: this painting, *The Gloomy Day*, *Hunters in the Snow*, *The Return of the Herd*, and *Haymaking*. *The Harvesters* is the only one of the series in the United States.

### TO READ

Muhlberger, Richard. *What makes a Bruegel a Bruegel?* Viking: New York, 1993.  
Venezia, Mika. *Pieter Bruegel*. Childrens Press: Chicago, 1992.

### TO DO

At home, create your own series of “Seasons” pictures. Using paint, markers, or even collage, make four pictures, each one showing people doing a seasonal activity or job, such as going to the beach or raking leaves.



### Education

The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
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www.metmuseum.org

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