

Guided Critique

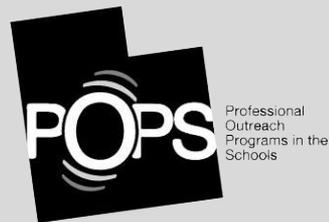
Karl Sholomovich Fridman

Weeding Women, 1961

oil on board

Springville Museum of Art Collection

Grade Level: High School





Look at this painting and describe what you see.

1. Who are the subjects?
 - a. What do you think they are doing?
 - b. Where are they?
2. How has the artist used color? What interesting color combinations do you see?
3. How is it painted? How would you describe the style?



Respond

1. What does this painting make you think of?
2. How does it make you feel? Why?
3. How would you describe the work the figures are performing?
 - a. How does it compare to work or jobs you have done?



Analyze

1. What can we learn about the figures from this image?
2. What details give clues about where they live and work?
3. What else do you wish you knew about them? Or the artist?
4. Pick one of the figures and create a short story about their life.

CONTEXT

- *Weeding Women* was painted in 1961 by Russian artist Karl Sholomovich Fridman.
- The early 1960s was a time of change and adjustment for the Soviet Union.
 - **CONNECT: Consider the complicated history of the USSR for further context (see next slide)**
- In the USSR, the Soviet worker exemplified communist ideals.
 - The rising Soviet working class was heroicized and assured greater power in society.
 - Both men and women were expected to work for the State. It was common for women to perform the labor-intensive jobs traditionally held by men.
 - As the USSR evolved under its many leaders, the influence of the working class shifted and eventually diminished.

CONTEXT

- Under Joseph Stalin's regime, from the 1920s-1940s, the USSR implemented collective farms that were run by the government.
 - Many of these farming experiments failed resulting in widespread famines in the 1930s and 1940s.
- After Stalin's death in 1953, Soviet politics shifted but most communist policies and ideals remained
 - During this period, known as the "Thaw" or "De-Stalinization," the USSR attempted to relax policies and to practice a peaceful co-existence with other (non-communist) nations which resulted in less censored information in the news and in the arts.
- Communist ideals on the working class prevailed while leaders attempted to fix the problems of Stalin's agricultural system
- **See the next slides to see how the working class was depicted in various media during this era.**



Dimitri Orloff, *One with the Plough, Seven with a Spoon: He who does not Work shall not Eat*, 1920.



Harvest and Collectivization, 1930s poster



Vera Mukhina, *Peasant and Factory Worker Soviet Pavilion Paris Exposition*, bronze, 1937.



Aleksei Aleksandrovich Vasilev, *They are Writing About Us in Pravda*, oil on canvas, 1951, Springville Museum of Art Collection



Connect

1. How does learning about the complex history of the USSR help you understand this painting more?
2. How does this image compare to the earlier images?
 - a. What is different?
 - b. What is similar?
3. How do you think the artist views the working class?

CREATE

1. Think about the the different types of work that exist in our society today.
2. How do you see workers portrayed in contemporary news outlets, social media, or art?
3. How would you portray current U.S. working conditions?
4. What medium and style would you use? Why?



Scott Sternbach, selections from *Delaware County Line* series, photography, 2000s.
www.scottsternbach.com



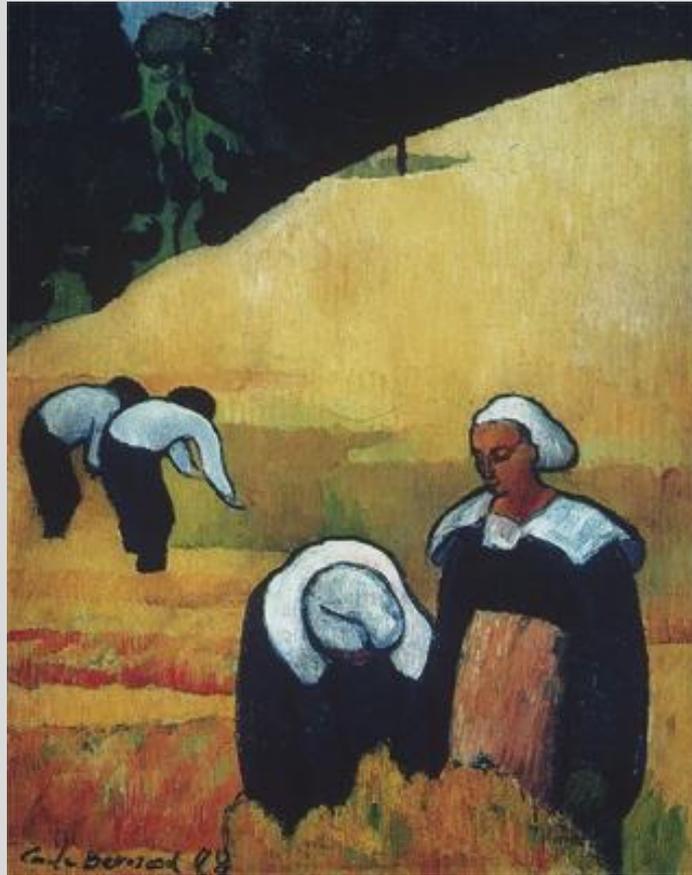
Jean-François Millet, *The Gleaners*, oil on canvas, 1857, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Extra Connection: Art History

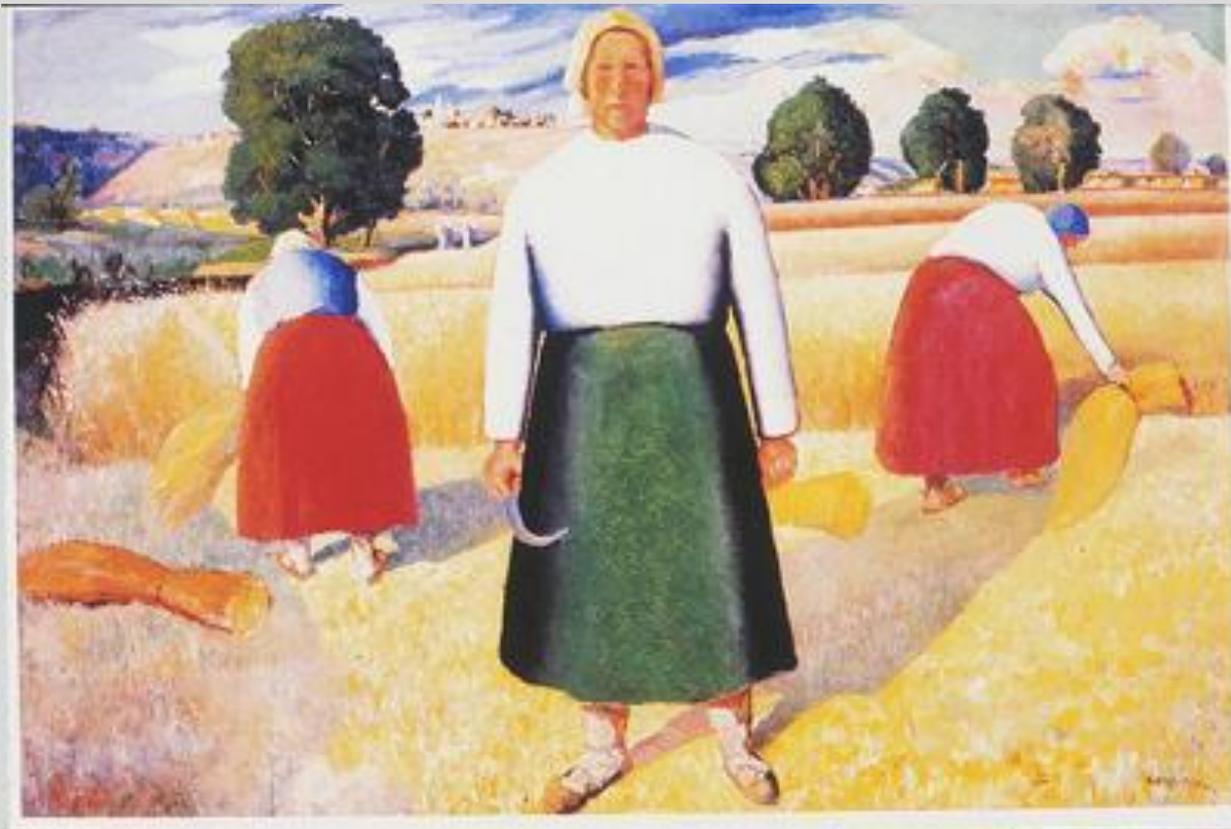
1. Work and labor have been subjects portrayed in art for centuries. However, as the world became more industrialized, images depicting the working class' experience became more politically relevant.
2. Look through the next few slides to see more examples of art historical images of the working class.



Vincent van Gogh, *A woman with a spade, seen from behind*, oil on canvas on wood panel, 1885, Art Gallery of Ontario.



Emile Bernard, *Harvest (Breton Landscape)*, oil on canvas, 1888, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



Kazimir Severinovich Malevich,
Reapers, oil on wood, c.1928-32

Analyze

- What type of statements do you think these artists are making with their images of the working class?
 - Do they all have the same message? How do their messages differ?
- How does Fridman's image of working women compare to other art historical images of the working class?
 - Do you think Fridman was imitating any past artist's style? Why or why not?
- What statement do you think Fridman is making? How is it that statement similar or different from other art historical images?