



Paint like Ellen!

Grades: Pre-K to Adults

Background:

First Lady Ellen Axson Wilson loved to paint as a way to deal with the daily struggles in her life. While engaged to Woodrow Wilson, she attended the Art Students League of New York, a prominent art school in New York and went on to create landscapes and portraits which took her around the world to showcase her work. After marrying Woodrow Wilson and moving to Pennsylvania, Ellen continued to paint and gave birth to her three daughters. As Woodrow Wilson's career took him from Princeton to eventually the White House as President in 1913, Ellen continued to paint and sketch. As First Lady, she was known to work out of a studio set up on the third floor of the White House. The demands of a First Lady took her away from her art, but she became best known for putting the Rose Garden in on the White House Lawn, arrange two of her three daughter's weddings in the White House, hosting intimate gatherings for causes, and work with political figures on bringing light to issues such as improving housing in portions of Washington D.C known as the slums. Ellen died in 1914, a little less than two years after becoming First Lady, from a condition known as Bright's Disease.

Materials Needed:

- Examples of Ellen Axson Wilson's works
- Paper
- "Ellen's Paintings" Coloring sheets
- Your medium of choice: paint, markers, crayons

Activity:

Look at the examples of Ellen's paintings in the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library's collections and choose your favorite. Try recreating her works on your own, or use our samples to redesign Ellen's paintings for your own.









Autumn Landscape, 1911











