



Friends of the
Topiary Park

Ten Activities for Students

In the Classroom:

- 1.) **Writing:** Refer to a reproduction of Seurat's painting, *Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grand Jatte*. Select a character from the painting and write a few paragraphs about what you imagine his/her life might have been like in the mid-1880's. Perhaps write in an autobiographical style.
- 2.) **Compare and Discuss:** Compare recreational activities of the 1880's with those of today. How has technology changed some of the ways we use leisure time?
- 3.) **Picture Study:** Which characters are moving in Seurat's picture? How fast? Is the picture, taken as a whole, active or still? Why does it seem that way?
- 4.) **Research Report:** Find out how clothing styles in Seurat's painting reflected the culture of 1880's Parisian society.
- 5.) **Design and Create:** If you could design and grow a topiary, what would it look like? Draw, paint, or build a model of it. Where would you plant it? Why there?



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At the Topiary Park:

- 1.) **Drawing:** Take your sketchbook and draw the scene from an angle different from that of Seurat's painting, perhaps from the rear or looking across the pond.
- 2.) **Science/Biology:** How many forms of plant life can you identify in the Topiary Garden? Make a list. How about animal life?
- 3.) **A Closer Look:** Look closely at one of the topiary characters. How many plants are used to form this topiary? Can you see the bronze armature? What has to be done to get the plant to grow in the shape of the armature?

Look at the topiary from the viewpoint of Seurat's painting. Now go around and look at the topiary from the other side, the side not shown in the painting. How has artist James Mason "finished" this figure?
- 4.) **Analyze and Discuss:** Look at the Topiary Garden in relation to the buildings around it. Do you think the Garden is a good addition to the area? Tell why.
- 5.) **Just for Fun:** Pick a favorite topiary character. Stand next to that topiary and strike the same pose. Have someone take your photo. Props and costumes would be especially fun!