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### Jessie Willcox Smith

Jessie Willcox Smith is known to be a part of the many people that make up the group of golden age illustrators in America. The golden age of illustration was a time period between the years of 1850 and 1925 in which illustration and the production of magazines and other books containing illustrated works became more popular and widely available for many people for entertainment and information. During this time many forms of new technology and advances in forms such as printmaking lead to an increase of art on a much larger scale in its availability. Some of the advances that were made at the time included the new techniques in printmaking allowing for mass production of work, paper production becoming much cheaper, new railroads being built make transportation much easier and allowing things to be transported much farther and faster, and the new jobs opening for many from industrialization and a rise in the economy allowing for more people to have extra money to spend on entertainment.

Jessie Willcox Smith's work looks to be inspired and adapted from the art period of impressionism. In her works "Heidi Introduced Each in Turn by it's Name to Her Friend Clara" and "You Can Have That, I Have Plenty", Smith shows that her soft and smooth color palette utilizes soft shading and lines. Much of the values used are quite light and delicate and blend each color smoothly usually to create a peaceful scene. Though much of her work is quite light in value, often using pastels like lavender and pale blues and greens, other works such as "Mother and Child" use a much darker color palette in the background with rich blues and greens. Despite

this the main subject of the mother and child in the piece are quite light and warm tones bringing them closer and more raised in space. This work also has a peaceful and tranquil sense to it with the expressions and positioning of the subject and colors used to depict them.

Smith worked often in watercolor, gouache, and oil and pastels at times. These mediums helped in adding to the effect and tone she often achieves in conveying in her work. With these materials she is able to create soft transitions with dreamlike qualities from working in a wet medium that could be used in a loose manner and could appear translucent depending on how it was applied. The medium of gouache can also give the work a flat, matte appearance and can create a more opaque look while still achieving the application looseness of watercolor. In these works, these materials, techniques and applications support the message or idea in their soft palette that conveys the feeling of tenderness or affection that is often a theme in many of Smith's works.

Smith's illustrations often fall under the genre of children and love or affection. Almost all of Smith's work includes child figures and in many other works she also often includes figures such as older women who can be understood to be the mother figure to these children based on their interactions, positioning, and the unity they show. This genre could possibly be related to her life and childhood as to show what she wished she had experienced.

Overall Jessie Willcox Smith was an essential illustrator to the golden age of illustration and helped in creating a place within the arts and illustration for women. Her choice in medium was important to her work and conveying her message and theme as well as displaying her inspiration from impressionism. Her subject matter and overall genre of working with children and mother figures as well as the style she portrayed them in was a nice change compared to other illustrators of the time.



Heidi introduced each in turn by its name to her friend Peter.



JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH.

## Works Cited

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