

Edward Hopper, the painter of American urban landscape

Edward Hopper was born in the small Hudson River town of Nyack, New York State, on 22nd July 1882. His family were solidly middle-class: his father owned a **grocery** where the young Hopper sometimes worked after school. By 1899 he had already decided to become an artist, but his parents persuaded him to begin studying commercial illustration because this **seemed** to offer a more secure future. He first **attended** the New York School of Illustrating, then in 1900 he transferred to the New York School of Art. However, like the majority of the young American artists of the time, he desired to study in France. In addition to spending some months in Paris, he visited London, Amsterdam, Berlin and Brussels. On the second occasion he visited Spain as well as France.

Hopper **settled** in Greenwich Village, which was his base for the rest of his life, and in 1929 he married Jo Nivison.

In 1925, he painted what is now generally recognized to be his first **fully** mature picture,

“*The House by the Railroad*”. Hopper painted in both oil and **water colors** and preferred subjects such as streets, gas stations, theatres, bridges, railroads and lighthouses. Most of his works are strangely empty of people, but are still full of emotion. Many express a sense of **loneliness** but they convey a feeling of great space and warm sunlight. Some paintings, such as his celebrated image of a gas-station, “*Gas*” (1940), even have elements which anticipate Pop Art. He died in 1967, isolated if not forgotten. His true importance has only been fully realized in the years since his death.

(Adapted from *Lives of the Great 20th Century Artists*, by Edward Lucie-Smith, Thames&Hudson)

to attend: *frequentare*
 fully: *pienamente*
 grocery: *negozio di alimentari*
 loneliness: *solitudine*
 to seem: *sembrare*
 to settle: *sistemarsi*
 water colours: *colori a tempera*



In this building near Washington Square Park there was Hopper's study.

1 Answer the following questions.

EVENT	
Place and date of birth	
Family social class	
1899	
Water	
Education	
Europe	
Back to New York	
1925	
Favorite subjects	
Painting techniques	
Typical features of his paintings	
"GAS"	
1967	



2 **PAIR WORK** Look carefully at the painting *The House by the Railroad* (oil on canvas, 1925) and take turns to answer the questions.

1. Is it a landscape, a portrait or a still life¹?
2. What can you see in the foreground of the painting?
3. What is the centre of the interest in the painting?
4. Are there any other elements around the house?
5. Where does the light come from?
6. What time of day do you think it is?
7. Describe the house (entrance, floors, windows, roof, attic)
8. What kind of colors does the artist use?
9. What feelings does the house suggest to you?
10. Would you like to live in a house like this?
Give your reasons.



This painting inspired the house in Hitchcock's film "Psycho".

1. The subject matters of still-life paintings are unanimated objects which can be natural (food, cut flowers, vegetables, dead animals, rocks, shells) or man-made (vases, bottles, glasses, books, coins, etc.).