



William-Adolphe Bouguereau, *Crown of Flowers*, 1884, oil on canvas, 162.9 x 89.9 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

*Crown of Flowers* (1884) by French academic artist William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825–1905) shows two young girls in the countryside. The young girl standing in the foreground wears a solemn expression, her posture very still and stiff as she holds out her apron filled with flowers.

The older girl entertains her by adorning her with a floral crown. This painting evokes the nostalgia for country life that arose in the late nineteenth century in response to rapid industrialization and urbanization. Unlike his contemporaries, such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919), who enjoyed depicting idyllic scenes of nymphs, Bouguereau preferred rural female subjects. Despite his apparent interest in realism, these peasant girls are clothed in pristine rags and have clean feet and porcelain complexions. Bouguereau's attention to meticulous detail makes his figures appear photo-realistic. By giving less definition to the landscape, the artist isolates the figures from the background and allows the viewer to focus on the relationship between the girls at play.

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