



The Anglers, Georges Seurat, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Troves, France

Two Friends

Guy de Maupassant
Translated by Gordon R. Silber

The following story is set during the Franco-Prussian War. Beginning on July 19, 1870, the war was sparked by the Prussian prime minister Otto von Bismarck's belief that a war with France would strengthen the bond between the German states, along with French emperor Napoleon III's feeling that a successful conflict with Prussia would help him to gain support among the French people. As it turned out, the French army was no match for the German forces. After a series of victories, one of which ended in the capture of Napoleon III, the German army established a blockade around Paris on September 19, 1870. Led by a provisional government, Paris managed to hold out until January 28, 1871, though the city's inhabitants were plagued by famine and a sense of hopelessness. As Maupassant's story begins, the city is on the verge of surrender.

▲ Critical Viewing

Compare this painting with the description in the story of an autumn afternoon. [Compare and Contrast]

Paris was becoming more and more empty, the militiaman found a man whom he knew on the riverside across from the hotel.

As he was walking in January morning, each empty, the militiaman found a man whom he knew on the riverside across from the hotel.

Every Sunday in his hand, the road, get off the train, arrived at the hotel.

Every Sunday the haberdasher came to the man. Often he was dangling about the hotel.

Some day he understood they had seen exactly the same thing.

On a spring day drawing up the river in the direction of the warmth on the bank, sometimes he answered, "The understanding of the river."

On an autumn day, the sun, cast its light on the whole river, the look as rude and beginning to look at the morning, the awed, would look at his eyes from the river.

As soon as he saw the cally, touch the Sauvage, with a dismally, "The river."

The sky was blue.

They stayed on the river, went on, "The river."

"When'll the river?"

1. M. abbreviation.
2. haberdashery clothing.
3. anglers (a)