

**What inspired Monet to make *The Japanese Footbridge*?**

Monet's gardens at Giverny, which he designed himself, became the main source of inspiration for his work. He carefully planned his gardens to be beautiful and different as the seasons changed. Something was always in bloom! When the grounds at Giverny became too much for Monet to manage on his own, he hired a team of six full-time gardeners to help him plant and maintain them.

Then Monet embarked on another ambitious project: a water garden, inspired in part by the country of Japan. He bought a piece of land across the road from his house and arranged to divert a small stream there, in order to construct a pond. To evoke the feeling of a Japanese garden, Monet lined the curving banks of the pond with iris and bamboo. Japanese maples and weeping willows surrounded the pond, and water lilies—creamy yellow, pink, and white—floated on its surface. Finally, Monet built an arched wooden footbridge based on the bridges in the Japanese prints he collected. But Monet's bridge was painted a brilliant blue-green instead of the red traditionally used in Japan.

*The Japanese Footbridge* is one of a series of twelve paintings that Monet made in 1899 of the bridge and waterlily pond. Here, the pond itself nearly fills the canvas: Monet has cropped out both sky and shore. The lilies form horizontal bands on the shimmering surface of the water, while the reflections of the reeds and willow branches are rendered with short, vertical brushstrokes. The bridge itself curves across the top of the canvas in an unbroken line—look for its reflection in the water below.