

When Palo Alto mom Wenda O'Reilly heard her kids complaining they were bored — at the Louvre, of all places — she knew she had to take action.

O'Reilly, who has a doctorate in education from Stanford and an unstinting affection for art of all kinds, believed her kids, too, would love art, if they could only appreciate what they were seeing. She bought a French version of the *Go Fish* card game that featured the work of Impressionist artists, and the kids were hooked. Trouble was, she says, they'd say things like, "Do you have the guy with the cut-off ear?" referring to Van Gogh's self-portrait.

So she decided to write a booklet to go along with her own version of her daughters' favorite paintings. At first, the project remained private, but after years of work Wanda and her husband, James, decided to make the game available to the public. They published it through Birdcage Books, a venture they run, appropriately enough, out of their home. The first

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venture, *The Renaissance Art Game*, won a seal of approval from the National Parenting Center and is now being sold at many major museums, including the national galleries in London and Washington, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and, yes, the Louvre.

The newest book and game, which focuses on the world of the Impressionists in Paris during the Industrial Revolution (*The Impressionist Art Game*, Birdcage Books, \$25) tells the artists' stories in simple prose that is never simplistic. A clever timeline places the period in historical context, and the author's attention to details and anecdotes makes art come alive to children of all ages.

The accompanying deck of museum-quality cards comes with instructions for games, with different versions for different ability levels. Players are challenged to collect all the artwork by a particular painter; for younger gamers, the names of artists are color-coded along the side of the card, for easier identification. With gorgeous, rich colors and enticing tidbits about the lives of the painters and the techniques they employed in their art, O'Reilly mixes art, education and entertainment in a way that will make even museum-phobes smile. **SJM** *Jenny Desai*

