

Start at home

Seasons in time



**“Tell Auntie I’m glad she enjoys my poor letters.
Don’t tell her that Paris is fearfully cold again,
snow all over everything, inches deep...
It’s fine to walk on, like velvet, until your feet get frozen.”**

– Hugh Ramsay, letter to his sisters, March 1901

About the artist

Hugh Ramsay seemed destined to do everything in life early. He made his first overseas journey as a baby, migrating from Scotland to Australia with his large, affectionate family. Enrolling at the National Gallery School at just 16, ‘Young Hughie’ quickly excelled. Upon graduating he moved to Paris, promptly gaining recognition for his lush and luminous tonal realist paintings. When the great Dame Nellie Melba took Hugh under her wing as his patron, the young artist believed his good fortune was sealed. But this was not to be. Tragically, Hugh took ill with tuberculosis and passed away in his late twenties, leaving behind an incredible artistic legacy.

About the work

With its crisp colours, symbolic detail and distinctive panel structure, *The four seasons* is very different from most of Hugh Ramsay’s paintings. Best known for his sensitive, naturalistic portraits, in this piece he was heavily inspired by the stylised graphic work of Art Nouveau illustrator Alphonse Mucha. The piece is comprised of four vertical columns, one for each season of the year. Each column is further split, showing both a feminine figure and a seasonal landscape. From left to right we can track the course of a whole year. Using panels to convey the passage of time is sometimes called *sequential art*.

Presented by



Materials you need

- a sheet of A3 paper
- a lead pencil
- a ruler
- an eraser
- a pencil sharpener
- a black fineliner pen
- coloured pencils

Take it further

Recreate your favourite seasonal drawing with watercolour paint. Add a decorative border featuring fruits and vegetables in season at that time of year.

Create another sequential drawing for a different measure of time: each panel showing an hour, day, week, month or year.

Hugh Ramsay was an excellent children's portraitist. Find his paintings *Jeanne* and *Miss Nellie Patterson* online, and make up a story about the two girls going on an adventure together.

Try it yourself Seasons in time

- 1 Use a lead pencil and ruler to divide your A3 page into four quarters.
- 3 Draw a rectangular frame in each quarter section. You should have four equal panels, like a page of comics.
- 4 Write the name of a season at the top of each panel: Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring.
- 5 Now think about summer. What kinds of clothes do you wear? What sorts of activities do you do? In the first panel, draw a picture of yourself in summer, wearing summer clothes and doing summer things. Add a background to show what the outside world looks and feels like in summer.
- 6 Repeat for the rest of the seasons, drawing yourself in different clothes and with a different background in every panel. As you draw, think about how each season looks and feels.
- 7 What details could you add to show that time is passing? You could draw yourself getting taller, or your hair getting longer in each panel.
- 8 Outline your drawings and colour them in, choosing different colours to suit each season.

The four seasons is currently on display in Gallery 3 and online: <https://bit.ly/39t5v54>

detail Hugh Ramsay, Australia, 1877 - 1906, *The four seasons*, c.1902, possibly Melbourne or London, oil on panel, 96.3 x 20.8 cm (a-d), 36.0 x 20.8 cm (e-h); Gift of Diana Ramsay AO through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2011, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

We would love to see your work! Ask your parent or carer to post a photo on Instagram and tag the Art Gallery of South Australia. Or you can email your photo to us at public.programs@artgallery.sa.gov.au

@agsa.adelaide #agsastart