Camille Pissarro was a French landscape artist best known for his influence on Impressionist and Postimpressionist painting.

**Synopsis**
Camille Pissarro was born on July 10, 1830, on the island of St. Thomas. Relocating to Paris as a young man, Pissarro began experimenting with art, eventually helping to shape the Impressionist movement with friends including Claude Monet and Edgar Degas. Pissarro was also active in Postimpressionist circles, continuing to paint until his death in Paris on November 13, 1903.

**Early Life**
Jacob-Abraham-Camille Pissarro was born on July 10, 1830, on St. Thomas, in the Danish West Indies. Pissarro’s father was a French citizen of Portuguese Jewish descent who traveled to St. Thomas to help settle the estate of his late uncle and wound up marrying his uncle’s widow, Rachel Pomié Petit. The marriage was controversial and not immediately recognized by the small Jewish community where they lived. As a result, the Pissarro children grew up as outsiders.

At the age of 12, Pissarro was sent by his parents to a boarding school in France. There, he developed an early appreciation of the French art masters. After completing his education, Pissarro returned to St. Thomas, and although he initially became involved in his family's mercantile business there, he never stopped drawing and painting in his spare time.

**Career**
In 1849 Pissarro made the acquaintance of Danish artist Fritz Melbye, who encouraged him in his artistic endeavors. In 1852 Pissarro and Melbye left St. Thomas for Venezuela, where they lived and worked for the next few years. In 1855 Pissarro then returned to Paris, studying at the École des Beaux-Arts and Académie Suisse and working closely with painters Camille Corot and Gustave Courbet, honing his skills and experimenting with new approaches to art. Pissarro eventually fell in with a group of young artists, including Claude Monet and Paul Cézanne, who shared his interests and questions. The work of these artists was not accepted by the French artistic establishment, which excluded nontraditional painting from the official Salon exhibitions.

Though Pissarro kept a studio in Paris, he spent much of his time in its outskirts. Like many of his contemporaries, he preferred to work in the open air rather than the studio, painting scenes of village life and the natural world. During this period, he also became involved with his mother’s maid, Julie Vellay, with whom he would have eight children and eventually marry in 1871. However, their budding family life was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, which forced them to flee to London. Returning to his home in France at the end of the conflict, Pissarro discovered that the majority of his existing body of work had been destroyed.

But Pissarro rebounded quickly from this setback. He soon reconnected with his artist friends, including Cézanne, Monet, Edouard Manet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Edgar Degas. In 1873, Pissarro established a collective of 15 artists with the goal of offering an alternative to the Salon. The following year, the group held their first exhibition. The unconventional content and style represented in the show shocked critics and helped to define Impressionism as an artistic movement. For his part, Pissarro exhibited five paintings in the show, including *Hoar Frost* and *The Old Road to Ennery*. They would hold several more exhibitions over the coming years, though the group slowly began to drift apart.

**Later Life**
By the 1880s, Pissarro moved into a Postimpressionist period, returning to some of his earlier themes and exploring new techniques such as pointillism. He also forged new friendships with artists including Georges Seurat and Paul Signac, and was an early admirer of Vincent van Gogh. While in keeping with his lifelong interest in innovation, Pissarro’s turning away from Impressionism contributed to the general decline of the movement, which he had influenced greatly.

In his later years, Pissarro suffered from a recurring eye infection that prevented him from working outdoors during much of the year. As a result of this disability, he often painted while looking out the window of a hotel room. Pissarro died in Paris on November 13, 1903, and is buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery.