

European Arts and Artists: Learn about European life and history through the eyes of its most celebrated artists. Trace changes in attitudes toward art and life through works from the Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque ages, up to modern times.

ARTWORK 1: Segna di Buonaventura, 1298–1326/31, Madonna and Child, 1310 (G343)

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. In the early 1300s, Italian artists were commissioned by the Catholic Church and other wealthy Christian people to create paintings to put in churches. The people worshiping at the church would be able to see the stories of the Bible in a lifelike painting.
2. A popular subject of Italian paintings was the Virgin Mary, known as the Madonna or My Lady, holding her son, the baby Jesus. The Madonna and Child are painted as divine spiritual figures, with the use of real gold in the halos encircling their heads. This is painted in tempera, a quick-drying egg-based paint.
3. Buonaventura, a member of the Sienese School, painted in the Byzantine style, with elongated expressionless faces and stylized figures. As the fourteenth century progressed, Italian artists began to look back to the past art of ancient Greece and Rome for artistic inspiration, and they began to paint or sculpt in a more realistic style. This was the start of the period known as the Renaissance. Look around at other paintings in this gallery to see the change that occurred in style (look at Fra Angelico's paintings or the Madonna and Child by Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano).

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. What do you first notice in this painting?
2. How would you describe the relationship between the woman and the baby? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What has the artist done to make the woman and baby seem important?
4. What do you see that is realistic in this painting? What is not realistic?
5. Compare this with the Madonna and Child by Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano (or another Madonna and Child). What are similarities? What are the differences?
6. Use gallery 343. For a movement activity, ask students to stand in front of the painting they like the best (for younger students, limit to a selection of paintings on one wall). If they can't decide, then they can stand in the middle. Ask volunteers to share their reasons, and if someone else is convinced by what they say, they can change their mind and move into a new group.

Research Resources:

From the Met Museum: [Madonna and Child, ca. 1320](#)

From the National Gallery: [Making Green: Tempera versus Oil | National Gallery, London](#)

From Khan Academy: [Siena in the Late Gothic, an introduction](#)

ARTWORK 2: Gerrit (Gerard) van Honthorst, *The Denial of St. Peter*, 1623

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. The scene comes from a Christian story. St. Peter was a follower (disciple) of Jesus Christ. During the Last Supper, all the disciples and Christ gathered together to eat. Christ told Peter that Peter would deny knowing Christ three times before the rooster crowed that next morning. Then that night, Christ was betrayed and arrested by soldiers for his religious beliefs. The soldiers were also looking for the followers of Christ. This is the scene of Peter's first denial, as he is accused by a young woman of knowing Christ. He denies that he knows Jesus Christ.
2. Gerrit van Honthorst was a Dutch painter from the city of Utrecht. He painted in a Baroque style, showing lots of drama with the strong contrasts of light and the emotion on the faces of the people. He was famous for painting nighttime scenes like this one.
3. Van Honthorst was influenced by an Italian artist named Caravaggio, who dramatically painted many Biblical scenes with realistic people, bringing the scenes to life. At the time Caravaggio was painting, the Catholic Church was recovering from the Protestant reformation, when many people had left the Catholic Church to form a new Christian religion. Realistic art like this was popular and helped draw people back to the Catholic Church. Paintings like this could be found in Catholic churches of the time or might also have been commissioned by Christians to display in their homes.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Use VTS: What's going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? (WDYSTYST?) What more can we find?
2. 2nd to 4th grade students: Set up a tableau activity. As for three volunteers to be the actors in the painting, and they can take those poses. The other students can act as "directors," adjusting the poses as necessary to closely match the painting. Ask each of the three students how they feel in that pose. Then ask the other students if they have any different perspectives or opinions from what the actors said. (For students too old for the tableau, ask them to imagine how it would feel to have someone grab hold of them as we see in the painting.)
3. Peter is denying knowing his friend so he can avoid getting into trouble, too. How might you have handled such a situation?
4. How does Van Honthorst use contrasts of light to focus our attention? What do you first notice in the scene?

Research Resources:

From The Getty Museum: [Gerrit van Honthorst](#)

Wikipedia: [Caravaggio, Crucifixion of Saint Peter](#)

Wikipedia: [The Denial of St. Peter](#)

Characteristics of Baroque art, [Mia Guide website](#)

ARTWORK 3: Attributed to José Montes de Oca, Spain, Saint Benedict of Palermo, 1734

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. Saint Benedict is a Catholic saint who was born in Sicily (part of today's nation of Italy). He was born to parents who were freed slaves said to have come from Ethiopia. St. Benedict was admired for his devotion to his faith as well as being a good mentor and leader. He is the first Black Catholic saint of African origin.
2. José Montes de Oca was a sculptor who worked in Seville, a city in Spain. He carved in the Baroque style, depicting St. Benedict realistically and with a dramatic open-armed gesture. This sculpture is carved from wood and then painted. While Benedict holds a Bible in one hand, it is thought he once held a quill pen in his other hand.
3. José Montes de Oca added very lifelike details in Benedict's face, where we see glass eyes and a slightly open mouth with bone teeth. It is as if St. Benedict is talking to us.
4. This sculpture would have been placed in a Catholic church in Seville. The church would be filled with other sculptures of Christian figures. Saints are thought to help the faithful have their prayers heard by God.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. What makes this sculpture of St. Benedict seem lifelike (realistic)? What seems not lifelike (not realistic) about this sculpture?
2. How would you describe St. Benedict's personality or mood? (WDYSTMYST?)
3. A saint is someone who devoted their life to their faith and helping others. Who are people in our community today who help others?
4. (Older students) If you were sculpting a religious or spiritual figure, would you want your sculpture to be realistic or not realistic (abstract)? Why?

Research Resources:

From the Matthiesen Gallery: [SAINT BENITO OF PALERMO \(JOSE MONTES DE OCA\)](#)

From London Art Week, the Nicolás Cortés Gallery: [José Montes de Oca](#)

From Universidad de Almería: [José Montes de Oca y León, sculptor \(1676–1754\)](#)

Franciscan Media: [Saint Benedict the African](#)

ARTWORK 4: France, Grand Salon from the Hôtel de la Bouëxière, 1735

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. Jean Gaillard de la Bouëxière built the Grand Salon in his Paris mansion, around 1735, to be his party room. Jean wanted to show that he could afford the best builders and decorators to create a room for himself and his guests to play games and listen to music. This room was moved from France to Mia, and it took workers a whole year to put it back together here.
2. All around the room are gilded (gold painted) carvings that show leisure pastimes in France for the richest people, so we see symbols for hunting, music and theater, and travel on the walls.
3. The room is set up for us to see how the light and sound shifts from day to night in this space. We see a card table in the center, as card games were popular at parties back then. The light replicates what candlelight would look like in the room, as the sun went down. There was no electricity at that time, so all the light came from candles and fire. Crystals in the chandeliers and mirrors in the room helped reflect this candlelight. The more candles you had in the room, the more impressed your guests would be with your wealth.
4. Jean Gaillard de la Bouëxière would also have had many servants in his house to keep the rooms cleaned and to serve his guests. The big red curtains on the windows were to help block cold drafts coming into the room. In the summer, when it was warmer, they used very light curtains.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Let's spend a moment in the room just listening. What are some sounds that you hear?
2. See how the light changes in the room as it gets darker/lighter. Where do you see surfaces or things that reflect light in the room?
3. This salon was used by Jean Gaillard de la Bouëxière to be his party room, where all his friends and family could gather. What kind of things would you want in a party room?
4. Imagine this room is a time machine and you go back in the past to the 1700s. What would you want to ask people at that time about their lives?
5. (Modified Step In/Step Out) Imagine you are the owner of this house and room. How does it make you feel, being in a room like this? Now imagine you are one of the servants who has to clean this room or serve the guests. Now how do you feel being in this room? How might your perspective change?

Research Resources:

Mia: [ArtStories](#)

Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, video: [Salon Doré: What is an 18th century Salon?](#)

From the Met Museum: [Grand Salon from the Hôtel de Tessé, Paris](#)

ARTWORK 5: Pierre Bonnard, Dining Room in the Country, 1913

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. Pierre Bonnard was a French artist. He considered himself "the last of the Impressionists" with his painting style because he used the expressive qualities of bright colors and loose brushstrokes. However, he painted entirely from memory, and like other painters known as Symbolists, he wanted his paintings to reflect his own individual response to his memories.
2. The dining room is in Bonnard's country house outside of Paris. Marthe de Mélny (or Boursin), the artist's wife, leans on the windowsill, looking in. It is a beautiful day in the countryside.
3. If you look closely, you will see two cats in the dining room. Outside in the garden, you can make out the figure of a young girl who seems to be picking flowers.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Imagine you are holding a paintbrush. Find a section of the painting that you like, and paint it with your paintbrush. How does it feel to paint like Bonnard?
2. How would you describe the colors in this painting?
3. What might be some sounds you would hear in this room? What kind of smells might you notice?
4. What season of the year is it? Why? What is the weather report you would give for this day?
5. Imagine this scene is the middle of a story. What do you think happened before this scene? What might happen after?
6. Bonnard said he painted scenes from his memories. Thumbs up if you think this was a good memory for him and thumbs down if you think this was a bad memory. What did you see that made you choose a good/bad memory?

Research Resources:

From MyModernMet: [Meet Les Nabis, the "Prophets of Modern Art" Who Transformed Turn-Of-The-Century Painting](#)

From Wikipedia: [Les Nabis](#)

From Parkstone International: [Pierre Bonnard – The colour of history](#)

From the Guardian: [New evidence rescues tarnished reputation of Pierre Bonnard's 'sickly' wife](#)

ARTWORK 6: Alexandra Exter, Italian Town by the Sea, 1917

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. Alexandra Exter was a Russian painter and designer who traveled through Europe and worked in France for much of her career. When she went to art school in Kiev in the early 1900s, it still was unusual for a woman to have a career as an artist. In times before, women often were not allowed to go to art schools because of their gender. Men controlled the admission to the schools. Exter painted and designed sets and costumes for theaters, and she later taught in an art school.
2. Her painting style was a blend of Cubism and Italian Futurism (Cubo-Futurism). Cubist painters broke down the subject matter into geometric shapes, seen from all different angles, while Futurists wanted to show things that were modern, powerful, and in motion.
3. This landscape shows an Italian town built on a cliffside by the sea. Bright colors and the circular motion draw in the viewer and activate the landscape. In the far left corner, you can see an abstracted sailboat.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. What is going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can you find?
2. What kind of shapes do you see in the painting? (For younger students, ask them to use their hands to make the shape they see.)
3. How do we know this is a town? WDYSTMYST? How do we know it is by the sea? WDYSTMYST?
4. Let's imagine that we are hearing music coming from this painting. What might be some instruments you would hear if the painting could make sounds or music? (Or what might the music sound like if we could hear this painting?)
5. (For older students) As a woman artist, Exter faced a lot of challenges to have a successful career. Why do you think women might not have been encouraged to gain an education or to work outside the home at that time? Do women face any such challenges today?

Research Resources:

National Museum of Women in the Arts: [Alexandra Exter](#)

[Alexandra Exter: From Russia to Paris with Art](#)

Thyssen Bornemisza Museum Nacional: [Alexandra Exter](#)

Check out the [Art Story](#) to learn more about Cubism and Futurism in Russian art

ARTWORK 7: Egon Schiele, Portrait of Paris von Gütersloh, 1918

Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)

1. Egon Schiele was an Austrian artist who had a brief but brilliant career. Schiele lived and worked in Europe during the troubled times of World War I. His style of painting is known as Expressionism, where he used the line, color, and composition to create an emotional impact.
2. This painting is of Paris von Gütersloh. Von Gütersloh was also an artist and writer, and he was a friend of Egon Schiele's. (For middle to high school students: This painting is unfinished as Schiele died in 1918 from the Spanish flu pandemic, when he was only 28 years old.)
3. The energy of the painting comes from the expression and body language of Paris von Gütersloh, painted with dynamic outlines and choppy brushstrokes.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. Take a moment to look at the painting, first far away, then close up. What changes as you move closer?
2. If you were texting a friend about this painting, how would you describe it?
3. (For younger students) Take the pose of Paris. How does it feel to be in that pose?
4. (For older students) To be a good portraitist (or painter of portraits), you need to capture the personality of the person being painted. What personality or mood has Schiele captured in this portrait of his friend Paris? WDYSTMYST?
5. What might be a question you would want to ask Paris or Egon?
6. (For high school students) Egon Schiele's art could be very raw and emotional, and he offended some of the art world in his time--critics and other artists--with his works. What artists or musicians today challenge authority or society with their work or music? Why might it be important to challenge the ways in which things have always been done?

Research Resources:

The Art Story: [Egon Schiele](#)

Royal Academy of Art: [Egon Schiele in 60 seconds](#)

From the Neue Galerie: [ALBERT PARIS VON GÜTERSLOH](#)

Khan Academy: [Schiele, Hermits](#) and [Nazi looting: Egon Schiele's Portrait of Wally](#)

Leopold Museum: [EGON SCHIELE](#)

ARTWORK 8: Salvador Dali, Portrait of Juan de Pareja, the Assistant to Velázquez, 1960**Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)**

1. Salvador Dali was a Spanish artist who was known as a Surrealist. Surrealism gives us the sense of the irrational or dream-like. Surrealist artists try to capture where our minds go when we are asleep or not conscious. Dali worked in many different media, and had a long and successful career.
2. In this painting, Dali is showing his respect for another great Spanish artist, Diego Velázquez, by referencing two paintings Velázquez did in the 1600s, Portrait of Juan de Pareja and The Maids of Honor (Las Meninas). You can see the outline of Juan de Pareja's head (see his nose formed by the easel's edge in the middle of the painting), and then you can see characters from Las Meninas scattered throughout this painting.
3. The painting has a very monochromatic color palette of grays and browns, so we focus more on the forms and shapes within it. Dali also shows us how skilled he is with his brushwork, which changes from very loose in the background to very controlled, such as when he paints the stitches sewing parts of the canvas together.

Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)

1. VTS: What's going on in the picture? WDYSTMYST? What more can we find?
2. What is the first thing you notice when you look at this painting? (Explore all the hidden visual references to Velazquez's paintings.)
3. What makes this painting seem dream-like?
4. (Older students) Why might Dali have chosen such colors like the grays and browns?
5. Dali was inspired by his respect for Diego Velázquez to create this painting. From what we've seen and learned on this tour, what have been other inspirations for artists to create their works?

Research Resources:

The Art Story: [Salvador Dali](#)

Works by Diego Velázquez: [Juan de Pareja](#) (1606–1670) and [Las Meninas](#)

The Art Story: [Surrealism](#)