A+ Academics
Art Smart Bulletin
2025-2027

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Note to Teachers and Parents

The purpose of the Art Bulletin is to introduce students to the rich and varied world of painting. Students will not only become familiar with specific paintings, they will also gain an understanding of the elements that make up a great painting, as well as an appreciation for how artists use those elements to convey their ideas. The Art Bulletin also strives to place these artists and paintings within a broader historical context, allowing students to see how the sweep of history affected the art that was being produced, and, inversely, how the art that was produced shapes our views of these historical periods.

Art is important. The history of art is the history of humanity. Art demonstrates our species' ever-evolving attempts to preserve some aspect of the present moment, to freeze the unceasing flow of time and assert our own existence. This is not merely the history of painting techniques and mediums, or a tedious list of art movements and painters. Art history is the history of seeing. It is a chronicle of the way we as humans have seen and experienced the world, how we viewed ourselves, and what we thought of life on Earth.

Art has been an essential aspect of our lives since before the dawn of civilization. We were painting pictures onto the walls of caves thousands of years before we developed written systems or mathematics. The desire to create is inherent in all of us and should be nurtured. Creativity, expression, and aesthetic appreciation are essential in a child's intellectual development. Research has shown that the study of fine arts helps students develop analytical skills that they apply to studies in other areas of the curriculum.

Although the bulletin is limited to a select number of paintings, these works have been chosen with broader educational goals in mind. They are a sampling of Western paintings from the Renaissance up to our present moment, covering a large variety of subjects, styles, and mediums. Some are from the National Gallery in

Washington D.C., but many of these works can be found in museums across Texas. We hope that students will be able to see some of these paintings in person.

The Art Elements and Art History sections are not meant to be studied in isolation, but to be closely integrated with students' study of the individual paintings and biographical notes about the artists. Paintings are arranged and discussed chronologically, illustrating how art has evolved through the centuries. Discussions of individual paintings reinforce this chronological development, so that students learn art history and the elements of painting by example and comparison.

The Art Contest is an enjoyable, rewarding way for students to learn about art. We hope that they, and you, have a lot of fun preparing for it. Participation in this decades-old contest is an experience that can last a lifetime.

Introduction for Students

This booklet is not a textbook that you study by itself. It's a reference book for you to use to help study the paintings in the Art Contest, just as you might use an atlas to help you study geography or a dictionary to help you study spelling or reading.

Start preparing for the Art Contest by spending some time with the paintings, before you even turn another page in this booklet. It's important to remember that we are not seeing actual paintings. We'll be looking at reproductions, or copies, of these 30 paintings as paper prints, but we can learn a lot from good copies. Don't worry at first about who painted these pictures, or what their titles are. Think about which ones you like best, which ones have the best colors or the strangest shapes. Talk about the paintings with classmates, teachers, and family. Then keep them close at hand as you read this booklet!

Use the Official List to make sure you learn the correct spelling of each title and artist's name. Other sources may show names and titles in different ways that will be counted incorrect in the contest. In the Glossary of Terms, you'll find brief definitions of terms that we discuss in more detail later in the booklet.

In the Art Elements section, you'll read about terms used to describe art. You already know most of these words, but you'll see some new definitions that are specifically for art. The Art History pages tell a little about what ideas artists were interested in when they painted these works and what was going on in the world at the time. There are many ways to divide art history into periods of time. We divide it here into four general art periods: Renaissance, Baroque, Modern, and Contemporary. During each of these periods, artists worked in a number of different styles. We will not try to describe all those styles, but just a few that are represented in the thirty paintings in this booklet.

Paintings are arranged from oldest to newest, so you can see how painting has changed through the centuries. Each one-page discussion of a painting suggests

some of the things to look for as you study that work and tells you a little about the artist. If you see a term that you don't understand, look it up in the Glossary of Terms. Then reread the paragraph that explains that term in the Art Elements or Art History pages.

After the discussions, you'll find sample questions and a few suggestions for contest preparation. Enjoy these paintings. What you learn about them, and about art, will stay with you long after UIL contest day is over.

Official List

Bellini	*Christ Blessing*
Boudin	*Washerwomen on the Beach of Etretat*
Braque	*Fishing Boats (Le Perrey)*
Caillebotte	*On the Pont de l'Europe*
Cassatt	*Girl Arranging Her Hair*
Cézanne	*Banks of the Seine at Médan*
Christus	*The Nativity*
Close	*Jasper*
Dürer	*The Rhinoceros*
Dufy	*Golfe Juan*
Ercole	*Ginevra Bentivoglio*
Goya	*Still Life with Golden Bream*
Kiefer	*Zim Zum*
Leonardo	*Ginevra de' Benci [obverse]*
Magritte	*La condition humaine*
Modigliani	*Girl with Blue Eyes*
Motley Jr	*Portrait of My Grandmother*
Murillo	*Saint Rufina*
Neel	*Hartley*
Pollock	*Cathedral*
Rembrandt	*Self-Portrait*
Rothko	*Untitled*
Rubens	*Head of a Young Man*
Sorolla	*The Blind Man of Toledo*
Tiepolo	*the Storyteller*
Thiebaud	*Cakes*
van Gogh	*La Mousmé*
Wilson	*Tivoli: The Temple of the Sybil and the Campagna*
Wood	*Parson Weems' Fable*
Wyeth	*That Gentleman*

Pronunciation Guide

Bellini	bell-LEE-nee
Boudin	boo-*DAN*
Braque	brahk
Caillebotte	ky-BOT
Cassatt	kuh-SAT
Cézanne	say-ZAHN
Christus	KRIS-tus
Close	klohs
Dürer	DUR-er
Dufy	doo-FEE
Ercole	AIR-ko-lay
Goya	GOY-uh
Kiefer	KEE-fur
Leonardo	lay-oh-NAR-doh
Magritte	muh-GREET
Modigliani	moh-deel-YAH-nee
Motley Jr	MOT-lee JOO-nyer
Murillo	moo-REE-yo
Neel	neel
Pollock	PAH-luk
Rembrandt	REM-brant
Rothko	ROTH-koh
Rubens	ROO-binz
Sorolla	soh-ROY-uh
Tiepolo	tee-EP-oh-loh
Thiebaud	TEE-boh
van Gogh	van GOKH
Wilson	WIL-sun
Wood	wood
Wyeth	WY-eth

Glossary of Terms

Abstract - a style of art that emerged during the **Contemporary** period of art history. Abstract artists challenged artistic convention because, unlike their predecessors—who aimed to depict or represent reality—abstract artists made the subject of their composition the art elements themselves—shapes, colors, and forms—and used them to convey emotions, sensations, and ideas. One of the fundamental principles of abstract art is the emphasis on the artist's creativity, imagination, and personal vision. Abstract art encourages the viewer to explore and engage with the artwork on a deeper level, as the meaning and interpretation can vary from person to person.

Abstract Expressionism - Abstract Expressionism is a style of art that became popular in the mid-20th century. Abstract Expressionists use colors, shapes, and lines to express their feelings and emotions, rather than trying to make realistic pictures of people or objects. These artists often use bold brushstrokes, splatters, and drips of paint to create their masterpieces. The paintings are often very large, allowing for an immersive viewing experience.

Acrylic Paint - a type of fast-drying paint made of pigment suspended in acrylic polymer emulsion. It became popular with artists in the mid-20th century because it dries quickly, can be used on many different surfaces, and doesn't yellow over time like oil paint.

Art Elements - the artistic ingredients a painter uses to create a painting.

Background - the part of a painting that seems farthest away from the viewer. The background usually appears behind the main subject or focal point. The background

often contrasts with the foreground to create a sense of three-dimensional space and depth.

Baroque - a period of art history occurring from 1600 to 1800. Important historical events of the period include English colonization, the Seven Years War, Galileo and Newton's scientific discoveries, Locke's political science essays, and Protestantism's rise. Baroque paintings are usually formal, showcase tiny details of scenery and costume, have a great sense of energy and movement, and often include sharp contrasts between light and dark areas of the paintings.

Brushwork - the way an artist uses their paintbrush to apply paint onto a canvas or surface in order to create different textures, strokes, and patterns. Brushwork can be loose and free, or precise and detailed, depending on the artist's intention or style.

Canvas - (1) a painting; (2) treated fabric, stretched over a frame, to which paint is applied.

Chiaroscuro - the dramatic use of strong contrasts between light and dark areas in a painting. The term comes from Italian words "chiaro" (light) and "scuro" (dark). This technique creates a sense of volume and three-dimensionality. It was developed during the Renaissance and became a defining characteristic of Baroque painting.

Complementary Colors - pairs of colors that are located at opposite ends of the color wheel, making them the most different from each other. Examples of complementary colors include red and green, orange and blue, as well as yellow and purple.

Composition - the way individual art elements—like light, color, lines, and shapes—work with each other to form a complete painting. For example, light and shade make us see a three-dimensional image instead of just two dimensions. Color helps set the mood, and suggests relationships between the parts of a painting. Lines and shapes organize space and create structure. You can remember that "com" means "with" or "together", so that "com-position" refers to the choice made by the artist when deciding how to position, arrange, or design the different parts of painting in relation to each other.

Contemporary - a period of art history from the 1950s to the present day. Important historical events include the invention of the television, the advent of the internet, the landing on the moon, the Civil Rights Movement, and the wars fought in Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East. The period saw many artists moving from Europe to the United States, with New York City becoming a particularly popular destination. As the world became more confusing than ever, artists largely abandoned clear painting movements, their works becoming increasingly individual.

Contrast - a comparison that draws attention to the differences between things. Artists use many different elements to create contrast, for example: color (warm and cool, or bright and dull), light (light areas of canvas and dark areas), lines (straight and curved, vertical and diagonal), textures (hard and soft, rough and smooth), sometimes even the subjects of the painting (an old man and a baby).

Cool Colors - colors such as blue, green, lavender, purple, and others, that we associate with cool or cold temperatures, like the cool green of a shaded forest, or the icy blue of a mountain lake. (Compare to **Warm** and **Neutral** Colors.)

Cubism - a style of painting developed in France in the **Modern** period of art history. Artists took familiar objects from everyday life, broke them up into geometric figures like cubes, spheres, and cones, then put them back together. This process of fragmenting and reassembling allowed the cubists to include multiple **points of view** in a single composition by showing different sides or angles of the subject, forcing viewers to see familiar objects in unfamiliar ways.

Dutch Golden Age - the segment of the **Baroque** period of art history during which the Netherlands, a country in northern Europe, experienced a period of economic prosperity and artistic achievement. During this time, Dutch artists tended to create **portraits**, **landscapes**, **still lifes**, and **genre paintings**.

Fauvism - an art movement from the early 20th century where artists used bold, bright colors and simplified forms rather than trying to create realistic depictions. The name comes from "les fauves" (wild beasts), a term critics used to describe the shocking, intense colors these painters employed.

Focal Point - the specific area or element within an artwork that commands the viewer's attention and becomes the primary point of interest. It is the part of the **composition** that stands out the most.

Foreground - the part of a painting that seems closest to the viewer. Think of the foreground like the front of a stage. It tends to be the area that you first notice and that captures your attention. Artists use this tendency of ours to their advantage: by placing the main subject or focal point in the foreground, they guide the movement of the viewer's eyes toward it.

Form - the three-dimensional aspect of an object or artwork. In contrast to **shape**, which is two dimensional, form is used to describe objects that have volume, depth, and a sense of solidity. Examples of forms are spheres, cubes, cones, prisms and other more complex shapes that might curve or bend in unusual ways. Understanding form helps artists bring their artwork to life and make it look more realistic. By paying attention to form, they can create drawings that appear to have a physical presence and occupy space in a convincing way.

Genre Painting - a painting of ordinary people engaged in common, everyday activities.

Harlem Renaissance - an artistic and intellectual movement that began after World War I and lasted until the 1930s. The movement celebrated African American culture, art, sculpture, literature, music, dance, theatre, fashion, as well as social and political activism. It took place all around the North and Midwest United States, but was concentrated in Harlem, New York. It was a pivotal time for African American artists and writers to gain recognition, express their unique perspectives, and instill pride, spirit, and identity into the community and consciousness.

Impressionism - a style of painting developed in France in the **Modern** period of art history, by artists who wanted to create impressions of light and color that, when seen as a whole, would form pictures in viewers' minds. Impressionist artists placed different colors side-by-side very close together on the canvas, letting viewers' eyes blend the colors together. For example, blue and yellow from a distance blend into green. Impressionists used short, broad brushstrokes that created a rough **texture** on the surface of the canvas. Impressionist art contains few drawn **lines**, shadows, or dark colors.

Landscape - (1) a painting of an outdoor view that features large areas of natural scenery; (2) the outdoor view itself.

Light - (1) the source of light in a painting, like the sun or a lamp; (2) the lightness or darkness of different areas of a painting.

Lines - (1) lines drawn by an artist to mark the edges of something, or outline it, like the lines that form the outer edges of a building; (2) lines formed where objects touch or overlap, so that different colors or shapes come together, like the line our eyes see at the horizon where the earth and sky meet.

Middleground - the part of a painting that appears between the foreground and background. The middle ground helps create a smooth transition from the closest objects to the most distant ones. Artists often place supporting elements in the middle ground to create depth and connect different parts of the composition.

Medium - the material or tools used by an artist to create an artwork. Examples of mediums in painting include oil, ink, and tempera.

Modern - a period of art history from 1800 to 1950. Important historical events include the rise of democracy, the diminishing power of monarchies, the industrial revolution, which brought about major advancements in technology and changed the way people lived and worked, followed by two devastating world wars and the Great Depression, which shook the global economy. Also notable is the invention of the camera, which rendered the faithful representation of reality less necessary. As artists began to explore new styles and techniques, movements such as Impressionism, Cubism, and Surrealism took place. While artists of each school or

movement had their own approaches, they collectively embraced a departure from realism.

Mood - the feelings or emotions an artist wants viewers to experience when we look at a painting.

Neutral - colors such as black, white, and beige, which have neither a warm nor a cool effect in a painting. They are often considered to be calm, subtle, and not overly eye-catching, making them useful in creating a sense of balance and harmony. They can tone down the visual intensity of a painting or create contrast against brighter colors, making them stand out more prominently. By surrounding a bright or vibrant color with neutrals, artists can draw attention to that specific area, making it a focal point in the composition. Neutral colors are not included on the color wheel, and are instead created by mixing two **complementary** colors or by mixing colors with gray, white, or black.

Oil paint - a type of paint made by mixing pigments with linseed oil. Oil paint differs from other types of paint because it takes a long time to dry. This slow drying time allows artists to work on their paintings for a longer period and make changes if needed. Oil paint became popular during the **Renaissance** period, and is still used today.

Palette - (1) a flat surface—usually a piece of plastic or wood—on which artists mix their paints; (2) the range of colors used by an artist in a particular piece, including specific hues, tones, and shades that appear in a painting.

Patron - a person who financially supports and commissions an artist's work.

Perspective – the illusion of depth or distance. Artists use many different elements and techniques to make pictures on a flat surface seem to have space, distance, and three dimensionality. For example, objects painted in **cool colors** seem farther away than objects painted in **warm colors**. **Lines** that narrow from **foreground** to **background** make objects like roads and rivers seem to stretch into the distance. Using soft edges instead of sharply drawn lines, or leaving out details in background objects, makes the objects seem farther away. Painting objects smaller at the top of a painting makes them seem farther away than objects painted larger near the bottom.

Plein Air – a French term meaning "in the open air," describing the practice of painting outdoors to capture natural light and atmosphere directly. This approach became popular in the 19th century when portable paint tubes and field easels made outdoor painting more practical.

Point of view – the position or angle from which the viewer sees objects in a painting. Looking at the objects on a table while sitting in a nearby chair is one point of view. Looking at those same objects while standing across the room is another point of view.

Portrait – a representation of a person that focuses on their face and often includes their upper body. When painting a portrait, an artist attempts to capture the unique physical characteristics that define a person and make that person recognizable. In a portrait painting, the subject usually is singularly featured, formally posed and looking outward from the painting. Paintings that feature more than one person are called group portraits.

Post-Impressionism - an art movement that followed Impressionism in the late 19th century. Post-Impressionists built upon Impressionist ideas while developing more structured approaches, often using bolder colors, more distinct forms, and greater symbolic content. Post-Impressionist artists are a diverse group who, while having distinct individual styles, all built upon and expanded Impressionist techniques in their own directions. Unlike more unified movements with shared styles or principles, Post-Impressionism represents a period of artistic exploration where painters developed highly personal approaches while sharing a common starting point in Impressionism.

Primary Colors - colors that cannot be created by mixing other colors together. They are red, yellow, and blue.

Realism - the style of representing subjects with extreme accuracy and detail, with the intention of making them resemble real life as much as possible.

Regionalism - a style of art that emerged in the United States during the 1930s. Artists of this genre depicted rural places, farms, small towns, and everyday activities that were important to those areas, as well as painted scenes from American history. Unlike other artists of the Contemporary period who engaged in abstract art, the regionalist painters focused on realistic and recognizable scenes. They wanted to convey a sense of authenticity, nostalgia, and pride in American rural life. Their works often celebrated the resilience and strength of rural Americans, offering a sense of hope and optimism during the time of economic hardship and social change that was the Great Depression.

Religious and Spiritual Painting - a type of painting that depicts subjects related to people's faith, belief systems, and spirituality. These paintings often portray religious figures, scenes from sacred texts, or symbols associated with various religions.

Renaissance - a period of art history, approximately 1400-1600. The word "Renaissance" means "rebirth" in French, and during this period, there was a renewed interest in the ideas and achievements of ancient Greece and Rome. It was an age of exploration and discovery in science, philosophy, and art. Techniques of showing perspective and oil-based paints were developed. In addition, artists studied human anatomy and physiology to make the subjects of their paintings look more realistic. The Catholic Church continued to be an important patron of the arts, but the rise of a wealthy middle class led to new interest in nonreligious paintings. Renaissance art is remarkable for its bright, pure colors, its use of **symbols**, and its formal approach to subject matter and **composition**.

Secondary Colors - colors that can be created by combining **primary colors**. They are green, purple, and orange.

Sfumato - a painting technique developed during the Renaissance where colors and tones are blended in such a subtle manner that they appear to smoke together without harsh lines. The term means “smoked out” in Italian.

Shape - (1) the outline or boundary of an object; (2) the two-dimensional area created when a line connects to enclose a space. Shapes can be simple—like circles, squares, or triangles—or they can be more complicated and have lots of curves or angles.

Still Life - a painting of objects that do not move. Most still lifes are close-up views of carefully arranged groups of objects, often on a tabletop.

Symbol – something that stands for or suggests an idea. For example, a halo or the color blue might suggest holiness, flags might suggest patriotism, a pocket watch might suggest the passage of time.

Surrealism – an artistic movement that began in the 1920s, focusing on expressing the unconscious mind through dreamlike, irrational scenes and symbolic images. Surrealist paintings often combine realistic painting techniques with impossible or strange subject matter.

Tempera – a type of paint made by mixing colored powders with egg yolk or a similar substance to create smooth and creamy paint that can be applied to a surface like wood. Because tempera dries so quickly, artists can layer different colors to create artworks full of depth and detail. But the short drying time also means artists have to work quickly and are not able to make changes as they paint—a disadvantage when compared to oil paint, which dries slower. Tempera has been used since before the Renaissance.

Texture – the way an object feels on its surface when you touch it. Textures may be hard or soft, rough or smooth. Paintings themselves have smooth or rough textures, depending on how the artist applies the paint.

Warm Colors – colors such as red, yellow, orange, and others, that we associate with warm temperatures, like the orange glow of a sunset or the bright yellow flames of a fire. (See **Cool** and **Neutral** Colors.)

Woodcut Print – a type of print made by carving an image into a block of wood. The artist cuts away the areas they want to remain white on the paper, leaving raised areas that will hold ink. When the wood block is inked and pressed onto paper, it creates a print.

Woodcuts often have bold, strong lines and dramatic contrasts. This technique has been used for hundreds of years in many parts of the world.

Art Elements

When we use the term "art elements," we really just mean the artistic ingredients painters use to create pictures. You already know and use words like color, light, line, and texture, but we'll talk about what they mean in painting. We'll describe each of them separately, to help you become familiar with them. But remember that in painting, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. It's how a painter puts art elements together that makes a great work of art.

Usually, the first decision an artist makes about a painting is its subject, or what the picture will show. Other decisions like what colors to use, what mood is suitable, and how to arrange the composition then follow that first choice. The number of different things an artist can paint is almost unlimited, but most paintings can be divided into groups or categories according to their main subjects. For our discussions, we will use six general subject groups: Religious and Spiritual, Portrait, Genre, Still Life, Landscape, and Abstract. A few of the works may not seem to quite fit into one of these groups. And because many paintings include more than one kind of thing, it is not always easy to say which group a particular work belongs in. As you will see when we look at individual paintings, some may seem to fit into more than one subject category.

Our first group is concerned with the grand themes of religion and spirituality. **Religious and Spiritual paintings** depict subjects related to faith, belief systems, and spirituality. They may portray religious figures, such as Jesus Christ, Buddha, or Hindu deities. They may portray scenes from sacred texts, such as the Bible, the Quran, the Torah or the Tao Te Ching. They may portray symbols associated with various religions, such as the cross, the Star of David, or the lotus flower. They may illustrate stories, convey messages, or invite the viewer to contemplate or connect with their own spirituality. Many of the paintings we will look at from the Renaissance period fall under this category, because the Catholic Church was a major

patron of the arts. Popes, bishops and wealthy religious institutions commissioned artists to create religious paintings for churches, cathedrals, and other sacred spaces. This allowed artists to showcase their skills, gain prestige, and earn a living, while allowing the Catholic Church to reinforce its teachings, its presence, and its power. Paintings like *Christ Blessing* and *The Nativity* were useful in educating those who could not read. Nevertheless, the practice of making Religious and Spiritual paintings did not end after the Renaissance. As long as humans have been around, we have and will continue to explore and express our faith and spirituality in art.

A **portrait** is a picture of a person, but not all pictures with people in them are portraits. For example, *On the Pont de l'Europe* includes several people, but we wouldn't consider it a portrait, because the painting is more about the entire scene than about the specific people in it. Usually, people in portraits look outward from the painting, rather than looking at something within the painting or engaging in some activity. Subjects generally are posed, like people in a formal photograph, not like people in a candid snapshot. A good example of this formal posing can be found in Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci*.

When artists paint portraits, they often want to do more than just show us a picture of a person. Sometimes an artist may be interested in exploring the subject's emotions and inner world, capturing their personality, or suggesting a narrative. For example, in his self portrait, Rembrandt captures his own resilience and strength in the face of adversity. Through portraiture, artists might also seek to challenge societal norms or convey a particular message about identity, beauty, or the human experience. In Mary Cassatt's *Girl Arranging Her Hair*, her honest depiction of a young girl's morning routine challenges idealized standards of beauty, showing us that there is dignity and grace in everyday moments. This portrayal reinforces the idea that art can find beauty in truth rather than perfection.

Genre paintings are pictures of ordinary people engaged in common, everyday activities. The subject of a genre painting might be a single individual, or it

may include groups of people. In any case, they are ordinary people—workers, servants, homemakers, farmers, vendors, and children—engaged in routine activities of work and play. The purpose of genre painting is to capture and represent scenes that reflect the customs, habits, and situations of a particular time, period or culture, offering us a glimpse of what everyday life would have been like. For example, in Tiepolo's *The Storyteller*, we see a crowd gathered to hear a tale in the streets of Venice. The painting shows us not just what Venice looked like in the 1700s, but how people entertained themselves, what they wore, and how they interacted with each other. Through paintings like this, we can understand how people lived their daily lives in the past.

Put most simply, **still lifes** are paintings of objects that don't move. Their subjects are things like flowers, food, books, or dishes, instead of people or places. Many paintings that include very detailed pictures of objects are not still lifes, just as many paintings that include people are not portraits. To be classified as a still life, a painting has to be about the things, or objects, themselves. Still life paintings became a distinct genre during the Baroque period, although they have been around for centuries (ancient Egyptians used the concept of painting ordinary items to adorn their tombs). In the Netherlands, still lifes gained significant popularity among the public. The term "still life" originates from the Dutch word "stilleven." Artists continue to create still lifes today, though often in new and different ways. In Goya's *Still Life with Golden Bream*, we see how a simple arrangement of fish can carry deep emotional meaning. In Thiebaud's *Cakes*, painted over a century later, we see how ordinary objects like desserts can be transformed into celebrations of color and shape. These paintings show us that still life remains a powerful way for artists to explore both the beauty and meaning of everyday objects

A **landscape** is a painting of an outdoor view that features large areas of natural scenery. The view may include buildings, animals, or people, but the main subject of the painting is the land itself. These other features are not usually the largest or most

important part of the picture. Wilson's *Tivoli: The Temple of the Sybil and the Campagna* shows us how landscape painters combine natural and architectural elements to create dramatic views of the world around us.

To paint landscapes, some artists like to paint en plein air, meaning they took their supplies outdoors and painted what was directly in front of them. Artists like Sorolla would spend hours working outside, trying to capture the intense sunlight and shadows of the Spanish countryside. Other artists, like Dufy, used bright colors and simplified shapes to express the joy they found in nature, creating landscapes that feel more like dreams or memories than exact recordings of a place. Even when artists include people or buildings in their landscapes, like Caillebotte does in *On the Pont de l'Europe*, the real subject is the environment itself - in this case, the dramatic new industrial cityscape of Paris. These different approaches to landscape painting show us that there are many ways to capture the beauty and power of the natural world. Whether painted realistically or with artistic imagination, landscapes help us see and appreciate the world around us in new ways.

When creating an **abstract painting**, artists don't attempt to recreate the objects or scenes we see in everyday life. Instead, they use colors, shapes, lines, and forms to create artworks that express their feelings, ideas, and imagination. Abstract art can be bold and energetic, like Pollock's *Cathedral*, or quiet and meditative, like Rothko's *Untitled*, where large blocks of color create a sense of calm and contemplation.

Sometimes the term abstract is used to describe paintings that do not show objects as they really look, but still maintain some connection to the visible world. We call these paintings semi-abstract. In Braque's *Fishing Boats*, we can still recognize boats and water, but they've been broken down into geometric shapes and overlapping planes. Similarly, in Kiefer's *Aim Zum*, real-world elements are transformed into something more mysterious and dreamlike. In semi-abstract art, the art elements are used to represent real-world objects in a non-realistic way. In

purely abstract art, like Pollock's and Rothko's work, there are no real-world objects being portrayed—the main subjects are the art elements themselves. Artists creating these works often feel that emotions or ideas can be expressed without any reference to real-world objects. Sometimes they even feel that using objects gets in the way of their art, because the objects make viewers think of the things they see instead of thinking about the ideas or feelings the artist wants to communicate.

A second decision an artist must make before beginning to paint is the **size** of the work. That choice could depend on the location where the painting will be displayed. It might need to be small to fit in an ordinary home or large to fill the wall of a big church or public building. Its size might also be chosen to fit its subject. At different times in art history, certain subjects have been considered more important than others. Artists often painted large images of the subjects considered important and smaller images of other subjects. Size may also be chosen, particularly for some abstract works, as a direct element like color or line or texture.

Color is one of the most critical and noticeable elements in a work of art: our species is hardwired to notice color and to associate it with life. Colors can be found all around us, from the blue sky to the green grass to yellow school buses to our rosy cheeks. Color is like a magical tool that artists use to breathe life into their artworks. To an artist, color is an essential means of expression—artists can use color to recreate the world in a realistic way, but they can also use it to evoke certain moods or atmospheres.

How do artists create color? You may have seen pictures of painters holding a little piece of wood or plastic with different colors of paint on it. This object is called a palette, and it is used by artists to mix and hold the paints they apply to a painting. Why would an artist want to mix paint? It turns out that if we mix two different colored paints together, we get an entirely new, third color. But not every color can

be made by mixing other colors. Colors of this type are called primary colors. “Primary” means first. Primary colors are like the building blocks of all other colors. They are red, blue, and yellow. Primary colors are special, because they can’t be made out of other colors, and they are powerful, because they are used to make all other colors. The colors made by mixing together two primary colors are secondary colors. They are purple, green, and orange. When we mix red and blue, we get purple. Mixing blue and yellow gives us green. Mixing red and yellow creates orange.

To help us understand how colors work together, artists use something called a color wheel. The color wheel is a special tool that shows us all the colors arranged in a circle. It helps us see how colors relate to each other and how they can create different moods and feelings in an artwork. On the color wheel, a color is closest to the colors most similar to it and farthest from those most different from it. Colors that are next to each other are called “analogous colors”. “Analogous” has the same origin as the word “analogy,” and it means similar or comparable to something else. For example, red and orange are analogous colors, as are blue and green. There is a reason why these colors look alike and go well together: analogous colors contain the same primary color. Red is used to make orange, making them analogous, as is yellow, making the orange and yellow pair also analogous. One way to remember this is that every primary color separates two secondary colors and vice versa on the color wheel. In other words, in between every secondary color, there is a primary color.

Colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel are called "complementary colors." Since complementary colors are those that are most different to one another, when they are placed side by side, they create a lot of contrast and make each other look even more vibrant. A good example of this effect can be found in the green background and red stripes on the subject’s blouse in Van Gogh’s *La Mousmé*. The complementary pairs are blue and orange, red and green, and yellow and purple.

Sometimes we talk about color as if we were measuring temperatures. Of course, colors don't really have temperatures, but in our minds we associate certain colors with warmth and others with cool or cold temperatures. Colors like red, orange, yellow, and gold make us think of things like fires and sunshine, so we call them warm colors. Colors like blue, green, and purple make us think of things like water and shaded forests, so we call those colors cool. Artists often use color temperature to create different moods in their paintings. For example, Caillebotte's *On the Pont de l'Europe* is painted in cool blues and grays to create a sense of distance and isolation in modern Paris. In contrast, Sorolla's *The Blind Man of Toledo* uses warm golds and browns that make the Spanish sunlight feel almost hot enough to touch.

The human eye actually sees warm and cool colors differently. Warm colors make objects in a painting seem closer to us. Cool colors make objects seem farther away. You can see the same effect in the real world. In a field of wildflowers, the red, orange, and bright yellow flowers seem to stand out, and even appear closer, than the blue and purple ones. Next time you're in a crowd at a ball game or amusement park, look at the people in the stands across the field or waiting in line at a ride across the park. Your eyes will be drawn first to people dressed in warm colors, and the people in red and orange will look just a little closer than those in green and blue.

As you might have noticed, one half of the color wheel is warm, while the other half is cool. Does that mean every color is either cool or warm? No. Not every color appears on the color wheel. Do you know which ones are missing? Hint: think about the color of this paper and of these letters. Colors like white, black, gray, tan, beige, and ivory are left out of the color wheel because they lack something called saturation, and because they are not primary or secondary colors. This group of colors is less vivid and intense compared to primary and secondary colors. Their effect on us is a lot more muted. They are calm and quiet. They create a sense of balance and harmony. Neutral colors can tone down the visual intensity of a painting

or create contrast against brighter colors, making them stand out more prominently. By surrounding a bright or vibrant color with neutrals, artists can draw attention to that specific area, making it a focal point in the composition. A good example of this effect is *Still Life with Golden Bream* by Goya.

When we talk about **light** in painting, we usually mean one of two things: (1) the actual source of light, and (2) the lightness or darkness of different areas of the painting's surface. Sometimes in a painting, the artist shows us the source of light. It may be the sun, the moon, a lamp, or a candle. In Ercole's *Ginevra Bentivoglio*, the subject is clearly lit by the open window she's peering out of. In some cases, the source of light is symbolic, like in Bellini's *Christ Blessing*, where the light emanates from some divine presence above Jesus. More often, we see the effects of light, but not the source of light itself. Even when artists don't show us the source, the way they represent light is very important. The brightness and color of the light helps create the mood of a painting, whether it is an indoor or an outdoor scene. Light may tell us something about the time of day or even the time of year. It depends on the effect the artist is trying to achieve. Look, for example, at the difference in how two artists treat sunlight in *Washerwomen on the Beach of Etretat* by Eugène Boudin and *That Gentleman* by Andrew Wyeth.

Artists often use light to draw our eyes first to certain parts of a painting, like the face in a portrait. It's a tiny, white glimmer in the eyes of *Hartley* that draws us into a staring contest with the subject of Alice Neel's painting. In Grant Wood's *Parson Weems Fable*, bright directional light gives the scene a feeling of artificiality, as if it's playing out on a stage. Light can also create mood and atmosphere. Compare the soft, spiritual glow in Murillo's *Saint Rufina* with the dramatic light and shadows in Ruben's *Head of a Young Man*. The latter uses a technique called chiaroscuro, which means 'light-dark' in Italian. With chiaroscuro, artists create dramatic contrast between bright areas and deep shadows. Rembrandt was a master of chiaroscuro. In

his self-portrait, he uses this technique to create intense psychological drama, with parts of his face emerging from darkness into bright light. By using areas of light and shade, an artist can make us forget that a painting is just a flat surface, and make us see a complete three-dimensional picture.

When we study **lines** in painting, we have to look for lines formed in two different ways. One way an artist creates lines is simply to draw them on the canvas. Often, drawn lines mark the edges of something, or outline it. But many of the lines you see in paintings are not drawn. They form where objects touch or overlap, so that different colors or shapes come together, like the line our eyes see at the horizon where the earth meets the sky. Look, for example, at the lines Dufy drew to outline the tree and houses in *Golfe Juan* or the lines created by the edges of the rectangles in Rothko's *Untitled*.

Lines can be long or short, thick or thin, straight or curved. We usually talk about four different kinds of lines in painting: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, and curved. A vertical line extends up and down, like a towering tree or skyscraper. Horizontal lines get their name from the horizon and go from side to side. Diagonal lines are slanted, like the slope of a mountain or the handrail of a stairway. Vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines are fairly straight. A curved line forms an arc, like a rainbow.

We associate certain kinds of lines with certain feelings or emotions, just as we do with color. Straight vertical lines can give a painting a sense of strength and order. Horizontal lines suggest peacefulness and calm. On the other hand, curved lines and diagonal lines can create a sense of movement, although their difference in effect can be drastic. Diagonal lines can introduce a feeling of tension or instability, creating a sense of drama or action. Diagonal lines that abruptly change direction, which we call jagged or zigzag, convey a sense of rapid change, excitement, or agitation. They are commonly associated with fast-paced or chaotic movements—

picture a bolt of lightning or fractured concrete. On the other hand, curved lines flow smoothly and gradually change direction. Curved lines convey a sense of grace, gentleness, and fluidity; imagine the waves of the ocean, a curl of hair, or the features of a human face. They create a more organic and natural feeling of movement. Curved lines are often associated with calmness, elegance, and a sense of harmony.

Artists can turn one or more lines into a **shape** by connecting the line's endpoints. For example, by drawing a line that returns to its origin, artists can create a loop or a circle. By connecting three straight lines, they can make a triangle. Connecting many lines of many different types can result in intricate and exciting shapes like stars, hearts, clouds, or a crescent moon.

When talking about the art elements, think of shapes as outlines or edges that define the objects and figures in a drawing. They are two-dimensional, meaning they have only height and width, like the images you draw on paper. Like all the other art elements, shapes can evoke different feelings or moods. For example, a circle can represent unity, harmony, and inclusiveness. Their endless nature, without any sharp corners or edges, can evoke feelings of calmness, completeness, wholeness, and perfection. A rectangle, on the other hand, imparts structure, organization, and formality. Rectangles are not commonly found in nature, instead tending to be associated with manmade structures, like windows, buildings, and doors. Because of their clean, straightforward nature, they can convey neatness and precision, making them useful for an artist who wants to convey stability, rationality, structure, or order.

Unlike shape, **form** is three-dimensional—it concerns the volume and mass of an object. While shapes capture the outline of an object, forms encapsulate its entire structure and physicality. Forms occupy space and have height, width, and depth, making them tangible and multidimensional. You encounter forms every day—from

the roundness of a ball to the cubic shape of a building, forms are all around us! Forms are essential to accurate representations of the world we inhabit. Even when forms appear in a semi-abstract piece, such those made by cubists, they appeal to our real-world experience of space. An understanding of form is not only important to sculptors and artists who work in three dimensions. In fact, it is especially important to artists who paint on flat surfaces. By studying how light and shadow behave in the real world and interact with three-dimensional objects, artists can create an illusion of three-dimensionality and physical presence. By replicating the way light hits a surface, an artist can rely on us to infer its form. Because Murillo alternated between light and dark shades when painting *Saint Rufina*, we can perceive the young saint's form without walking around her.

The **texture** of an object is the way it feels on its surface when you touch it. For example, the skin of a peach has a soft, fuzzy texture. Sandpaper has a rough texture. The surface of a desk has a smooth texture. Great artists can make us see in their paintings differences in the textures of objects they paint. In *Ginevra de' Benci*, compare the prickly leaves of the juniper bush, with the smooth, silky curls of her hair and the glassy surface of the pond. Paintings have textures too. The actual surface of a canvas may be smooth or rough, depending on how the artist applies the paint. Some paintings have the same texture over the whole surface of the painting. Others are smooth in some areas, where the artist's brush strokes are light and delicate, and rough in others, where the paint has been applied thickly, with broad, sweeping strokes. A good example of these different brushstrokes can be observed in Rembrandt's *Self-Portrait*, where the artist uses more precise brush strokes around the subject's face and eyes, while painting other areas in broader, sketchier strokes. No one is allowed to touch the paintings in a museum, but you can tell the texture of an original painting just by looking at it.

Contrast means a comparison that draws attention to the differences between things. Sometimes these differences are small, and we have to look closely to notice them. More often in painting, they are quite distinct, because the artist wants us to notice the differences quickly. Artists use many different elements to create contrast. They use color, either painting bright, vivid colors next to duller, neutral tones like grays and tans, as in *Girl with Blue Eyes*, or by using complementary colors that contrast with each other, as in *Parson Weem's Fable*. They often use lines, with some lines in a painting very straight and firmly drawn, and others delicately sketched into curves. We see contrasts in the textures of objects in paintings, with hard objects like a wall or tabletop contrasting with the soft texture of a piece of fabric. Sometimes artists even contrast subject matter, as when they paint a wealthy aristocrat and a poor peasant together.

Goya's *Still Life with Golden Bream* is an excellent example of the way contrast can make a painting more dynamic and interesting. By making some areas darker and others lighter, Goya creates depth and draws attention to the fish. To further this effect, Goya juxtaposes the warm oranges and yellows of the fish's scales and eyes with cool greens of the ground they are piled on, a contrast that contributes to the dreary atmosphere and the tension between life and death. Overall, it is the artist's use of contrast that makes this painting so effective and impactful.

Perspective is the depth or distance we think we see in paintings. Artists use many different elements and techniques to make pictures on a flat canvas seem to have space and distance. We've talked already about how warm colors make objects seem closer and cool colors make objects seem farther away. Paler shades of color used in the background also create a sense of distance. Sometimes, artists use drawn lines to create perspective, making roads, paths, rivers, or streams grow narrower so they seem to stretch into the background. Smaller objects near the top of a painting appear farther away than larger objects near the bottom. Often, artists leave out

details of figures or objects they want to seem farther away, or they may use soft edges rather than sharply drawn lines. These techniques make objects look hazier and more distant. See how many of these techniques you can find in *The Nativity*.

Rhythm describes something that repeats and creates a kind of pattern. Rhythms of shapes and colors can help pull the different parts of a painting together, or draw our eyes where the artist wants us to look. A rhythm of vertical lines gives a painting a feeling of strength and stability, while a rhythm of curving lines creates a sense of energy and liveliness. In *Cathedral*, the repetition of wild curving lines of paint establishes a rhythm that makes our eyes bounce around the piece, allowing the piece to feel intensely dynamic and exciting, even without a clear subject. The rhythm of the painting almost feels like the rhythm of some kind of crazy jazz improvisation, where every unexpected twist and turn of melody is held together by the unceasing, steady beat of the drums.

Composition describes the way an artist puts a painting together. It's only when we see how individual elements work with each other as a whole to create a complete painting that we can really understand how important the individual elements are. A painting that looks like the artist has captured a casual, unplanned moment is usually very carefully composed. Looking at composition can help us understand how artists use elements to arrange and balance objects in paintings, to direct our eyes to different parts of the canvas, and to create the moods and emotions we associate with particular paintings.

Light and shade open up the space of a two-dimensional canvas, and make us see flat, painted objects as we would see them in our real, three-dimensional world. Color helps set the overall mood of a painting and suggests relationships among parts of the canvas. The same color used in several places can draw different parts of the painting together, like the repetition of teal and pink that ties foreground and

background together in *Girl Arranging her Hair*. Sometimes artists use color to separate parts of the painting, using warm colors primarily in the foreground and reserving cool colors mostly for the background, for instance, as Dufy did in *Golfe Juan*. Lines and shapes also organize space in a painting. The horizontal line of the bridge in *Blind Man of Toledo* helps to separate the middle ground from the background, giving a clear sense of scale and depth in this Spanish landscape. Instead of drawing lines to organize a composition, artists often arrange objects so that we see geometric shapes when we look at them. For example, in *Hartley*, the subject's relaxed posture creates a balanced composition, with a triangle and rhombus on either side of him, and another rhombus underneath him, anchoring the scene. If you squint at this piece, all the space that the subject does not occupy can be neatly broken down into geometric shapes, providing a sense of harmony and structure that contrasts the candid-looking pose of the subject.

The art elements, like a painter's palette, offer endless possibilities for creativity and expression. As we engage with artworks, we uncover the subtleties of how the art elements contribute to the overall narrative and meaning. We can think of the art elements as the building blocks of visual storytelling.

Renaissance: 1400-1600

The word "renaissance" means rebirth in French. This period of history is called the Renaissance because it represents a rebirth of classical Greek and Roman ideas and culture after hundreds of years in the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, explorers like Christopher Columbus sailed across oceans, scholars developed new political theories, and scientists gave us a deeper understanding of the universe. This spirit of discovery and innovation transformed art forever, as painters developed new techniques that would change how we see and represent the world.

Though Spain, England, and the Netherlands all produced important Renaissance art, the birthplace of the Renaissance was Florence, Italy. Artists began studying nature directly, learning anatomy through observation and dissection, and carefully recording the world around them. They set up workshops where young artists could learn these new techniques. Artists were no longer seen as simple craftsmen but as educated intellectuals. Many, like Leonardo da Vinci, studied mathematics, engineering, and other sciences alongside their art, bringing this scientific knowledge into their paintings in revolutionary ways.

Renaissance paintings can be recognized by several important innovations. Artists used mathematical principles to create linear perspective—a technique that creates the illusion of depth by making distant objects appear smaller. The invention of oil paint allowed artists to blend colors smoothly and build up layers of transparent color, creating more realistic shadows, textures, and subtle effects of light. Renaissance painters also paid careful attention to how they arranged their compositions, using geometry to guide viewers' eyes through their paintings. Whether creating portraits or religious scenes, artists used these techniques to make their paintings more engaging and lifelike. Many of these innovations, which we'll see in paintings by artists like Petrus Christus and Leonardo, continue to influence artists today.

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Petrus Christus
Flemish, c. 1410-1475

The Nativity c. 1450
National Gallery of Art

When we think about Renaissance art, we usually think about Italian artists, like Leonardo and Bellini. But Italian painters were not the only artists creating magnificent works during this period. In the city of Bruges, in modern-day Belgium, Flemish artists like Petrus Christus were creating exciting paintings of their own. Italian painters worked towards more realistic perspectives and anatomy, while Flemish painters attempted to heighten the realism of their works by capturing as many small details as they could, often resulting in a vibrant feast for the eyes.

The Nativity is a colorful religious painting depicting the birth of Christ. The composition is framed by a stone archway that shows the Bible story of Adam and Eve. This is a story about sin and punishment. The birth of Christ, depicted below the arch, represents hope and redemption from the sins of Adam and Eve. The painting is extremely balanced, with every shape and detail carefully placed to create a feeling of tranquility and harmony that makes us think of the divine. Christus also uses geometric shapes throughout this piece. Circles suggest the eternal, since there is no beginning or end to a circle, while triangles represent the Holy Trinity—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. See if you can count how many circles and triangles there are in this painting.

Little is known about the life of Petrus Christus, though he was at one time the most important artist in Bruges. It is believed that he may have traveled to Italy and learned new techniques, such as linear perspective, from the Italian masters. Christus was the first Northern artist to use linear perspective, a technique he implemented in *The Nativity* to create the illusion of space receding into the distance. His work inspired future generations of painters in Bruges and beyond.

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Ercole de' Roberti
Italian, c. 1455-1496

Ginevra Bentivoglio c. 1474-1477
National Gallery of Art

Ginevra Bentivoglio is an example of a portrait painting. During the Renaissance, portraits like this one were commissioned by powerful rulers to preserve their likenesses and demonstrate their high social standings. This painting was commissioned by the ruler of Bologna, and it depicts the ruler's wife, Ginevra, staring out over the city they ruled. She is shown in profile. This pose was typical of Renaissance portraits. The profile pose recalls the images of Roman emperors that could be found on ancient coins, lending the sitter an aura of majesty and making them inaccessible to the viewer, since they are turned away from us.

Ercole was inspired by the works of Flemish painters like Petrus Christus. If you compare *Ginevra Bentivoglio* to *The Nativity* by Christus, you can see a similar fondness for intricate detail and bright color. Ercole took great care in painting each individual pearl on Ginevra's gown and every wrinkle in the fabric of her veil. More attention has been given to the splendor of her garments than to the expression on her face. Her blank expression offers us no clues into what she might be thinking and feeling at this moment. We are not meant to know Ginevra, but to admire her wealth and power. Rulers at this time were to be feared, not loved.

Ercole was working in a studio in Bologna when he completed this painting. During the Renaissance, young artists worked together at studios, where they apprenticed for more established artists who secured commissions from wealthy patrons and churches. This is how most Renaissance painters learned their craft and established themselves. After Ercole left Bologna, he returned to his home city of Ferrara, where he served as court painter for the rulers of the city. He died in his early forties, supposedly due to his excessive love of wine.

Click here to view image.

Leonardo Da Vinci
Italian, 1452-1519

Ginevra de' Benci [obverse] c. 1474-1478
National Gallery of Art

Leonardo Da Vinci is perhaps the most famous of all the Renaissance painters, though he was much more than just a painter. Leonardo has come to be known as the "Renaissance Man", meaning a person who excels in many fields. Born near Florence, Leonardo combined his talents as a painter, scientist, and inventor. His detailed studies of light, shadow, and anatomy revolutionized the way artists painted. His curiosity about how things worked—from the way light falls on skin to how muscles move beneath it—led to many great achievements in art and science.

One of the techniques that Leonardo pioneered is called *sfumato*, which means "smoked out" in Italian. This technique uses smooth transitions in color to create the illusion of shape and depth, rather than harsh lines. Leonardo uses this technique in *Ginevra de' Benci*. Notice how the colors on the subject's skin seamlessly blend from lighter to darker gradients, creating a softer, more lifelike appearance than the sharp details we saw in earlier portraits. To achieve this effect, Leonardo would sometimes use his fingers to blend his paint. If you view this piece in person, you can actually see some of Leonardo's fingerprints on the painting.

The subject of the painting was the daughter of a wealthy banker in Florence, and the portrait was likely commissioned for her betrothal. In the painting, Leonardo places Ginerva in front of a juniper bush, which symbolizes female virtue. He positioned her in a three quarters pose, allowing her eyes to gaze out of the painting to meet our own. This was a radical choice for this period. Most portraits used a profile pose, like *Ginevra Bentivoglio*. This more engaging pose would become Leonardo's signature style, reaching its peak in his later masterpiece, the Mona Lisa, where the subject seems to watch us as we move around the room.

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Giovanni Bellini
Italian, 1430-1516

Christ Blessing c. 1500
Kimbell Art Museum

In *Christ Blessing*, Bellini fills his painting of Jesus's resurrection with meaningful symbols that tell the story. Under Jesus's right hand, two rabbits—one white and one brown—represent rebirth through their changing fur colors, just as Jesus was reborn. A shepherd with a flock of sheep appears in the background, showing how Jesus leads his followers. The red pole in Jesus's left hand would hold the banner of resurrection, while three figures in the distance represent the three Marys who discovered Jesus's empty tomb. People of this era would recognize these symbols and be able to understand the story that Bellini is portraying.

An interesting aspect of this painting is how Jesus appears to be both human and God-like at the same time. The light on Jesus's body is not from the sun, which can be seen setting behind him. The shadows on his body suggest that he is being lit by some other presence above his right shoulder, perhaps the light of God. This supernatural light suggests Jesus's divinity, while the shadows on his body keep him grounded in the physical world that Bellini depicts around him. This interplay of light suggests that Jesus is both God and human, illustrating a crucial aspect of Christian thought.

Bellini painted *Christ Blessing* using oil paint. At the time, oil was a new medium. Much of Bellini's older works had been created using tempera. Bellini belonged to a family of famous Venetian painters. He and his family were always experimenting, looking for new ways to push the art of painting forward. Oil paint allowed Renaissance artists like Bellini and Leonardo to create more realistic figures and environments. Bellini's religious paintings are relatable and moving because he was able to paint scenes from the Bible in a way that feels grounded in the physical world, while also maintaining a sense of the divine.

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Albrecht Dürer
German, 1471-1528

The Rhinoceros 1515
National Gallery of Art

In 1515, a rhinoceros named Ulysses was brought to Lisbon as a gift for the king of Portugal, marking the first time the animal had appeared in Europe in over a thousand years. Many people came out to see this incredible creature. An amateur artist made a quick sketch of the rhino and sent it to a friend in Germany. This letter reached Albrecht Dürer and inspired him to create *The Rhinoceros*. He completed this piece based solely off the sketch and a description of the rhinoceros, without ever having seen one in person. This explains the fascinating inaccuracies in the creature's anatomy, like plates of armor, scaly legs, and a horn protruding out of its neck. Despite these errors, Dürer's powerful image was so convincing that it was used in German science textbooks for over 400 years.

The Rhinoceros may look like an ink drawing, but it is actually a woodcut print. A woodcut print is kind of like a giant, incredibly detailed stamp. Dürer carved the image into a block of wood, then applied ink and pressed it onto paper. The carved-away parts stay white on the paper, while the raised parts print in black. This difficult technique requires the artist to think backward while carving. It is a difficult and intricate process, of which Dürer was a master.

Though Dürer was a talented painter, he preferred printmaking for financial reasons. While a painting could only be sold once, a single woodcut could produce hundreds of prints to sell. His prints spread throughout Europe, making him famous in his twenties. Like many Northern European artists, he was inspired by his Italian friends and contemporaries, Leonardo and Bellini, whose techniques he learned during two trips to Italy. Through his widely distributed prints, Dürer helped spread Renaissance ideas across Europe.

Baroque: 1600-1800

The Baroque period took place in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The world was undergoing many dramatic changes during these years. English settlers began colonizing North America. Europeans fought each other in the Seven Years War. Isaac Newton discovered the laws of gravity. John Locke wrote essays that changed the way humans related to governments. Bach composed masterful melodies we still listen to today. And artists pushed the boundaries of painting in bold new directions, creating works of unprecedented drama and emotional power.

Baroque art is characterized by dramatic movement, intense lighting, and powerful emotions. While Renaissance artists had shown their subjects in moments of calm reflection, Baroque artists captured figures in motion, frozen in the midst of action. They used strong contrasts of light and shadow to create dramatic effects. In Catholic countries like Italy and Spain, the Church commissioned paintings designed to inspire religious devotion through their visual splendor. Painters like Murillo found new ways to make religious subjects feel deeply human and accessible, while artists like Tiepolo brought fresh energy to scenes of everyday life. This period also saw the rise of new genres in painting, with artists like Richard Wilson elevating landscape painting to new heights of grandeur.

The Baroque period saw artists developing increasingly distinctive individual styles. Rembrandt became famous for his masterful use of light and shadow to reveal psychological depth. Rubens pioneered dynamic new ways of capturing movement and emotion, influencing artists across Europe. Whether painting portraits, religious scenes, or landscapes, Baroque artists aimed to capture not just the appearance of their subjects, but also their emotional and spiritual power. In the paintings we'll study, we'll see how these artists used new techniques to create works of unprecedented drama and intensity.

Click here to view image.

Peter Paul Rubens
Flemish, 1577-1640

Head of a Young Man 1601
Blanton Museum of Art

During the Baroque period, artists like Rubens began creating more dynamic works than their Renaissance predecessors. Think of how Renaissance paintings like Leonardo's *Ginevra de' Benci* show their subjects perfectly still and carefully posed, as if they exist outside of time. Now look at Rubens' *Head of a Young Man*—it's more like a snapshot, catching someone in the middle of quick movement. The young man's neck muscles strain as he turns his head. His mouth and eyes open wide in surprise. His hair flies back as if caught in the wind. Everything about the painting suggests motion and emotion, making it more dramatic than the calm, quiet Renaissance portraits we've seen.

Rubens was both a hugely successful painter and an international diplomat. He traveled to many countries, sometimes on top secret missions, sometimes to complete paintings for royal families. He was even knighted in both England and Spain. One of his first diplomatic missions sent him to Italy, where he studied the works of the Renaissance masters. Like Dürer, Rubens had his work copied, printed, and distributed throughout Europe, making him a famous and highly sought after painter.

To keep up with the huge demand for his work, Rubens set up a large workshop where artists helped him complete his numerous commissions. He created over 1,400 paintings in his lifetime. He would often reuse models from one painting to the next. *Head of a Young Man* is one of Rubens' earliest oil sketches. He likely created it for *The Mocking of Christ*, one of his first commissions in Rome. He would go on to reuse this face in many of his later paintings, helping his workshop create paintings faster and more efficiently.

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Rembrandt van Rijn
Dutch, 1606-1669

Self-Portrait 1659
National Gallery of Art

Rembrandt, one of the greatest painters of the Dutch Golden Age, was deeply inspired by the Italian Renaissance painters, and even saw himself as an heir to their painting tradition, signing his works with only his first name, just as Leonardo did. But his style is quite different from Leonardo's. Rembrandt's self-portrait is not smooth and perfectly blended. His brush strokes are loose and visible. He leaves the lower half of the painting unfinished, blurring the hands and body, drawing all attention to his face. Surprisingly, the result is a portrait that feels more real, more human than the earlier portraits we've studied.

Throughout his life, Rembrandt would paint himself over forty times, leaving us a remarkable record of his changing face and fortunes. This self-portrait was painted during an especially difficult period. When he was younger, he'd found success early, opening a workshop at age 21 and becoming one of Amsterdam's most sought-after painters. But by the time he painted this, he was no longer the successful artist he had once been. He had lost his wife, fallen into financial ruin, and was forced to auction off his house to pay his debts. A decade later, he would die a very poor man and be buried in an unmarked grave.

It is said that Rembrandt had the ability to paint the emotion behind a person's face. So what emotion sits behind his own? Keeping in mind the sad course of his life, take a look at this self-portrait. See the anxious lines on his forehead, the tired bags under his eyes, the imperfections in his wrinkled skin. But also notice the glimmer of white in his eyes as he stares out at us, confronting us defiantly from the past, as if to say, "This is me, I was here." Rembrandt's self-portraits are testaments to the artist's humanity, in all its strength and fragility.

Bartolomé Esteban Murillo
Spanish, 1617-1682

Saint Rufina c. 1665
Meadows Museum

Click here to view image.

By observing Murillo's *Saint Rufina*, we can see how a master baroque painter approached a religious painting. In this painting, Murillo strikes a perfect balance between realism and otherworldliness. He bathes Saint Rufina in a soft light that seems to belong to the spiritual world. But Murillo's painting is also grounded in the material world. Murillo paints Saint Rufina just as he would paint a good friend. Her face is a face you might see today. She could be your older sister or a classmate. Murillo painted the saint with a tenderness not often seen in religious artwork, resulting in a depiction of a saint that feels accessible to everyone who views it.

Saint Rufina is—along with her sister Saint Justa—the patron saint of Seville, the city Murillo lived in his whole life. The sisters made pottery for a living, which is why Rufina is holding clay pots in the painting. In the late 200s AD, they refused to sell their pots for use in a Roman pagan festival, and when angry pagans broke their pottery, the sisters responded by smashing a statue of Venus. For this transgression, they were arrested and asked to renounce their faith. They refused and were executed, making them famous martyrs. This is why Rufina also holds a palm branch—a symbol of martyrdom that appears in many paintings of saints.

Murillo spent almost his entire life in Seville, becoming Spain's most celebrated painter. While he was famous for religious works like this one, he also painted remarkable scenes of everyday life in Seville—children playing, families eating, people selling food in the streets. These paintings give us a rare and wonderful glimpse into daily life in 1600s Spain. Tragically, Murillo died after falling from a scaffold while painting a church ceiling, but his gentle style influenced generations of painters in Spain and abroad.

Click here to view image.

Richard Wilson
Welsh, 1714-1482

Tivoli: The Temple of the Sybil and the Campagna 1765
Kimbell Art Museum

Artists paint landscapes to capture the beauty and power of nature, helping us see the world in new ways. In a landscape painting like Wilson's *Tivoli*, the land itself becomes the main subject. While people might appear in these paintings, they're typically small figures that help us understand how grand the scene is, or help tell a story about the location. Wilson's landscape does both—it shows us the awesome scale of nature while also telling a story about people's connection to history.

This landscape painting shows us a view of Tivoli, a small Italian town that artists loved to visit in the 1700s because of its natural beauty and ancient Roman ruins. In his painting, Wilson shows us a scene that is both epic and peaceful, both ancient and modern. The sloping hills covered in ruins give way to vast plains extending towards Rome. In the foreground, seated under a large tree, are two traveling artists, sketching this incredible view. These artists give us a sense of scale. These artists are doing exactly what we're doing now—looking carefully at the scene, thinking about how the past connects to the present, and trying to understand what makes this place special.

Richard Wilson is considered to be the first major English landscape painter, though he didn't start out painting landscapes. He began his career painting portraits, but discovered his true passion when he moved to Italy and fell in love with its beautiful countryside. When he returned to England, he began painting the English countryside in the same grand, dramatic style he had developed in Italy. Soon, wealthy British landowners were asking him to paint their estates to look as magnificent as ancient Rome. His way of making ordinary places look extraordinary would inspire many other British artists to become landscape painters too.

Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo
Italian, 1727-1804

The Storyteller 1773
Blanton Museum of Art

Click here to view image.

Giovanni Domenico Tiepolo was the son of a successful painter, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo. Young Tiepolo traveled with his father to Germany and Spain, helping him paint huge wall and ceiling murals in palaces and cathedrals—dramatic scenes of angels, saints, and heroes. After his father's death, Tiepolo returned to Venice, the charming port city where he was born. Built on small islands connected by bridges and canals, Venice was full of stories waiting to be painted. Instead of his father's heavenly scenes, Tiepolo chose to paint the lively world right outside his door.

One such painting is *The Storyteller*. This painting depicts a large array of local characters, gathered around a man telling a story. The storyteller has a guitar on his back and a baton in his hand, which he uses to point to an illustration on a tapestry. The audience around him seems to be captivated by his tale. A skinny dog sulking away from the crowd, perhaps annoyed that the storyteller is disturbing its peace. Above the dog we see a man in a Venetian mask flirting with a pretty woman in an orange dress. Behind them, a crowd congregates near a church. All of this takes place in front of the backdrop of the Gulf of Venice, which stretches out into the horizon, connecting the city to the larger world of trade and commerce.

Unlike the portraits and religious paintings we've seen, *The Storyteller* invites us to be curious about everyday life in the past. Pick any person in the picture and imagine: Who were they? What was their life like? What were they doing there that day? Though the clothes and buildings might look different from our world, people haven't changed much over the centuries—they still gather to hear stories, make friends, fall in love, and sometimes get annoyed at noisy performers. Have fun exploring this lively painting, and let your imagination run wild.

Modern: 1800-1950

Following the Baroque years, the world underwent rapid and drastic change. The French and American Revolutions brought about political reform. Monarchies were replaced by democracies. The industrial revolution transformed cities overnight, as factories and railroads reshaped the landscape. At the beginning of the twentieth century, two world wars tore Europe apart, and the great depression destabilized the world economy. These unprecedented changes left people feeling confused, trying to make sense of a world that was changing with alarming speed.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, art changed as much as the world did. Artists began experimenting with new styles and techniques. In the previous periods of art history, artists had generally attempted to represent reality. After the invention of the camera, paintings no longer needed to do this. In a matter of seconds, a camera could produce a perfect representation of reality, so painters began creating works that accomplished other aims. Many art movements sprung up around the world during the Modern Period, all with different motivations and techniques. The Impressionists painted quickly, capturing impressions of light and movement. Cubists attempted to paint subjects from multiple angles at once to demonstrate the limits of our own perspectives. Abstract Expressionists created paintings that didn't represent reality at all.

Because there were so many different movements within the Modern Period, it is impossible to define key characteristics that all these artists and works share. There is a general shift from realism towards abstraction during this period, but ultimately, what all these artists share is a desire to show us new ways of looking at the world. While Renaissance and Baroque painters wanted to show us things as they appeared, Modern artists wanted to show us things as they experienced them. While viewing these paintings, ask yourself not just what the paintings are showing you, but what they are telling you about how these artists experienced the world.

Click here to view image.

Francisco de Goya
Spanish, 1746-1828

Still Life with Golden Bream c. 1808-1812
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Goya is known as both the last of the Old Masters and the first of the Modern painters. He lived and worked during the time of the Napoleonic wars, which deeply impacted his home country of Spain. Goya had served as a painter for the Spanish royal family before the French invaded Spain, plunging the country into years of war. Goya suffered a severe illness that resulted in the loss of his hearing. This, along with the many atrocities of war that he witnessed, affected his paintings, which became increasingly darker and preoccupied with death and suffering.

Still Life with Golden Bream was painted during the violent years the French occupied Spain. The painting is a still life. We see dead fish piled on a shore at night, their eyes huge and yellow, staring out at us, seeing nothing. There is no symbolism in this painting, only stark reality. This simple painting of death connects to the powerful anti-war images Goya was creating in his series *The Disasters of War*, where depicted the violence and insanity of the war in Spain.

Goya's art is modern in terms of style, theme, and intention. Stylistically, Goya painted in loose, almost haphazard brushstrokes, giving his work a wildness not seen in earlier painting. Thematically, Goya was modern because he used his art to comment on current events. Goya's depictions of war and Spanish life tell us more than what it was like to be there at that time, the way Tiepolo's painting of Venice did. Goya shows us how he himself interpreted events. And the third aspect of Goya's work that makes it modern is the intentionality behind it. Many of Goya's most famous paintings were not commissions, but works he made for himself, simply to express his own ideas and exercise his creativity, something that would become common for modern artists.

Click here to view image.

Gustave Caillebotte
French, 1848-1894

On the Pont de l' Europe 1876-1877
Kimbell Art Museum

On the Pont de l' Europe shows us a new kind of world and a new way of painting it. In cool blue tones, Caillebotte captures the strange beauty of industrial Paris. We see men on an iron bridge, overlooking a railway station filled with steam and machinery. The composition feels like a snapshot—one man walks partially out of frame, while two others stand with their backs to us, separated from the city by the bridge's geometric metal bars. Everything feels cold and mechanical, but also fascinating. Caillebotte shows us both the impressive power of this new industrial age, as well as how it makes people feel small and alone in their own city.

Caillebotte belonged to the Impressionists, a group of artists working in France during the late 1800s. Like photographers with their new cameras, these artists tried to capture real life as it actually looked, even if that meant showing awkward moments or cutting figures in half at the edge of the frame. While earlier artists carefully arranged their subjects, Impressionists painted quickly, often *en plein air*—or outside in English—to catch fleeting moments of modern life and the ever-changing effects of light on the world around them.

Gustave Caillebotte came from a wealthy family. In Paris, he befriended pioneer Impressionist painters Monet and Renoir. His wealth allowed him to paint whatever interested him, leading to unusual perspectives like this view from the bridge. He also used his money to support his fellow artists, buying many of their paintings. When he died, he gave his huge collection to the French government, creating Paris's first major museum of Impressionist art. While people once knew him mainly as a collector, today we recognize Caillebotte as an innovative artist who helped us see the modern world in new ways.

Paul Cézanne
French, 1840-1926

Click here to view image.

Banks of the Seine at Médan c. 1885-1890
National Gallery of Art

Banks of the Seine at Médan is an example of a landscape painting, but Cézanne's approach to landscape painting was wildly different from that of early artists like Richard Wilson. Cézanne was not simply trying to paint the appearance of nature—he wanted to reveal the underlying structure of the world. He attempted this difficult feat by breaking objects down into simple geometric forms and by painting in short repetitive brushstrokes. By simplifying the world he saw, he hoped to convey its true essence.

When first viewing *Banks of the Seine at Médan*, you may find the painting difficult to decipher. It may appear messy, disorienting, even unfinished. But if you get closer to the painting, you'll start to notice its strange qualities. Cézanne created this landscape by placing countless short lines of color side by side. This technique was developed by Impressionist painters, but Cézanne takes it a step further. His brushstrokes are not exactly conveying the effects of light on the landscape, but rather building the landscape up out of the strokes of color. We get the sense that the landscape is emerging out of the paint, rather than the paint capturing the image of the landscape.

Though Cézanne worked alongside the Impressionists, he did not consider himself an Impressionist painter. Today we would classify him as a Post-Impressionist. Cézanne was a shy man who struggled being around other people, so he retreated into nature often, where he found inspiration in the hills and lakes of the countryside. During his life, critics were often dismissive of his works, but later artists would go on to view Cézanne as the father of modern art. His paintings would influence later art movements such as Fauvism and Cubism.

Mary Cassatt
American, 1844-1926

Girl Arranging Her Hair 1886
National Gallery of Art

Click here to view image.

Mary Cassatt was born in Pennsylvania to parents who recognized the importance of art and culture. They took her on many trips to Europe, where she encountered amazing paintings like the ones we've studied here. At a time when women weren't allowed to attend most art schools or show their work in major exhibitions, Cassatt decided to make painting her career anyway. After studying art in the United States, she moved to Paris where she met Edgar Degas, a famous Impressionist painter. Degas recognized her talent and introduced her to other Impressionists. She quickly made a name for herself within the art movement, while also distinguishing herself from the other Impressionists.

Cassatt was an early fighter for women's rights, speaking out for equality at a time when many people thought women couldn't be serious artists. Her paintings focus on the lives of women in a way that is personal and psychologically complex. Most impressionist paintings of women were created by men, and they often depict women as objects of desire rather than complex people. Cassatt lends humanity and dignity to her portraits of women, painting her subjects' daily lives with understanding and respect, resulting in works that still resonate deeply today.

In *Girl Arranging Her Hair*, Cassatt shows us a quiet morning moment. The girl doesn't look like the models in fashion magazines—she has large teeth and imperfect skin. She looks like a real person, caught in a private moment. The blues of her gown and sink and the pinks of her face and wallpaper create a sense of harmony in the piece. Cassatt paints the girl with such care and empathy that we feel privileged to share this simple moment from almost 150 years ago, reminding us that there is great beauty in everyday life.

Click here to view image.

Vincent Van Gogh
Dutch, 1853-1890

La Mousmé 1888
National Gallery of Art

In 1888, Vincent Van Gogh left the busy streets of Paris for the sunny countryside of Arles, where he hoped to found a colony of artists—a place where painters could live and work together. Though his dream didn't take off, Van Gogh's time in Arles marked a high point in his own artistic career. While living in the town, he completed over 200 paintings, including some of his most famous works.

One of the masterpieces that Van Gogh created during this period was *La Mousmé*. This portrait was influenced by Japanese art. Van Gogh collected Japanese woodcut prints and admired them for their sense of balance and harmony. He painted *La Mousmé* using thick brushstrokes and vibrant colors, creating movement and harmony through the use of patterns and complimentary colors. The polka dots on the girl's skirt seem to transform into the orange buttons curving up her striped shirt. These buttons follow the movement of the stripes, leading our eye up to the subject's face, where we meet her striking brown eyes. Van Gogh implements two different sets of complementary colors: bold oranges and blues, and more muted greens and reds, which help achieve a feeling of balance in this portrait.

Van Gogh was a Post-Impressionist artist whose legend precedes him. You may already know that he struggled with mental illness and that he was institutionalized after cutting off his own ear. It is true that he suffered greatly during his short life, but it's important to not buy into the trope of the tortured artist. Van Gogh's art was not the product of his mental illness. He was a deeply sensitive and deliberate artist, and for him, painting was a joyous and life-affirming activity. Art served as a relief from his suffering. Today, Van Gogh is remembered as one of the most important painters who ever lived.

Click here to view image.

Eugène Boudin
French, 1824-1898

Washerwomen on the Beach of Etretat 1894
National Gallery of Art

Without the context provided by this painting's title, you may not be able to recognize what's going on in this painting. We understand that it's a landscape painting. We can clearly make out the sea, dotted with sailboats, and we are able to discern some kind of rock formation in front of a sky full of wispy clouds, but what about that mess of color on the beach? The title clues us in to the fact that those blots of paint represent women washing clothes, but if you get close to the painting, what you'll see are dabs of paint layered side by side in an explosion of movement and color. The lack of fine detail actually helps convey the energy of the scene and shows us what this mass of moving women might actually look like from far away.

Eugène Boudin was one of the first French landscape painters who painted outside. Painting outdoors was a challenge. Subjects are always moving and the light is constantly changing, so you have to paint quickly if you want to accurately capture the scene. Instead of blending colors seamlessly, painters like Boudin placed different colors side by side in small brushstrokes, creating the impression of gradations in color. This is similar to how TVs work today, with thousands of individual pixels creating the illusion of color gradation.

When Boudin was ten years old, he worked with his father on a steamboat, where he developed an affinity for the ocean that would later carry over into his artwork. Boudin traveled to Flanders in his early twenties. There he was inspired by the works of Dutch seascape painters. In Paris, Boudin mentored the young painter Claude Monet, who would go on to start the Impressionist movement. Boudin was a much loved painter, and his influence on early Impressionist art was hugely significant. Monet once said, "If I became a painter, it was because of Boudin."

Joaquín Sorolla
Spanish, 1863-1923

The Blind Man of Toledo 1906
Meadows Museum

Click here to view image.

Joaquín Sorolla once said that all he ever wanted to be was a painter and nothing more than a painter. He achieved this goal spectacularly, becoming one of the most successful artists in the world. While he painted portraits of famous people like President Taft and the Spanish Royal family, what he loved most was working outdoors in the bright Spanish sun. His paintings are filled with dazzling light and color, capturing the feeling of warm summer days. Sorolla painted outdoors with portable easels and canvases, often working for hours in the blazing Spanish sun, working quickly to capture the intense light before it changed.

After a hugely successful exhibition in Paris, where he sold almost 500 paintings, Sorolla and his wife traveled to Toledo, a historic town outside Madrid. Sorolla loved exploring different Spanish cities, painting not just their beauty but their unique character and people. In *The Blind Man of Toledo*, his energetic brushstrokes make the whole scene shimmer like a mirage on a hot day. A stone bridge cuts across the background while a road curves toward us in the foreground. In the shadows of a wall, a blind man walks carefully forward, his body partly lit by streams of bright sunlight.

Like the Impressionists, Sorolla loved painting outdoors and capturing the effects of light. But his style was also shaped by hours spent studying Spanish masters like Goya and Velázquez in Madrid's Prado Museum. While Impressionist paintings like Caillebotte's *On the Pont de l'Europe* feel like quick snapshots of modern life, Sorolla's paintings combine spontaneous energy with careful planning. His brushstrokes dance and shimmer, but his compositions are thoughtfully arranged to tell deeper stories about the places and people he painted.

Georges Braque
French, 1882-1963

Click here to view image.

Fishing Boats (Le Perrey) 1909-1910
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

This painting is quite unlike anything we've seen thus far. The landscape, composed of boats, houses, and sky, seems to be collapsing in on itself while also being pulled apart. We can recognize that the shapes on the canvas represent objects we're familiar with, but they've been simplified into their fundamental forms, and the perspective Braque shows us is dizzying and confusing. It's as if the three-dimensional forms that make up the landscape have been disassembled and flattened onto the two-dimensional canvas. This painting shows us the beginning of a revolutionary new way of making art called Cubism.

Braque was influenced by Cézanne, who—as we saw in *Banks of the Seine at Médan*—had begun moving towards abstraction and simplification, painting only the essential and fundamental forms that lie underneath the natural world. Braque took these ideas further. He painted scenes as if we were seeing them from multiple viewpoints at once, breaking shapes into geometric planes and rearranging them. He used a limited palette of browns, greens, and grays, focusing our attention on structure rather than color. He hoped to move beyond the limits of our own human perspective and show us the physical world as it really is.

Braque developed this style alongside another artist named Pablo Picasso. Their new approach, Cubism, represents an important bridge between the Impressionist experiments we've seen and the abstract art that would follow. Since the Renaissance, artists had been trying to create the illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat canvas. Braque and the Cubists did something radical—they emphasized the flatness of the canvas instead of trying to hide it. This idea would influence generations of artists who followed, including many abstract painters.

Amedeo Modigliani
Italian, 1884-1920

Girl with Blue Eyes 1918
The McNay

Click here to view image.

The first thing you may notice about *Girl with Blue Eyes* is that the girl doesn't actually have blue eyes. Instead, her face is mask-like, with empty holes for eyes. Her neck stretches impossibly long, and her face is elongated into an oval shape. At first glance, the portrait might seem simple, even cartoon-like. But there's something haunting about it that makes us keep looking. Unlike earlier portraits that tried to show us exactly what people looked like, Modigliani wasn't interested in creating a realistic image. He was trying to show us something that can't be captured in a mirror—the mysterious essence of a human being.

Modigliani developed his unique style by combining very different artistic traditions. Born in Italy, he grew up studying classical Renaissance portraits, with their graceful lines and careful attention to human beauty. When he moved to Paris as a young artist, he discovered two new influences that would change his art forever: modern painters like Cézanne who were breaking all the old rules, and African masks whose simplified features could express powerful emotions. From these different sources, Modigliani created something entirely new—portraits that keep the elegance of Renaissance painting while replacing realistic features with mysterious, mask-like faces.

Modigliani's paintings were shocking to people at the time—his first and only exhibition was even shut down by the police! But today we recognize that Modigliani was showing us a new way to think about what a portrait could be. His paintings remind us that there's always something mysterious and unknowable about every person we meet, something that can't be captured by simply painting what we see on the surface.

Archibald Motley Jr.
American, 1891-1981

Portrait of My Grandmother 1919
National Gallery of Art

Click here to view image.

Portrait of My Grandmother is both an intimate family portrait and a powerful statement about American history. Unlike the elaborate backgrounds we saw in paintings like *Ginevra Bentivoglio*, Motley places his grandmother in front of a blank wall. There is nothing to distract us, not even her chair is visible. Her expression is stoic. Her glassy eyes seem to look through us rather than at us. Her hands are long and elegant, but also bent and weathered from years of labor. Through this stark, honest portrait, Motley presents his grandmother as both a beloved family member and an important historical figure whose story needed to be told.

Motley's grandmother, Emily Sims Motley, was born enslaved on a sugar plantation in Louisiana. After the Civil War, she moved with her family to Chicago. Emily shared a house with four generations of family, including her grandson, Archibald. Motley painted this portrait when Emily was 80 years old. By this point, she had difficulty walking, so Motley would carry her upstairs to her bedroom every night. The love and respect Motley had for his grandmother is beautifully translated onto the canvas in *Portrait of My Grandmother*.

Motley was one of the first African American artists to achieve recognition. While this early portrait focuses on family history, he would become famous for colorful scenes of African American life in Chicago during the 1930s and 40s. His work challenged racist stereotypes by showing the full richness of black American experience. Though he lived in Chicago, he is considered part of the Harlem Renaissance—a movement that celebrated African American art and culture. In all his work, from this intimate portrait to his vibrant city scenes, Motley painted with the same purpose: to show the dignity, humanity, and joy of African American life.

Raoul Dufy
French, 1877-1953

Golfe Juan 1937
The McNay

Click here to view image.

In *Golfe Juan* by Raoul Dufy, we can see how landscape painting changed dramatically in the twentieth century. Unlike Wilson's carefully detailed view of Tivoli or Caillebotte's snapshot of Paris, Dufy isn't trying to show us exactly what this place looks like. Instead, he creates a world of impossibly bright colors where everything seems to dance with energy. Though the coastline stretches for miles into the horizon, the whole scene appears flat, like a colorful map. Most striking is the giant tree in the center, which bursts upward like an explosion of orange bark and green leaves, too wild to be contained by the canvas.

What made Dufy paint this peaceful coastal scene in such a bold, strange way? He belonged to a group of artists called the Fauvists, who wanted to paint feelings rather than just things. They took Cézanne's simplified shapes and Van Gogh's bright colors and created a completely new style. Instead of using traditional techniques like shading to make things look three-dimensional, they used brilliant colors to express joy, energy, and freedom. When they first showed their work, one critic called them *les fauves*—"the wild beasts" in French—because their paintings seemed so untamed and intense. The artists embraced this nickname, proud to be seen as artistic rebels.

Before becoming a painter, Dufy worked as a coffee importer on the French coast. His love for the ocean and coastal cities stayed with him throughout his life, appearing again and again in his paintings. Though he experimented with different styles—from Impressionism to Fauvism to Cubism—he eventually created something uniquely his own: a joyful, energetic way of painting that captured how it feels to be somewhere beautiful on a perfect summer day.

Click here to view image.

René Magritte
Belgian, 1889-1967

La condition humaine 1933
National Gallery of Art

Look carefully at *La condition humaine*—it shows a painting on an easel in front of a window. The painting on the easel seems to perfectly match the landscape outside, as if it's showing exactly what it's hiding. But wait—this is all just one painting! There isn't really an easel or a separate canvas here. Magritte is playing a clever trick that makes us think about how we see the world. We naturally try to make sense of everything we see, just like you're trying to make sense of this painting right now. This desire to understand the world around us is what Magritte calls "*La condition humaine*"—or "the human condition" in English.

Magritte was part of an artistic movement called Surrealism that began in the 1920s, after the confusion and destruction of World War I. While earlier artists like Sorolla tried to show the world exactly as it appeared, Surrealists created strange dreamlike scenes using realistic painting techniques. If the real world could be as nonsensical as war, why shouldn't art show us impossible things? Magritte became famous for paintings that make familiar objects seem strange and mysterious.

Windows and paintings are two of Magritte's favorite motifs. Both show us rectangular views of the world—but while we trust windows to show us reality, we know paintings are just representations of reality. In *La condition humaine*, Magritte combines both to ask an interesting question: how do we know what's real and what isn't? When you look through a window, you're seeing the world through a frame, just like in a painting. And just as everyone sees a painting differently, everyone sees the world through their own unique window. Instead of trying to show us how the world looks, Magritte wants us to think about how we look at the world and how differently the world might look from another perspective.

Grant Wood
American, 1891-1942

Parson Weems' Fable 1939
Amon Carter Museum of American Art

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Parson Weems' Fable shows us a story about telling the truth that isn't exactly true itself. The famous tale goes like this: six-year-old George Washington cuts down his father's favorite cherry tree with a hatchet. When confronted, young George says, "Father, I cannot tell a lie. I cut the tree." His father forgives him, proud of his son's honesty. This story was actually invented by Mason Locke Weems (known as Parson Weems), who wrote the first biography of Washington. Weems created this tale to teach American children about the importance of honesty in their leaders.

Grant Wood shows us this story like a play, with Parson Weems himself pulling back a curtain to reveal the scene. The young Washington has the same familiar face we see on the dollar bill—a humorous touch that reminds us this is more myth than history. While Washington and his father act out their moral tale in the foreground, Wood shows us a darker truth in the background: slaves working on Washington's plantation beneath storm clouds that seem to foreshadow the American Civil War. The painting cleverly contrasts the simple lesson of the cherry tree story with the complex and disquieting truths of American history.

Wood belonged to a movement called Regionalism, which focused on rural American scenes and historical subjects during the Great Depression. While European artists like Magritte were creating dreamlike scenes, American Regionalists painted familiar places and stories in a distinctive style that mixed folk art with modern techniques. But like Magritte, Wood used his realistic painting style to make us think differently about what we're seeing. His seemingly simple scene actually asks us to consider which stories we tell about our past, and why we tell them.

Jackson Pollock
American, 1912-1956

Cathedral 1947
Dallas Museum of Art

Click here to view image.

Take a close look at Jackson Pollock's *Cathedral*. What do you see? In other paintings we've studied, the answer would be simple—a girl brushing her hair, men on a bridge, a pile of fish. But *Cathedral* doesn't show us anything from the real world. Instead, the painting itself—the swooping drips and splashes of paint—is the subject. This type of art is called abstract, meaning it doesn't try to represent real objects or scenes. Just as music can move us without showing us pictures, Pollock wanted his paintings to stir emotions through color, rhythm, and movement.

Pollock created a completely new way of painting called Abstract Expressionism. While earlier artists carefully controlled their brushes, Pollock laid huge canvases on the floor and moved around them, dripping and throwing paint from above. He let his feelings guide his movements, throwing his entire body into his work, like a dancer performing without choreography. Though this might look random or easy, each splash and drip required incredible skill and careful deliberation. Pollock carefully chose his colors, controlled the flow and direction of the paint, and knew exactly when a painting was finished.

The rise of Abstract Expressionism marked a revolutionary moment in art history. During World War II, many European artists fled from Paris to New York, bringing their creative ideas with them. Out of this cultural exchange came Abstract Expressionism—the first truly American art movement to influence the rest of the world. These radical new paintings, with their huge size and total abstraction, showed that art didn't need to represent anything to be powerful. Pollock and his fellow Abstract Expressionists proved that the act of painting itself could be just as meaningful as what was being painted.

Contemporary: 1950-Present

The contemporary period brings us from the 1950s, right up to the present moment. During this period of history, the world became more and more connected due to globalization. The United States established itself as a superpower. Men went to the moon and back. Wars were fought in Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East. The Civil Rights Movement fought for equal opportunities for all people. The invention of television brought about a popular culture. Technology progressed faster than it ever has, culminating in the internet, social media, and artificial intelligence.

A major shift that characterizes the Contemporary Period is the move away from defined artistic movements. While the Modern Period saw artists gathering around specific manifestos and shared approaches—like Impressionism or Surrealism—Contemporary artists increasingly forge their own individual paths. Rather than belonging to clearly defined groups with shared techniques or philosophies, these artists create unique visual languages that express their particular vision of the world. This individualism reflects broader cultural shifts toward personal expression and identity, with artists developing styles that are distinctly their own rather than representative of a larger movement.

Contemporary artists also began looking for inspiration far beyond traditional art historical sources. While earlier artists primarily built upon previous artistic movements, Contemporary artists draw from an expanding universe of visual culture—television, advertising, comics, photography, industrial design, and eventually digital media. This period saw unprecedented experimentation with materials and techniques, from traditional painting mediums to unconventional substances or found objects. Whether working in realism, abstraction, or somewhere in between, Contemporary artists expand our understanding of what art can be and where inspiration might be found.

Click here to view image.

Mark Rothko
Latvian American, 1903-1970

Untitled 1952
Dallas Museum of Art

If you stand in front of Rothko's *Untitled*, what you'll see is a gigantic canvas split into two rectangles of pure color—one red, one yellow. You may initially feel confused, but spend some time with this painting. Get close to it. Let go of any preconceived notions you may have about what art should be and allow your mind to wander as you stare into these colossal fields of vibrant color.

Throughout history, artists have used color to guide our emotions—to tell us how we are supposed to feel about the thing they are depicting. Goya's dark palette in *Still Life with Golden Bream* might make us feel a sense of sadness for the dead fish piled on the shore, and Dufy's bold blues and oranges in *Golfe Juan* give his landscape a feeling of excitement and joy. But Rothko is doing something entirely different here. He didn't use color to give us emotional information about a scene—he painted color itself, leaving it up to us to work out the emotional content. Viewing a Rothko painting is a personal experience. He wanted each viewer to come to his work with their own lived experience and take away whatever they could.

Rothko, like Jackson Pollock, was an abstract expressionist. But the two artists could not be more different in their approaches to abstract art. While a Pollock painting is like a frenetic jazz piece, Rothko's art is like a highly structured work of classical music. Rothko loved Mozart, and just as Mozart used simple chords and scales to create intensely emotional and joyous music, Rothko used only the absolute fundamentals of the art elements to arrange his compositions—shape (specifically the rectangle) and color. Just as music moves us using arrangements of notes—different frequencies played in an intentional succession—Rothko creates emotional experiences using only the bare essentials of painting.

Andrew Wyeth
American, 1917-2009

That Gentleman 1960
Dallas Museum of Art

Click here to view image.

In *That Gentleman*, we see a man leaning back in a rusty blue chair, seemingly staring at a blank wall. His posture is awkward, his left arm is twisted over his lap, his legs are crossed, and his expression (or at least what we can see of it) appears to be strangely alert. Scissors hang on the wall behind him, and a pair of shoes rests on a table. Though the room is dark, a band of sunlight falls across the man's back, apparently from some window out of frame. The atmosphere of this painting feels both familiar and mysterious, ordinary and poetic.

Wyeth's father was a famous illustrator who taught him to paint at a young age. He lived in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, and rarely traveled, believing that by looking deeply at familiar subjects and places, he could find universal truths. The subject of *That Gentleman* is Andrew Clark, one of Wyeth's neighbors. After painting Andrew Clark, Wyeth said that he was a dignified gentleman who might otherwise have gone unrecorded. Through careful observation and patient painting, Wyeth revealed the quiet dignity and mystery in everyday moments.

Wyeth was inspired by the American Regionalist movement during an era when abstract expressionism was popular and realism was considered out of style. Rather than follow trends, he remained committed to painting the people and places he knew in a style that felt true to his vision. He worked in tempera, an ancient medium that predates the Renaissance, created by mixing egg yolk and pigments. This medium gives his paintings a timeless quality, connecting Wyeth's subjects—the ordinary people of his rural Pennsylvanian town—to the deepest histories of art. His work reminds us that sometimes the most radical thing an artist can do is to look carefully at what others might overlook.

Wayne Thiebaud
American, 1920-2021

Cakes 1963
National Gallery of Art

Click here to view image.

In *Cakes* by Wayne Thiebaud, three rows of delicious-looking pastries seem to glow in creamy pastel colors, each displayed proudly on its own plate. The thick strokes of oil paint look so much like real frosting that you might find yourself getting hungry! While this is technically a still life painting, Thiebaud transforms these ordinary desserts into something magical through his unique style. He outlines each cake in bright colors and adds prominent shadows that make the cakes appear to float off the canvas.

Before becoming a fine artist, Thiebaud worked as a cartoonist and even interned at Walt Disney Studios. During World War II, he served as an Air Force photographer and film editor. These early experiences with commercial art and photography shaped his distinctive way of seeing the world. When he began teaching art after the war, he started painting the pictures that would make him famous—rows of pies, cakes, candy machines, and other everyday American treats. By painting these simple objects with such care and joy, Thiebaud helps us see the beauty in things we might usually take for granted.

While earlier artists we've studied belonged to specific movements like Impressionism or Abstract Expressionism, contemporary artists like Thiebaud find inspiration everywhere—from fine art to comic books, from shop windows to movie screens. Thiebaud combines the careful observation of traditional still life painting with the bold colors of advertising and the playful spirit of cartoons. His work reminds us that art can be found in unexpected places, even in something as simple as a slice of cake. Thiebaud lived to be 101 years old, spending decades teaching young artists and creating paintings that help us see the wonder in ordinary life.

Alice Neel
American, 1900–1984

Hartley 1966
National Gallery of Art

Click here to view image.

Though Alice Neel is one of the most acclaimed American portrait painters, she never thought of her paintings as portraits, preferring to call them "pictures of people". Portraits often try to show their subjects in the best possible light, but Neel wasn't interested in this kind of artificial presentation. Her paintings are more like snapshots, capturing specific moments in people's lives with all their complexities and imperfections. Like Rembrandt, Neel possessed a rare talent for capturing the emotions behind a person's still face, and like Van Gogh, she filters what she sees through a unique and personal style of bold colors and expressive brushstrokes.

Hartley is a painting of Neel's son. We see him casually seated in an orange armchair, his legs spread comfortably, his hands behind his head in a relaxed pose. But there is nothing relaxed about the expression on his face. His eyes don't exactly meet our own, but rather appear to be gazing out into space, as if Hartley is lost in thought. There seems to be a great deal of anxiety lurking beneath the surface of his face. Neel painted this portrait during a difficult period in her son's life. He was struggling during his first year of medical school and considering joining the army to fight in the Vietnam War.

Neel did not have an easy life. She was very poor for the majority of her life and suffered many personal tragedies. She painted portraits of the ordinary people around her, illustrating the humanity of every individual she painted. Because she was painting portraits during a period when abstract art was flourishing, her work was not appreciated until later in her life. Today, she is celebrated as one of America's most important artists, who proved that honest depictions of ordinary people could reveal profound truths about human nature.

Anselm Kiefer
German, 1945-

Click here to view image.

Zim Zum 1990
National Gallery of Art

Zim Zum is an absolutely massive painting. It's taller than a basketball goal, longer than a car, and weighs almost 1,000 pounds. This semi-abstract landscape was constructed out of solid lead, which Anselm Kiefer burned with fire and corroded with acid, then painted over using acrylic paint, crayon, and ash. Out of the chaos of crinkled metal, the image of a dark lake emerges, surrounded by streaks of charred earth. When viewing *Zim Zum*, we're not just looking at a landscape—we're experiencing it. The enormous scale makes us feel tiny before it, while the dark colors and rough texture create a solemn, overwhelming emotional experience.

Kiefer was born in Nazi Germany, just before the end of World War II. He grew up in the aftermath of the war with an acute awareness of its horrible ramifications. Through his art, Kiefer confronts his country's difficult history. The title "*Zim Zum*" comes from Jewish mysticism—it describes the moment when God cleared out space to create the universe. By combining this spiritual idea with a scarred landscape, Kiefer suggests both destruction and the possibility of renewal.

Unlike earlier landscape painters who tried to capture nature's beauty, Kiefer creates landscapes that tell stories about human actions and their consequences. Kiefer's unconventional use of materials sets him apart from most painters we've studied. He often uses materials that already contain history and meaning, such as lead, ashes, and straw. By physically attacking his materials with fire and acid, Kiefer introduces an element of chaos into his work. His work shows us that contemporary art can address serious themes, such as war, collective trauma, and spiritualism. Though *Zim Zum* might seem dark, it also contains hope—just as nature can heal charred earth, art can help us understand difficult parts of our past.

Chuck Close
American, 1940-2021

Jasper 1997-1998
National Gallery of Art

Click here to view image.

If you look *Jasper* up close, what you'll see is hundreds of tiny abstract pictures, placed side by side in a grid of diamonds. But take a step back and you'll see an extremely realistic portrait of Jasper Johns, the famous artist and friend of Chuck Close. If you squint, you may even feel like you're looking at a photograph. This effect is similar to the way computer screens work, where thousands of individual pixels come together to create the illusion of a solid image.

Close did not always paint in this style. He became famous for painting huge portraits in a photorealistic style—meaning his portraits were so realistic they looked just like photographs. In his mid-forties, Close suffered a spinal artery collapse, which left him partially paralyzed and bound to a wheelchair. But instead of giving up art, Close learned to adapt to his new circumstances and created paintings in a style that worked for him. He strapped paint brushes to his wrists and continued painting portraits by breaking his canvas up into grids, filling each square with fun shapes and bright colors. He was so experienced that he knew exactly how each square of the painting would come together to create the larger image. What might have seemed like a limitation became the source of a bold new artistic vision.

Portraits were always Close's favorite type of painting. He once said that you can see a person's entire life in their face—whether they laughed a lot or frowned often can be read in the lines of their face. The portraits Close created after his injury were filled with joy. Each one was a celebration of ordinary people, of life, and of the ability to create. Chuck Close's life and art remind us that creativity isn't limited by physical ability—sometimes our greatest challenges can lead to our most innovative ideas if we choose to persevere and keep creating.

Painting	**Medium**	**Approximate Size** *(h x w in inches)*
Banks of the Seine at Médan.	Oil on canvas	29 x 36
Cakes	Oil on canvas	60 x 72
Cathedral	Enamel & aluminum paint on canvas	72 x 35
Christ Blessing	Tempera, oil, and gold on panel	23 x 19
Fishing Boats (Le Perrey)	Oil on canvas	36 x 29
Girl Arranging Her Hair	Oil on canvas	30 x 25
Girl with Blue Eyes	Oil on canvas	24 x 18
Ginevra Bentivoglio	Tempera on poplar panel	21 x 15
Ginevra de' Benci [obverse]	Oil on panel	15 x 15
Golfe Juan	Oil on canvas	32 x 40
Hartley	Oil on canvas	50 x 36
Head of a Young Man	Oil on paper	14 x 9
Jasper	Oil on canvas	102 x 84
La condition humaine	Oil on canvas	39 x 32
La Mousmé	Oil on canvas	29 x 24
On the Pont de l'Europe	Oil on canvas	42 x 52
Parson Weems' Fable	Oil on canvas	38 x 50
Portrait of My Grandmother	Oil on canvas	38 x 24
Saint Rufina	Oil on canvas	36 x 26
Self-Portrait	Oil on canvas	33 x 26
Still Life with Golden Bream	Oil on canvas	18 x 25
That Gentleman	Tempera on panel	24 x 48
The Blind Man of Toledo	Oil on canvas	24 x 36
The Nativity	Oil on panel	50 x 38
The Rhinoceros	Woodcut on laid paper	9 x 12
The Storyteller	Oil on canvas	13 x 23
Tivoli: The Temple of the Sybil and the Campagna	Oil on canvas	29 x 39
Untitled	Oil on canvas	98 x 67
Washerwomen on the Beach of Etretat	Oil on wood	15 x 22
Zim Zum	Acrylic, emulsion, crayon, shellac, ashes, and canvas on lead	150 x221

Suggested Activities for Contest Preparation

PART A

Use only the Official List in this bulletin to study for Part A. Other sources may show variations that will be considered incorrect in the contest. Students in each contest division will write names of artists and titles for 15 randomly selected paintings.

Spelling - List difficult or unfamiliar words, either artists' names or words in painting titles, such as "Modigliani," "Caillebotte," "sfumato," etc. In teams or as individuals, have spelling bees until you can spell every word.

Capitalization - Make a list of painting titles and artists' names that have some words that are capitalized and some that aren't. Read each title out loud three times: first say the whole title, then only the capitalized words in the title, then the whole title again. Repeat this exercise until you're sure you know which words are capitalized and which aren't.

Punctuation - Make a list of artists' names and painting titles that include punctuation marks: commas, dashes, apostrophes, etc. Be sure to include artists' names that have diacritical markings, like Cézanne.

Association - Use the Part B activities below to help prepare for Part A. It's easier to memorize artists and titles when you can associate them with other things you've learned. Isn't it easier, for example, to memorize the title of Magritte's painting if you know the idea the painting represents? Or to remember that Rembrandt painted *Self-Portrait* when you know he was famous for painting self-portraits?

PART B

The activities suggested here will help students at all grade levels prepare for the contest.

The more familiar you are with the paintings themselves, the better you will do in Part B of the contest. After you have studied and compared the paintings, use a copy of the Official List and, without looking at any of the paintings, try to create a picture in your mind of each one. Describe the objects you remember and where they are in the picture. Think about what elements are most important to the painting: color, lines, light, rhythms, etc. Are the colors warm, cool, neutral, complementary? What kinds of lines are most important? Are lines drawn or formed where colors or objects meet? What is the source of light and how is it used? Does the artist create a sense of perspective? Are there contrasts of colors, lines, light and shadows, textures, or subjects? Are there geometric shapes that are important in the composition of the picture? How is it like other paintings you've studied? How is it different?

Think about what you know of the artist's life and the time when the picture was painted. What does the painting tell you about what life was like then? Does it tell you something about what was happening in a particular country or region? Is the painting an example of a particular style, like Surrealism or Impressionism? Did the artist who painted it help create a new style of art? Are there other pictures you've studied that are painted in the same style? Is it one of the older or newer paintings on the list? Don't worry about memorizing specific dates. Do try to learn, for example, that Fauvism is a Modern style and not a Renaissance one, or that Rubens, a Baroque artist, lived before Dufy, a Fauvist.

Writing out short lists sometimes can help you organize your thoughts about these paintings. Thinking about art elements, for example, make a list of paintings that have a rhythm of curved lines. Or write lists of paintings in which artists use color (warm, cool, or both) to bring foreground and background together. For Art History, make a list of the portrait paintings you have studied. Or write a list of the styles of art you've studied, starting with the style that came first.

To test your memory, play the "Name That Painting" game with teams of two, three, or four players. Write the thirty-one painting titles on separate slips of paper, fold them, and put them in a sack or bowl. Take turns drawing one title at a time. One team member draws a title, and must describe the painting to his or her teammates, without using any of the words in the title. Time how long it takes to name the painting. The team with the quickest time wins. Once you've played a few times and gotten good at the game, make it harder by changing the rules. For example, work on Art Elements by describing the paintings using only colors, or only details about light or lines, but don't describe the actual things in the painting. For Art History, use clues like "19th century still life," or "Abstract Expressionist," or "Italian genre painting." As your skill improves, make the game harder by using only one-word clues, like "American," "Cubist," or "Renaissance."

Sample Questions

Art Elements Grades 4-6

1. When we mix red and yellow together, what color do we get?
    a) Purple
    b) Green
    c) Pink
    d) Orange

2. What are analogous colors?
    a) Colors opposite each other on the color wheel
    b) Colors that can't be mixed from other colors
    c) Colors next to each other on the color wheel
    d) Colors that aren't on the color wheel

3. What kind of lines suggest peacefulness and calm?
    a) Vertical lines
    b) Diagonal lines
    c) Horizontal lines
    d) Zigzag lines

4. Which of these colors is NOT a primary color?
    a) Red
    b) Green
    c) Blue
    d) Yellow

5. What is the foreground of a painting?
    a) The part that seems farthest away
    b) The part that seems closest to the viewer
    c) The middle part of the painting
    d) The upper fourth of the painting

True/False

6. Warm colors like red and orange make objects appear closer to us than cool colors like blue and green.
   a) True
   b) False

7. Texture in a painting can be smooth or rough, depending on how the artist applies the paint.
   a) True
   b) False

8. A shape is three-dimensional, while a form is two-dimensional.
   a) True
   b) False

Art Elements Grades 7 & 8

1. What element creates rhythm in a painting?
    a) Using only primary colors
    b) Making all lines vertical
    c) Repeating shapes and colors
    d) Using neutral colors only

2. What technique creates dramatic contrast between light and dark to create depth and volume?
    a) Sfumato
    b) Perspective
    c) Chiaroscuro
    d) Rhythm

3. Why are neutral colors not included on the color wheel?
    a) They are too dark
    b) They lack saturation
    c) They are too light
    d) They are primary colors

4. Which best describes composition in painting?
    a) The size of the canvas
    b) The illusion of depth in a painting
    c) How all elements work together to create a painting
    d) The subject of the painting

5. Complimentary colors
    a) Are across from each other on the color wheel
    b) Are next to each other on the color wheel
    c) Are colors not found on the color wheel
    d) Are any two colors that compliment each other aesthetically

True/False

6. Point of view is the position from which the viewer sees objects in a painting.
    a) True
    b) False

7. Shapes have three dimensions: height, width, and depth.
    a) True
    b) False

8. Grey is an example of a neutral color.
    a) True
    b) False

Art History Grades 4-6

9. During which period did artists begin using oil paint?
    a) Renaissance
    b) Baroque
    c) Modern
    d) Contemporary

10. What is unusual about Chuck Close's later portraits?
    a) They are all self-portraits
    b) They are all of famous women
    c) They are made of tiny abstract pictures in a grid
    d) They are very small

11. What technique did Leonardo da Vinci use that made his portraits look softer?
    a) Chiaroscuro
    b) Sfumato
    c) Fauvism
    d) Cross Hatching

12. Which of these artists was a part of the Dutch Golden Age?
    a) Wyeth
    b) Sorolla
    c) Ercole
    d) Rembrandt

13. *Fishing Boats* (*Le Perrey*) by Braque is an example of
    a) Abstract Expressionism
    b) Genre painting
    c) Cubism
    d) Still Life

True/False

14. Thiebaud was famous for paintings of American foods and treats.
    a) True
    b) False

15. The Renaissance began in Paris, France.
    a) True
    b) False

16. Anselm Kiefer was a Spanish painter who started the Cubist movement.
    a) True
    b) False

Art History Grades 7 & 8

9. What was revolutionary about Braque's approach to landscape painting?
    a) He painted outdoors
    b) He used bright colors
    c) He showed multiple viewpoints at once
    d) He focused on cityscapes

10. What medium did Wyeth work in to create *That Gentleman*?
    a) Tempera
    b) Oil paint
    c) Woodcut printing
    d) Acrylic paint

11. What was the Harlem Renaissance?
    a) A political movement for African American voting rights
    b) A cultural, artistic, and intellectual movement celebrating African American achievements
    c) A social movement advocating for better working conditions in Harlem factories
    d) A religious revival in Harlem, New York

12. What country was Francisco de Goya from?
    a) France
    b) Italy
    c) Spain
    d) Peru

13. René Magrite belonged to which artistic movement?
    a) Cubism
    b) Impressionism
    c) Post Impressionism
    d) Surrealism

True/False

14. Post-Impressionist artists all shared the same style and techniques.
    a) True
    b) False

15. Tiepolo's *The Storyteller* shows us a scene from everyday life in Venice.
    a) True
    b) False

16. Amedeo Modigliani was the pioneer of the Fauvist movement, which uses bright colors and simplified forms to express emotion.
    a) True
    b) False

Additional Activities

"Before and After" - Choose one of the 30 paintings, and write a short story about what happened just before the picture was painted or just after it was completed. For example, what is the young girl getting ready to go do in *Girl Arranging Her Hair*? What is the young man looking at in *Head of a Young Man*? What is *Ginevra de' Benci* like as a person? Where is the sulking dog going in *The Storyteller*? Where is *The Blind Man of Toledo* coming from? Where is he going next? Look at these paintings and allow your imagination to run wild!

"Elements on the Move" - With several students working together, get different colors of construction paper and cut them into shapes. Use some regular geometric shapes like circles, squares, and triangles and some that have lots of strange angles and curves, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Take turns arranging the colored shapes in different ways on a desk or table, with some or all of the pieces overlapping. After each new arrangement, talk with each other about how the shapes, lines and colors work together. You can create scenes with the shapes, or just use them for purely abstract art works. Try making some arrangements with only warm colors, and others with only cool colors. Compare arrangements that use only regular geometric shapes to ones that combine regular and irregular shapes. What different emotions do different colors, lines, and shapes make you feel?

"Picture Me This" - Pretend that instead of having your school picture taken this year, you're going to have your portrait painted. Remember that it will be a permanent record of who you are. Will you dress up or be casual? What kind of expression will you have on your face? What colors will you wear? Will you pose indoors or outdoors? Sit or stand? What else besides you will be in the portrait? What

style of painting do you want the artist to use? Share your portrait ideas with classmates, and see how many different kinds of portraits you've planned.

"Painting Goes to School" - Choose one of the paintings or artists and create a project for another school subject. Teach your classmates who aren't in the Art Contest definitions of new English or foreign words you've learned, like "sfumato" or "Nativity" or "Regionalism." For a history project, research what life was like for ordinary people living in Madrid during the time Goya was painting. For a geography project, make a map of Florence. Research the history of Italy and the origins of the Renaissance. For a science project, compare how oil paint reacts with different materials like linen, wood, and canvas. Or think of another project that interests you. There are plenty from which to choose!

Museum Notes

The **Amon Carter Museum of American Art** opened in 1961 to house the collection of western art amassed by Amon Carter, Sr. Expanding on an original collection of 400 paintings, drawings, and sculptures by Frederic Remington and Charles Russell—the single most important collection of works by these artists—the museum now encompasses a wide range of 19th and 20th century American paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures, as well as photographs from the early days of the medium to the present. The museum's holdings include a collection of more than 230,000 photographic objects, spanning the history of photography. A building addition, designed by the museum's original architect and completed in 2001, quadrupled the museum's display space and enabled the museum to display many more of the works from its growing collections.

The **Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art** is part of the University of Texas at Austin. Serving Austin and Central Texas, the Blanton is one of the finest university museums in the country. Its art ranges from ancient Greek pottery to 20th century Abstract Expressionist painting. European art from the Renaissance and Baroque, American art from the 19th and 20th centuries, and Modern and contemporary Latin American artworks are represented in the museum's permanent collection of over 18,000 works. The museum's collection of prints and drawings is considered one of the finest in the nation. The Blanton presents a wide range of special exhibitions and educational programs both for the university community and for the public.

The **Dallas Museum of Art (DMA)** is one of the largest art museums in the United States. Established in 1903, the DMA's collection has grown to over 24,000 objects, dating from the third millennium B.C. to the present day. The museum is known for its educational programs, its impressive exhibitions, and its vast and diverse permanent gallery. The museum's collections were conceived as a celebration of the human power to create. These collections include European, African, Ancient Mediterranean, Asian, Contemporary, and American art. The DMA's research library, the Mildred R. and Frederick M. Mayer Library, is home to over 50,000 volumes available to both curators and the general public. Entry to the DMA has been free since 2013.

The **Kimbell Art Museum**, located in Fort Worth, Texas, hosts a permanent collection of about 350 works of art, traveling exhibitions, a large research library, and educational programs. Though the collection is relatively small, the works are of extremely high quality. The Kimbell is home to the first known painting of Michelangelo, as well as works by Caravaggio, Reubens, Velázquez, Rembrandt, Monet, Matisse, Picasso, and many other important artists. The building itself was designed to be a work of art in its own right and is considered to be one of the most significant works of architecture of recent times. Admission to the permanent collection is free to the general public.

The **McNay Art Museum**, located in San Antonio, Texas, is considered the first modern art museum in Texas. The building is a Spanish Colonial style mansion that sits atop 23 acres of land. The museum is primarily known for its collection of 19th and 20th century European and American art. It currently houses over 20,000 objects, including works by Cézanne, Picasso, Gauguin, Matisse, and Rivera. The museum was established in 1954, when artist Marion Koogler McNay bequeathed her fortune, mansion, and art collection to the creation of the museum.

The **Meadows Museum**, a division of Southern Methodist University's Meadows School of the Arts, houses one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Spanish art outside of Spain, with works dating from the 10th to the 21st century. Highlights of the collection include Renaissance altarpieces, monumental Baroque canvases, exquisite Rococo oil sketches, polychrome wood sculpture, Impressionist landscapes, modernist abstractions, a comprehensive collection of the graphic works of Goya, and a select group of sculptures by major 20th century masters, as well as works by leading artists of the region.

The **Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH)** was established in 1900 and is now one of the largest art museums in the United States. The museum hosts over a million visitors each year, where, in addition to viewing the collection, they attend special exhibitions, lectures, and educational programs for children and adults. The museum's continually growing permanent collection contains nearly 70,000 works of art which date from ancient cultures to the present. The major civilizations of Europe, Asia, North and South America, and Africa are represented. Among the museum's particular strengths are Italian Renaissance paintings, French Impressionist works, American art, and European and American paintings and sculpture from post-1945.

Opened in 1941, the **National Gallery of Art** in Washington, D. C., is home to one of the finest collections in the world. It began when the U.S. Congress agreed to accept a gift from Andrew W. Mellon of his art collection and the money for construction of the museum's original building and also agreed to provide government funds to support the operation of the new museum. It grew to its present status through gifts from hundreds of other donors. The mission of the Gallery is to serve the nation by preserving, collecting, exhibiting, and fostering the understanding of works of art. Its collections concentrate primarily on painting, sculpture, and works on paper from the Middle Ages to the present, from Europe and the United States. The permanent collection is particularly rich in Italian, French, and American art. Unique among the world's national art museums, the Gallery's collections have been formed entirely by private donations. The Gallery does not use government funds to purchase additional works of art.

Answer Key for Sample Questions

Grades 4-6	Grades 7 & 8
1. D	1. C
2. C	2. C
3. C	3. B
4. B	4. C
5. B	5. A
6. A	6. A
7. A	7. B
8. B	8. A
9. A	9. C
10. C	10. A
11. B	11. B
12. D	12. C
13. C	13. D
14. A	14. B
15. B	15. A
16. B	16. B