



# Art Smart

**Art Contest Bulletin  
2023-2024 and 2024-2025**

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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 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 that you use to help you 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

Bearden	<i>Tomorrow I May Be Far Away</i>
van Beyeren	<i>Banquet Still Life with Roses</i>
Borgoña	<i>The Investiture of Saint Ildefonsus</i>
Botticelli	<i>Portrait of a Youth</i>
Butinone	<i>Supper at Bethany</i>
Cambiaso	<i>Holy Family with Saint Anne</i>
Caravaggio	<i>The Cardsharps</i>
Castiglione	<i>Noah Leading the Animals into the Ark</i>
Dalí	<i>The Sacrament of the Last Supper</i>
De Chirico	<i>Conversation among the Ruins</i>
Fabritius	<i>Young Girl Plucking a Duck</i>
Garofalo	<i>Madonna and Child with St. Jerome</i>
Graves	<i>Untitled #1</i>
Hopper	<i>House with Fence</i>
Kandinsky	<i>Improvisation 31 (Sea Battle)</i>
Krasner	<i>Blue and Black</i>
Lawrence	<i>Street to Mbari</i>
Leyster	<i>Self-Portrait</i>
Matisse	<i>Ivy in Flower</i>
Mondrian	<i>Composition with Large Blue Plane, Red, Black, Yellow, and Gray</i>
Monet	<i>Weeping Willow</i>
Munch	<i>Girls on the Pier</i>
Neel	<i>Dorothy Pearlstein</i>
O'Keeffe	<i>Red Cannas</i>
Picasso	<i>Bottle of Port and Glass</i>
Rivera	<i>Delfina Flores</i>
Titian	<i>Woman Holding an Apple</i>
Vermeer	<i>Woman Holding a Balance</i>
Warhol	<i>Caroline</i>
Wood	<i>New Road</i>



## Pronunciation Guide

Bearden	BEER den
van Beyeren	fuhn BY uh run
Borgoña	bohr GOH nyah
Botticelli	bawt tee CHEL lee
Butinone	boo tee NOH neh
Cambiaso	kahm bee AH soh
Caravaggio	kah rah VAHD jow
Castiglione	kah stee LYAW ne
De Chirico	deh KEE ree kow
Dalí	dah LEE
Fabritius	fah BREE tsee oos
Garofalo	gah row fah loh
Graves	GREYVZ
Hopper	HOP uhr
Kandinsky	khan DYEEN skee
Krasner	KRAZ nuhr
Lawrence	LAWR uhns
Leyster	LAHY ster
Matisse	ma TEES
Mondrian	mon dree AHN
Monet	moh NEY
Munch	MOONK
Neel	NEEL
O'Keeffe	oh KEEF
Picasso	pih KAH soh
Rivera	ree VE rah
Titian	TISH uhn
Vermeer	ver MEER
Warhol	WAWR hawl
Wood	WUD

## 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** - a type of paint known for its quick-drying time and vibrant colors. It became popular during the **Contemporary** period of art history. Once dry, acrylic paint becomes waterproof and durable, making the paintings last for a long time.

**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 in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. 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** - a painting technique that uses strong contrasts between light and shadow to create a dramatic effect. The term derives from the Italian words for "light" (*chiaro*) and "dark" (*scuro*). Chiaroscuro became popular during the **Renaissance** period and continued to be used by many **Baroque** artists. Artists employ chiaroscuro to evoke intense emotions in their viewers and add a sense of drama to their work.

**Collage** - a technique that involves combining various materials, such as paper, photographs, fabric, and found objects, onto a flat surface to create a new composition. The materials can be cut, torn, layered, and overlapped, allowing artists to play with texture, color, and shape to create expressive artworks.

**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 they tried to understand and express the strange new world they were living in, artists also began to create **abstract art** during this period.

**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 early **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**. The artists paid close attention to **light**, colors, and **textures**, making the paintings look very lifelike. The Dutch Golden Age was also a time when art became more accessible to people other than just the rich and powerful. Paintings were bought by middle-class citizens who wanted to have art in their homes, and this led to a flourishing art market.

**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 sculptures or 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. Genre paintings were especially popular during the **Dutch Golden Age**.

**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 late 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 very 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.

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

**Modern** - a period of art history from 1850 to 1950. Important historical events include the rise of democracy, the diminishing power of monarchies, and 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.

**Mural** - a large artwork or painting typically created on a wall or ceiling.

**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.

**Oeuvre** - the entire body of work created by an artist throughout their lifetime.



**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.

**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.

**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.

**Pop art** - a movement that became popularized in the 1960s and 1970s, during the **Contemporary period** of art history. "Pop" artists drew inspiration from popular culture, like advertisements, comic books, and celebrities. They wanted to show that art could be inspired by everyday life and that ordinary things could be turned into art. Pop art often features bright and bold colors, and is usually made via a technique called **silk-screening**, in which a special screen with tiny holes delivers ink onto T-shirts, posters, or even paper. Pop artists like Andy Warhol favored silk-screening because it allowed them to make multiple copies of their artwork, making the work more accessible and more widely seen.

**Portrait** - a representation of a person or animal 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.

**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. 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 a pride in the 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 very formal approach to subject matter and to **composition**.

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

**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.

**Silk Screening** - a printing technique where paint is applied to a surface using silk screens and stencils. This technique allowed artists to mass produce their works in the **Contemporary period** of art history.

**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.

**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 was mostly used before and during the early **Renaissance** period of art history.

**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.)

## 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 *Supper at Bethany* and *Holy Family with Saint Anne* 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 we can see in Kandinsky's *Improvisation 31 (Sea Battle)* and Dalí's *The Sacrament of the Last Supper*. 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, *Conversation among the Ruins* includes two people, but we wouldn't consider it a portrait, because the painting is mainly about the mysterious and dreamlike atmosphere, and not 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 Botticelli's *Portrait of a Youth*.

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 portrait of *Delfina Flores*, Diego Rivera captures the young girl's childish innocence and tenderness. Through portraiture, artists might also seek to challenge societal norms or convey a particular message about identity, beauty, or the human experience. In Judith Leyster's *Self-Portrait*, her formal attire presents her as an important member of society, elevating her status beyond that of a mere craftsman. This portrayal reinforces the idea that artists can be respected and valued members of the community.

It's important to note that not all portraits represent real individuals. In many cases, artists like Titian would create idealized depictions of beauty rather than aiming for realistic representation. The woman depicted in *Woman Holding an Apple* may not have been a specific person but rather an embodiment of ideal beauty.

**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. In genre paintings, we see scenes of families spending time together, people enjoying leisure activities, musicians playing instruments, or people cooking and preparing meals. We can even learn about moral messages that were being imparted during that time. For example, in *Woman Holding a Balance* we see an intimate scene that reminds us not to give too much weight to earthly treasures, like expensive pearls and elegant furs, and to exercise moderation and good judgment. Genre painting became popular during the Dutch Golden Age, when an emerging middle class started to become an important player in a thriving art market. Ordinary citizens had money to spend on art, and they wanted to see paintings that reflected their own lives and experiences.

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. 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." To be classified



as a still life, a painting has to be about the things, or objects, themselves. Still life artists have painted many different objects in very different settings, but usually a still life is a close-up view of a carefully arranged group of things, shown in an indoor setting, often on a tabletop. *Banquet Still Life with Roses* is a typical example. The choice of objects and their arrangement is often deliberate, as it is truly the subject of a still life. The particular objects can have symbolic meaning. For example, skulls, hourglasses, and clocks signify the passage of time or the impermanence of life. The state of an object can also be symbolic; the perfectly ripe, half-eaten fruits and expensive, knocked over glasses might suggest decay, disarray, and excess.

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. Grant Wood's *New Road* is an example of a painting that includes buildings but is still considered a landscape. In contrast to Edward Hopper's *House with a Fence*, the environment in *New Road* is its main subject. While it is true that Hopper painted an outdoor view in *House with a Fence*, his composition draws our eyes to the empty sky and the neighboring houses, allowing the lawns and the trees to blend into the surroundings. For this reason, Hopper's painting is not considered a landscape. 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. Claude Monet favored this technique, believing that by painting *en plein air*, he could capture the ever-changing qualities of nature, such as light and color, more accurately than by working solely in a studio.

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 wild and expressive, like Nancy Graves' *Untitled # 1*, or made out of simple geometric shapes and straight lines, like Piet Mondrian's *Composition with Large Blue*

*Plane, Red, Black, Yellow, and Gray*. Sometimes the term abstract is used to describe paintings that do not show objects as they really look, such as the ocean and battleship in Kandinsky's *Improvisation 31 (Sea Battle)* or stemmed glass and wine bottle in Picasso's *Bottle of Port and Glass*. However, we will consider these pieces semi-abstract. Unlike Graves and Mondrian, Picasso and Kandinsky maintain a connection to the recognizable world—by taking real-world objects and distorting them, they walk the line between abstract and representational art. In Semi-Abstract art, the art elements are used to represent real-world objects in a non-realistic way. In Abstract art, there are no real-world objects being portrayed—the main subjects are 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 orange background and blue splashes in Matisse's *Ivy in Flower*. 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. 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. For an example of how objects painted in warm colors look closer than those in cool colors, look at some of the people and the bridge in Munch's *Girls on the Pier*.

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 *Red Cannas* by Georgia O'Keeffe.

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 some cases, the source of light is symbolic, like in Luca Cambiaso's *Holy Family with Saint Anne*, where the light emanates from baby 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 *The Sacrament of the Last Supper* by Dalí and *New Road* by Grant Wood.

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 *Dorothy Pearlstein* that draws us into a staring contest with the subject of Alice Neel's painting. With just a

touch of white paint, an artist like van Beyeren can create the impression of light shining on a surface like glass or polished wood. 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. It's Vermeer's use of light and shadow that moves our eyes up and down a painting that looks as realistic as a photograph. In *New Road*, the shadow in the foreground makes us feel as though we are peeking out from a grove or secret hiding spot, amplifying the mysterious atmosphere of the painting.

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 Kandinsky drew to indicate the masts of a ship or the lines created by the edges of colored shapes in *Ivy in Flower*.

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. For an example of both diagonal and curved lines, look at Nancy Graves' *Untitled #1*.

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. Look at the rectangles in *Conversation among the Ruins* and *Composition with Large Blue Plane, Red, Black, Yellow, and Gray*. What effect do you think they have?

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 as 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 Garofalo alternated between light and dark colors when painting the skull in *Madonna and Child with St. Jerome*, we can perceive its form without walking around it or holding it.

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 *Young Girl Plucking a Duck*, compare the glossy, hard shine of the beads on the girl's necklace, with the soft, feathered underbelly of the duck, and the heavy, thick fabric of the jacket. 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 is *Noah Leading the Animals into the Ark*. 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. It's often difficult to see the texture of an original work when we're looking at a copy.



**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 *Caroline*, or by using complementary colors that contrast with each other, as in *Ivy in Flower*. 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.

Munch's *Girls on the Pier* is an excellent example of the way contrast can make a painting more mysterious and interesting. By making some areas darker and others lighter, Munch creates depth and draws attention to the girls. To further this effect, Munch juxtaposes the cool colors of the water and sky with warm colors of the girls and the pier, a contrast that contributes to the atmosphere of ominousness and tension. Munch also creates contrast by painting the girls facing opposite directions and by incorporating vertical and horizontal lines. Overall, it is the artist's use of contrast that makes this painting so affective 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 *Street to Mbari*.

**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 *New Road*, the repetition of curving hills extending from the foreground into the background establishes a rhythm that makes our eyes bounce, simulating the sensation of winding up and down the hilly path. When we look down the hills, we naturally look back up again, and it feels like a never-ending cycle. This cycle adds to the playful and optimistic feeling we get from the artwork.

**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 blue and white that tie foreground and background together in *Delfina Flores*. Sometimes artists use color to separate parts, using warm colors primarily in the foreground and reserving cool colors mostly for the background, for instance, as Munch did in *Girls on the Pier* and Butinone did in

*Supper at Bethany*. Lines and shapes also organize space in a painting. The horizontal lines of the table in *The Sacrament of the Last Supper* help to separate the important characters in the foreground from their background landscape setting. 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, Hopper organized the objects he included in *House with Fence* into a square to frame the vast, empty sky and structure the composition. Or look at the doubly inverted pyramids that create an hourglass shape in *Street to Mbari*. The geometric shape provides balance and symmetry.

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 the ocean in search of new lands, scholars like Machiavelli developed new political theories, reformers like Martin Luther challenged the power of the Catholic Church, scientists like Galileo gave us a deeper understanding of the universe, and artists like Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo created innovative techniques and methods of painting, forever changing the way we see and experience the world.

Though Spain, England, and the Netherlands all produced important Renaissance art, the birthplace of the Renaissance was unquestionably Florence, Italy. Before the Renaissance, artists were limited to creating religious works commissioned by the Catholic Church. In Florence, powerful merchant families began commissioning paintings not to adorn churches, but to decorate their palaces. Though religious paintings continued to be commissioned and produced, artists were now free to experiment with new styles and subjects. They created paintings depicting mythological scenes, portraits of important people, and gigantic marble statues celebrating the human form.

Though art evolved considerably throughout the Renaissance, paintings from the era can be generally characterized by their bold and bright colors, their attention to balance and harmony, and—perhaps most notably—their use of linear perspective. Linear perspective creates the illusion of depth by using mathematical planes to calculate how small or large objects should be painted in relation to each other. With the invention of oil paint, artists were also able to create depth in their paintings, giving us more realistic renderings of people and the world. The techniques developed in the Renaissance are still relevant to artists today.

## **Sandro Botticelli**

Italian, 1445-1510

### ***Portrait of a Youth*** [c.1482/1485]

National Gallery of Art

*Portrait of a Youth* is an example of a Renaissance portrait painting. Before the Renaissance, almost all portraits were of a religious nature and depicted biblical characters rather than living people. At the start of the Renaissance, wealthy families in Florence began commissioning artists to create secular works for their own private collections, allowing artists to create portraits like this. Though these portraits depicted the likeness of the subject, they were still somewhat idealized. At this time, outer beauty was thought to be a representation of inner virtue, so the subjects were often painted to look more beautiful to demonstrate their virtue.

This piece was painted using tempera. This is an extremely difficult medium to use, as it dries quickly and doesn't blend. If you look at this portrait closely, you can see that the tones are not the product of blending, but rather careful layering and cross-hatching. Tempera paint is created by mixing pigments with egg yolk. Botticelli painted many of his masterpieces using tempera. After oil paint became available, tempera became much less popular. But Botticelli painted with Tempera his entire career, and is one of the greatest masters of the medium.

Botticelli spent almost his entire life in Florence. Botticelli painted many portraits and religious paintings, but he is perhaps best known for his mythological paintings, such as *The Birth of Venus*. Scenes from mythology had not been depicted since the time of the ancient Romans. The Renaissance brought with it a renewed interest in ancient Greek and Roman art, ideas, and literature, so painters like Botticelli were commissioned to create mythological works as well as religious ones.

## **Bernardino Butinone**

Italian, 1450-1507

### ***Supper at Bethany*** [1490s]

Blanton Museum of Art

*Supper at Bethany* is a religious painting. During the Renaissance, painters relied on commissions from the Catholic Church to support themselves. Due to widespread illiteracy, the Church commissioned an enormous quantity of paintings to decorate their cathedrals. *Supper at Bethany* is one such painting. It illustrates a scene from the life of Jesus and would have been part of an altarpiece, allowing those who couldn't read a chance to view, understand, and engage with the Biblical story.

The scene that *Supper at Bethany* depicts is from the story of Jesus and Lazarus. Jesus and his disciples went to the town of Bethany after learning of Lazarus' sickness. By the time they arrived, Lazarus had died. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, then was invited to a dinner to celebrate the passover. This is the part of the story that Butinone's painting depicts. At the dinner, Lazarus' sister Mary anointed Jesus' feet with perfume. This act foreshadowed Jesus' death, making the scene highly symbolic and important to the Church.

Butinone's depiction of the scene is typical of the early Renaissance style. The tempera paint is bright and bold, the colors were carefully selected and placed. There's a linear quality to the composition that can be found in many paintings from the Renaissance. The painting can be broken down into horizontal and vertical planes. The floor, the table, Mary, and the dog are on horizontal planes, while Jesus, the disciples, the pillars, the building and the tree in the background are on vertical planes. This creates a visual symmetry, similar to the tiles on the floor. The verticality of the painting allows the scene to be easily read, from left to right, from front to back, just like a book. This was important, since for many illiterate people of the time, paintings like this one served as a stand-in for the Bible.

## **Juan de Borgoña**

Northern European, 1470–1536

### ***The Investiture of Saint Ildefonsus*** [c. 1508–14]

Meadows Museum

Little is known about Juan de Borgoña's life prior to 1495, the year he first appeared in Toledo to paint at the cathedral. Though he lived and worked in Spain, scholars believe he was of Northern European descent. His technique suggests that he spent time in Italy, studying the works of Italian masters, before bringing these techniques to Spain.

In *The Investiture of Saint Ildefonsus*, Borgoña employs a linear perspective similar to the perspective we saw in Butinone's *Supper at Bethany*. The painting is perfectly balanced with a central focal point. Though the figures in the foreground appear somewhat one-dimensional, depth is suggested by the slanted tiles on the floor and the curving architecture in the background. The painting was completed using both tempera and oil paints. This combination of mediums has an interesting effect after the passing of five-hundred years. The oil paint has faded while the tempera remains vibrant, leaving certain colors vivid—specifically the greens, golds, reds, and blues of the figures' robes—while the rest of the colors have dulled to a sort of sepia tone.

The painting depicts the vision of Saint Ildefonsus. He's seen bowing down in front of the virgin Mary, who is seated on a throne. Saint Ildefonsus was a seventh-century Spanish archbishop who was especially devoted to the virgin Mary. He claimed to have had a vision in which he was visited by Mary. As a reward for his devotion, she gifted the saint the golden robe that he can be seen wearing in the painting. Borgoña painted the scene for his patron, Archbishop Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros. Based on portraits of Archbishop Cisneros, it is believed that Borgoña painted him into this painting as Saint Ildefonsus.

## **Garofalo**

Italian, 1481-1559

### ***Madonna and Child with St. Jerome*** [1530]

Dallas Museum of Art

*Madonna and Child with St. Jerome* is a small oil painting full of magnificent details and vibrant colors. A great amount of deliberation must have gone into the composition of this painting. Garofalo uses groups of threes to achieve harmony in this work. The painter positioned the three figures in the foreground to create a triangle, a shape comprised of three points. This triangle of figures is balanced by the two triangular mountains in the background, making three triangles. Three is considered a holy number in Christianity, representing the Holy Trinity.

This painting is full of symbolism. The old man in the painting can be identified as St. Jerome, an Italian theologian who attempted to translate the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin. He's sitting next to a lion. Lions were often used to indicate St. Jerome, since he was believed to have tamed a lion in the wilderness. Saint Jerome is holding an open book in his right hand. Just above the book, baby Jesus, held by his mother, is pointing to a passage. For a clue as to what passage Jesus is pointing to, we can look at St. Jerome's left hand, which is gripping a skull. The skull represents death, so the baby Jesus is most likely prefiguring his own death by pointing to the passage in scripture that describes his crucifixion.

Another interesting thing you might notice about this painting is the amount of detail in the background. Look closely through the two windows and notice the tiny details that Garofalo filled in. He painted each individual panel of the fence, the bricks in the wall of the house, and the leaves on the trees. These details would be impossible to see from so far away, especially with your eyes focused on the figures in the foreground. The painting is able to see more than the eye. This technique gives the work a surreal quality not found in real life or even photography.



## **Titian**

Italian, c. 1488-1576

### ***Woman Holding an Apple* [c. 1550]**

National Gallery of Art

A versatile artist who created beautiful portraits, landscape, mythological and biblical scenes, Titian is considered one of the greatest and most influential painters to have ever lived. He spent much of his life in Venice, an important Italian port city that allowed him access to rare pigments imported from Asia. These pigments and Titian's mastery of them account for the brilliant colors in his works. Throughout his long life, his style evolved, becoming looser as he aged.

Titian would have been in his sixties when he completed *Woman Holding an Apple*. This is a very different painting from the Renaissance works we've already looked at. Viewed from afar, the portrait appears extremely lifelike. The way the light falls on the woman, the shadows on her face, the wrinkles in her gown—all these details work together to give the woman an individual presence and a reality that portraits from the time typically lacked. If you look closely, the texture of the painting is incredibly soft. If it was a photograph, you might think that it was slightly out of focus. It's a sort of illusion—up close the painting is soft and loose, but viewed as a whole, it has the appearance of reality. This aspect of his work was revolutionary and has inspired artists ever since.

The woman Titian depicted so viscerally in this painting was most likely not a real person at all. Titian completed many paintings depicting ideal beauty rather than recognizable people. The apple in the painting is a highly evocative symbol. Due to the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, the apple is seen as a symbol of temptation. For the ancient Greeks, the apple was a symbol of youth and fertility. Titian was well educated in both the Biblical texts and Greek mythology, so the symbol remains ambiguous and open to interpretation.

## **Luca Cambiaso**

Italian, 1527-1585

### ***Holy Family with Saint Anne*** [Late 1570s]

Blanton Museum of Art

As we learned in the section on Bernardino Butinone, a major purpose of religious art in the Renaissance was to act as a visual representation of the Bible, allowing illiterate people to understand the stories. In the mid 1500s, the Catholic Church held the Council of Trent, where leaders of the Church met to discuss ways of combating the Protestant Reformation. The Church decided they wanted a new kind of art. They wanted dramatic paintings that were easy to understand—free of distractions and decoration—that would fill the viewer with powerful emotions.

Luca Cambiaso painted *Holy Family with Saint Anne* a few years after the Council of Trent. This work is exactly what the Church was looking for. The painting shows the holy family gazing lovingly down at baby Jesus. There is nothing else in the painting. The background is shrouded in darkness. The only light source illuminating the holy family seems to be emanating from baby Jesus himself. There is nothing in the painting that could distract the viewer from the subjects. You see exactly what Cambiaso wants you to see, no more, no less.

Cambiaso painted the scene using the chiaroscuro technique. Chiaroscuro means “light and dark” in Italian. This technique uses harsh light and high contrast to create a dramatic effect and provoke an intense emotional reaction in the viewer. Though the chiaroscuro technique can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks, painters like Cambiaso and Caravaggio mastered it during the Renaissance. The influence of this style of painting carries through the Baroque era and can even be observed today, both in painting and in other mediums, such as theatre and film, where harsh light is used to add a heightened sense of drama.

## Caravaggio

Italian, c. 1571-1610

### **The Cardsharps** [c. 1595]

Kimbell Art Museum

Caravaggio's *The Cardsharps* is the final Renaissance painting we'll be looking at here. This piece is wildly different from the paintings that came before it. It serves as a perfect bridge between the Renaissance and Baroque periods. *The Cardsharps* does not depict a religious scene. It was not commissioned by the church. It does not depict idealized beauty. Instead, we see real people in a dramatic moment that could have taken place in any Roman tavern at the time.

In this oil painting, two boys are playing a game of *primero*, a precursor to poker. An ominous older man is standing behind one of the boys, peeking at his cards, signaling to the other boy, who looks over in alarm and begins pulling a card out from behind his back. Dangling from the boy's belt, we can glimpse a dagger, which he'll surely have to use if he's caught cheating. Caravaggio painted this scene with shocking realism, masterfully capturing each character's psychology.

This type of scene would have been familiar to Caravaggio. The artist was a man of the streets who often used beggars, swindlers, and gamblers as models for his paintings. *The Cardsharps* was an important milestone for Caravaggio's career, attracting the attention of an influential cardinal who bought the piece and put the artist in contact with important church officials, allowing Caravaggio to start working on larger scale religious works. However, Caravaggio's success was short-lived. Prone to brawls and duels, Caravaggio lived a tumultuous life. In 1606 he killed a man in Rome and had to spend the rest of his life on the run from the police. Because he could never stay in one place for too long, the artist painted quickly, foregoing preliminary sketches, painting directly onto the canvas from life. His style was hugely influential, helping to usher in a new era of art history.

## Baroque: 1600-1750

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. Protestantism spread throughout Northern Europe, leading to a decline in the Catholic Church's power. And artists pushed the medium of painting forward in exciting new directions.

Baroque painting is typically noted for its dramatic movement and intense lighting. Caravaggio's work can be seen as a bridge between the Renaissance and the Baroque periods. In Catholic countries like Italy and Spain, the Catholic Church built ornate cathedrals and commissioned painters to create elaborate paintings designed to awe their congregations. In the Netherlands, where Protestantism was more prominent, artists created very different works. Protestant churches were simple spaces—they had no need for large religious paintings—so artists painted for middle class merchants instead of grand cathedrals. This meant artists like Johannes Vermeer and Judith Leyster were free to paint non-religious subjects. Instead, they created genre paintings, still lifes, and landscape paintings. This period in Dutch history is known as the Dutch Golden Age. Many of the Baroque paintings that we'll be looking at are from this period.

One important characteristic of Baroque painting is the sense of movement and action within the compositions. Renaissance paintings typically showed people at rest—instead of showing an important event, they depicted a quiet moment before or after the event. Caravaggio was important in changing this, as we saw in *The Cardsharps*. Baroque painters often try to capture moments of action. They painted humans in motion, leading to more dramatic and realistic paintings.

## **Judith Leyster**

Dutch, 1609-1660

### ***Self-Portrait*** [1630]

National Gallery of Art

Judith Leyster's *Self-Portrait* is a painting about painting. We see the artist sitting in front of an unfinished canvas, palette and brushes in hand, turning towards us in a brief moment of rest, smiling with the easy confidence of a master painter. The piece she is working on is a genre painting of a jovial fiddler—the type of painting the artist would have been known for during her life. She's wearing her best clothes, not the clothes she would have actually worn to paint in. This choice of clothes depicts the artist as an important member of society, rather than a mere craftsman.

Leyster's brushwork is loose and free—far more so than any of the works we looked at from the Renaissance. The Dutch Republic was a Protestant country, so Dutch painters were not bound to the Catholic Church or wealthy families in the way the Renaissance artists were. They sold their paintings to merchants and families instead of churches, allowing them more freedom to choose their subject matter and to experiment with different techniques. Leyster's *Self-Portrait* was painted as a sort of advertisement for her own skills as a painter, cleverly demonstrating her capabilities in both portrait and genre painting.

Leyster was a member of the artists' guild in Haarlem, which allowed her to teach a painting workshop. During this period, it was uncommon for women to be professional painters. Leyster started painting at a young age to help support her family, completing *Self-Portrait* when she was only twenty-one years old. She was successful in her time, selling many genre paintings of tavern scenes. After her death, Leyster's work was virtually forgotten, often misattributed to other artists, until the late nineteenth century, when her paintings were rediscovered and reevaluated. Today she is considered an important Dutch Baroque painter.

## **Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione**

Italian, 1609-1664

### ***Noah Leading the Animals into the Ark* [c. 1645]**

National Gallery of Art

*Noah Leading the Animals into the Ark* is an example of an oil sketch. The piece was painted in a loose style using oils on a brown piece of paper. During the Renaissance, oil sketches were created as a way to plan out larger pieces. Castiglione was the first artist to create oil sketches that were finished works in and of themselves. In the 1600s, art collectors were becoming interested in the process of painting, so they began collecting oil sketches, which gave insights into how works were planned and executed. Castiglione capitalized on this fascination by creating and selling oil sketches that were not preparations for larger works.

This painting depicts the Biblical story of Noah's ark. In loose, energetic brushstrokes, we see Noah and his family herding a group of animals into the ark. The color palette is restricted to only a few hues—red, blue, and white. We can see the brown paper poking through the paint. The animals in the foreground take up much more space than Noah and his ark. The painting seems to be more about the animals than the famous story they are a part of. Castiglione painted this scene many times throughout his life. He was known as an excellent painter of animals, so it's easy to see why the story of Noah's ark appealed to him.

Castiglione, like Caravaggio, lived a tumultuous life. He was prone to violent outbursts and constantly in trouble with the law. His antisocial behavior seems to be at odds with his idyllic paintings, but perhaps it makes sense when you consider that the human stories Castiglione depicts are often relegated to the background, giving precedence to the harmony of the animal world. Because of his violent character, Castiglione was not widely successful during his life, but today he is remembered as an innovative artist and a great painter of animals.

## **Barent Fabritius**

Dutch, 1624-1673

### ***Young Girl Plucking a Duck*** [c. 1650]

Dallas Museum of Art

In *Young Girl Plucking a Duck*, we can observe how baroque artists utilized the chiaroscuro technique. We saw this technique in the Renaissance, in the painting *Holy Family with Saint Anne* by Luca Cambiaso. In that piece, chiaroscuro was used to strip away all unnecessary details, so the viewer would focus only on what was important, the religious subject. Almost one hundred years later, Barent Fabritius used the same technique with a wholly different effect. He used chiaroscuro to give drama and meaning to a mundane scene.

The painting depicts exactly what the title suggests: a young girl plucking a duck. The girl is bathed in a soft warm light, perhaps from some lantern outside the canvas. In her hands lies the limp duck, its head grazing a table below. Behind the girl, the room recedes into darkness. Red is the only splash of color in the painting. The crimson red of the girl's lips is balanced by the red of her shirt, necklace, hair band, and the rosy hues of her cheeks. Red is the color of blood, of passion, of life. There is no red on the duck. No blood flows through its veins. The duck has been painted in somber grays and browns. The expression on the girl's face is difficult to interpret, but it feels as if she's having some sort of realization. The stylistic choices that Fabritius made transform the mundane scene of a girl plucking a duck into a painting about a young person confronting death.

Fabritius was born into a family of artists. His father was a carpenter, and his brother was a famous painter. Fabritius was influenced by Rembrandt, who is perhaps the most renowned of the Dutch baroque painters. Fabritius lived and worked in Amsterdam, Leiden, and London, completing striking portraits like *Young Girl Plucking a Duck*, as well as biblical and mythological scenes.

## **Johannes Vermeer**

Dutch, 1632-1675

### ***Woman Holding a Balance*** [c. 1664]

National Gallery of Art

Johannes Vermeer is known for his quiet genre paintings of interior domestic life in the Netherlands. His paintings demonstrate a remarkable talent for perspective, light, and balance, resulting in a realism uncommon in works from this era. This is evident in *Woman Holding a Balance*. The painting is like a photograph. It doesn't feel like the woman is a model posing for her portrait—it feels as if Vermeer has caught and captured a real person in a private moment. Capturing a moment is simple with a camera, but to achieve this effect with oil paint, Vermeer worked on his paintings for many months.

*Woman Holding a Balance* depicts a woman of the merchant class, elegantly dressed in a beautiful blue coat, in a quiet moment of contemplation. She holds a small balance in her right hand. Laid out on the table in front of her are strings of pearls and a few coins. She is likely about to weigh these. Behind the woman is a painting of the last judgment, the Biblical story where the righteous and the sinful are judged and separated. The woman's body is perfectly positioned to separate the righteous from the sinful. God floats on a cloud just above her head. The judgment scene on the wall contrasts drastically with the quiet judgment the woman is about to make with her scale, imbuing this tranquil moment with the weight of morality.

Vermeer lived his later years in a house in Delft with his wife, mother-in-law, and ten children. Almost all of his paintings are set in the rooms of this house. Vermeer made his living as an art dealer, painting in his free time. He worked slowly, completing only two or three paintings a year. After his death, his work was forgotten for over two hundred years, before his paintings were rediscovered. Vermeer is now considered one of the greatest Dutch painters of all time.



## **Abraham van Beyeren**

Dutch, 1620-1690

### ***Banquet Still Life with Roses*** [c. 1665]

San Antonio Museum of Art

*Banquet Still Life with Roses* is a striking example of a still life painting. Still lifes are paintings or drawings of deliberately arranged inanimate objects. The first still lifes were created during the Middle Ages, but it wasn't until the baroque period that still life painting became its own distinct genre. The word *still life* actually comes from the Dutch word *stilleven*. Though it was considered the lowest genre of painting at the time, still lifes were extremely popular among the public in the Netherlands, where Abraham van Beyeren lived and worked.

Van Beyeren is now known as one of the preeminent still life painters of his era, but his work was relatively unknown during his lifetime. At the beginning of his career, van Beyeren was a seascape artist, painting nautical scenes of ships at sea. After marrying into a family of painters, he began experimenting with still lifes. He started out painting mostly still lifes of fish, before moving on to more elaborate still lifes, like *Banquet Still Life with Roses*, which would have brought in more income for the artist. Due to financial instability, van Beyeren moved around constantly throughout his life.

*Banquet Still Life with Roses* is a painting of flowers and food, but it is also much more than that. It is a painting about the impermanence of life. The banquet that the title suggests seems to have ended. The glass has been knocked over, the flowers have fallen, the scene is shrouded in the darkness of night. What we are seeing seems to be not the banquet, but what was left over from the banquet. A watch is sitting just to the right of an open melon, reminding us that time is passing—that the food will rot and the flowers will fade. Van Beyeren doesn't only want to show us a pretty scene, he wants to remind us to cherish the time we have.

## **Modern: 1850-1950**

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 accelerated the growth and wealth of nations. At the beginning of the twentieth century, two world wars tore Europe apart, and the great depression destabilized the world economy. These uncertain times led artists to start questioning the purpose of art.

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. Surrealists explored dream worlds and the subconscious mind. Art was finally able to move away from representation.

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. However, a general shift away from realism is common among many of the paintings we'll be looking at here. While Renaissance and Baroque paintings wanted to show us the world, Modern paintings want to show us a new way of looking at the world. While viewing these paintings, ask yourself not what the paintings are showing you, but what they are telling you about what they are showing you.

## **Edvard Munch**

Norwegian, 1863-1944

### ***Girls on the Pier* [1904]**

Kimbell Art Museum

Edvard Munch is perhaps art history's greatest painter of anxiety. His most powerful works often elicit feelings of dread, strangeness, even panic. You may be familiar with Munch's most famous painting, *The Scream*, a painting of a person on a bridge, their face warped with terror, screaming under a twisting blood red sky. It's one of the most famous paintings ever created. *Girls on the Pier*, the painting we'll be learning about, explores similar themes as *The Scream*, but it does so with more subtlety and eeriness.

*Girls on the Pier* was inspired by a trip Munch took to the Åsgårdstrand resort hotel. If one were to describe the subject of the painting to someone who hadn't seen it themselves, it would sound like a pleasant picture of a few friends enjoying a night on the pier, like something that the Impressionists might have painted. But the style of the painting tells a different story. The mood is haunting. It was painted in wild, thick brushstrokes. The pier curves backwards at an unnatural angle. The sky is a dreary teal, though the moon can be seen hanging above the water. Matter seems to be bending around the girls, as if threatening to swallow them into the background. A large tree stands menacingly over the houses, like an imposing shadow. And the girl closest to the viewer, staring out at us, confronting us, has no face. We sense that she's asking something of us, but what that is, we can never know.

Munch's paintings are famous for their ability to stir powerful emotions in the viewer. His childhood was tumultuous, filled with many illnesses and deaths, which he would go on to explore in his art. Munch is known for his dramatic lines, simplified forms, and vivid colors, which he used to paint his own inner turmoil.

## **Wassily Kandinsky**

Russian, 1866-1944

### ***Improvisation 31 (Sea Battle)*** [1913]

National Gallery of Art

At the beginning of the modern period, artists started experimenting with abstract painting. Painters felt free to paint not only *what* they saw, but also *how* they saw. They could now attempt to capture, preserve, and evoke emotions without depicting narrative scenes in a realistic style. Instead they used color, lines, and shapes to convey meaning. Wassily Kandinsky was a pioneer of this new kind of art.

Kandinsky thought that artists were like prophets. Like a prophet, the artist looks into the future and shows others a new path. When an artist experiments and discovers a new way of producing art, the artist is teaching the viewer to see and experience the world in a new way. Kandinsky was a deeply spiritual man and wanted his paintings to connect with the viewer on a spiritual level. He attempted this feat by approaching biblical subject matter with innovative new techniques and a sense of spontaneity. In *Improvisation 31 (Sea Battle)*, Kandinsky's subject was probably inspired by the Book of Revelations. Though it was painted just before the first World War, the artists said it wasn't meant to depict a specific battle, rather an ongoing spiritual struggle.

*Improvisation 31 (Sea Battle)* is part of a series of improvisational paintings that the artist created in 1911 and 1913. It was painted with oil on canvas. At first glance the work seems to be completely abstract, but when you look closer you'll start to see forms emerging out of the bright blasts of colors, shapes, and lines. Look at it with the title in mind: *Sea Battle*. You may notice the masts of ships floating above the sea, the debris strewn across the surface of the water, the splashes of the cannonballs sinking into the ocean, the yellow blotch of sunshine and its corresponding reflection. Or maybe you'll see something else entirely.

## **Claude Monet**

French, 1840-1926

### ***Weeping Willow* [1918-19]**

Kimbell Art Museum

The 1910's, the period in which *Weeping Willow* was painted, was a painful time in Claude Monet's life. He witnessed the mass destruction wrought by the first World War. He lost his wife and son. His eyesight was failing him. It was a time of deep mourning, both personally and collectively. *Weeping Willow* was meant to be a response to the tragedies of the war. It was painted in Monet's beautiful garden in Giverny, where he stayed and painted for the last twenty years of his life.

The painting is an example of Impressionism, a style of art that Monet helped to popularize. Impressionists often painted outdoors, using quick, loose brush strokes to capture ephemeral moments. Monet in particular was fascinated by light. He would often paint the same subject over and over at different times of day in an attempt to capture the changing effects of light on one unchanging scene. Sometimes he'd set up several canvases next to each other and switch from one to the next as the light changed throughout the day. One of these subjects was the weeping willow tree in his garden at Giverny, which he painted ten times.

If you stand back and look at the painting from afar, you can clearly distinguish the writhing form of the tree. But as you get closer, the forms start to disintegrate into sporadic strokes of green, yellow, blue, and red. We're no longer entirely sure what we're seeing. The somber motif has been transformed into glorious bursts of color, light, movement. There's a certain joy to be found in the sorrow. This expressionistic, almost abstract quality of *Weeping Willow* may be attributable to Monet's failing eyesight, but the techniques he developed here would go on to influence the abstract expressionists of the early Contemporary period, notably the splatter paintings of Jackson Pollock.

## **Pablo Picasso**

Spanish, 1881-1973

### ***Bottle of Port and Glass*** [1919]

Dallas Museum of Art

This still life painting by Pablo Picasso is an example of Cubism. Cubism was a style of painting developed by Picasso and his friend, Georges Braque, at the beginning of the twentieth century. The aim of cubist art was to show people or objects from multiple angles at once in an effort to demonstrate the fragmented nature of reality. The world is made up of not just people and objects, but millions of conflicting perspectives of those people and objects. The way that I see an empty bottle of port and a glass is not necessarily the way you see it. Picasso was trying to capture this phenomenon in his cubist work, by showing things from many points of view at once.

Picasso achieved his effect by breaking subjects down into geometric shapes. In *Bottle of Port and Glass*, a traditional still life has been reduced to flat rectangles and jagged lines overlapping each other. This is not an abstract painting, because reality is still being depicted. But reality has been fractured and rearranged. The result can be disorienting and confusing, but it can also be a lot of fun to stare at the painting and attempt to reconstruct the objects out of the two-dimensional shapes.

Picasso was born in Spain, but he spent most of his life in Paris, France, where he came into contact with many other notable artists. He experimented throughout his career. His early art was heavily inspired by Edvard Munch and Toulouse-Lautrec, but after coming into contact with the works of Henri Matisse and African art, he began to experiment with more extreme styles, eventually leading him to his revolutionary Cubist work. Picasso lived a long life and was one of the most revolutionary and influential artists of the twentieth century.

## **Piet Mondrian**

Dutch, 1872-1944

### ***Composition with Large Blue Plane, Red, Black, Yellow, and Gray*** [1921]

Dallas Museum of Art

While painters like Picasso and Kandinsky were experimenting with abstracting reality, Piet Mondrian was pushing the idea of abstraction even further, creating works like *Composition with Large Blue Plane, Red, Black, Yellow, and Gray*. This piece does not abstract a real scene, like the Picasso piece we just looked at. Instead, it shows us something totally separate from the physical world. This piece is truly abstract. It represents nothing. It tells no story. There is no center, foreground, or background. It is no more or less than black lines and primary colors.

This piece may seem confusing at first. You may be wondering why it matters. Why are lines and colors important? What can this piece teach me? All valid questions. To understand Mondrian's work, it's important to consider the period in which it was made. Like many of the artists we've looked at in the Modern period, Mondrian was reacting to the collective trauma of the first World War. But while other artists were attempting to create works that captured the chaos of the era, Mondrian wanted to rise above it all. The real world was far too messy for Mondrian's taste. For him, art was separate from reality. His mission was to create a Utopian art that demonstrated the underlying order of the world, and he achieved this by reducing his paintings to nothing more than lines and primary colors, the building blocks of the universe.

So while the piece may seem overly simplistic, we must remember that Mondrian's intention was simplicity. If you gaze at this piece for long enough, you may start to notice your mood changing. You may become calmer or feel a sense of inner peace. You're giving yourself over to Mondrian's alternate universe, a universe of order, clarity, harmony.

## **Edward Hopper**

American, 1882-1967

### ***House with Fence* [1923]**

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Most of Edward Hopper's greatest works feel like they could be the first shot of a movie. There's something mysterious in each of his paintings, a quiet sense of tension suggesting that there's more than meets the eye, that what we're seeing is only a piece of a much larger story. Like all great storytellers, Hopper was able to transform small everyday moments into complex and evocative scenes layered with meaning and narrative possibility.

In his watercolor painting *House with Fence*, we see a white two-story home sitting atop a green lawn, gated by a white picket fence. It's an overcast day—the light is falling even and cool over the quiet neighborhood street. But there's something undeniably strange about the painting. The quietness of the street feels almost too quiet. The composition is cropped and unbalanced. The top of the telephone pole rises straight out of the frame, and we can only see half of the house with the fence. The neighboring house is more visible than the house the painting is named after. Due to this strange compositional choice, the viewer's eye is drawn to the middle of the piece, to the empty stretch of sky that separates the two houses. Hopper took the cliché motif of the white picket-fenced house and transformed it—by emphasizing the empty sky and street he created a painting about emptiness and isolation, common themes throughout his oeuvre.

Hopper lived a quiet life with his wife Josephine Nivison, a fellow painter who acted as a model for all of Hopper's paintings of women. Many of his paintings show lone figures in urban settings, a motif that differs drastically from the more patriotic American art that came before. The images he created changed the way we look at modernity and the United States.



## **Diego Rivera**

Mexican, 1886-1957

### ***Delfina Flores*** [1927]

McNay Art Museum

Diego Rivera is one of the most famous Mexican painters, best known for his dynamic political murals, his paintings of women and flowers, and his tumultuous marriage to painter Frida Kahlo. Rivera spent his early years traveling through Europe, experimenting with Cubism and Post-Impressionism, before returning to Mexico, his home country. In Mexico, Rivera shifted his focus, creating works that celebrated his country's rich culture and history.

*Delfina Flores* is a portrait, painted in oils, of a young girl in a traditional dress, standing barefoot on a bright yellow mat in front of a blue and white wall. She is centered in the frame. Her hands are crossed. She's gazing out at us, or perhaps past us. Though she is only about five years old, the girl's position, posture and gaze give her an undeniable sense of dignity. Rivera painted this piece in a somewhat flat and simplified style, prioritizing color and harmony over realism. The stripe of blue on the skirt of the girl's dress perfectly balances the stripe of blue on the wall, as do the pink sash around her waist and the ribbons in her hair, and the white of her shirt and the sliver of white on the wall at the top of the frame.

Delfina—the girl in the portrait—was the daughter of one of Rivera's housekeepers, an Otomi Indian. The Otomi are one of the oldest indigenous groups in Mexico, though their culture and history have not been studied and appreciated as much as those of the ancient civilizations of the Mayans and Aztecs. Rivera wanted to use his art to celebrate the indigenous people of Mexico, as well as the lower classes. He painted Delfina Flores' portrait several times throughout her life, always with great tenderness. In 1935, he created a beautiful double portrait of Delfina and her infant son, Dimas.

## **Georgia O’Keeffe**

American, 1887–1986

### ***Red Cannas*** [1927]

Amon Carter Museum

Georgia O’Keeffe was famous for her still-life paintings of flowers. But these aren’t normal still-life paintings, and they aren’t normal flowers either. Take a look at *Red Cannas*. The point of view where O’Keeffe places the viewer in relation to the flowers is extreme. We’re looking at the flowers as if we were a tiny bumblebee, hovering just above the petals. O’Keeffe has blown the flower up to gigantic proportions so that we can see it in a wholly new way, which in a sense, is the purpose of all art—to teach us how to see the world with fresh eyes.

By painting the cannas as if looking through a magnifying glass, O’Keeffe shows us that majesty can be found in the smallest and unlikeliest of places. Look closer, she seems to be saying. Look at the beauty around you, the flowers in the fields, their deep reds and soft folds. O’Keeffe loved flowers and painted them throughout her life. She wanted to show the world what she saw when she looked at a flower. She and her husband, photographer Alfred Stieglitz, grew red cannas in their garden, and she associated the flowers with him.

After Stieglitz’s death in 1946, O’Keeffe moved to New Mexico, where she drove around the deserts, alone in her Ford Model A, painting the desolate landscapes, open skies, and animal bones that she collected. She felt a spiritual connection to the desert, similar to the connection she felt to flowers. If flowers represented the beauty of nature in its smallest form, the desert was nature at its most vast. O’Keeffe lived a long and adventurous life, living to be ninety-eight years old. In 2014, one of her flower paintings sold for over forty-four million dollars, the highest price ever paid for a painting by a female artist. She’s remembered as one of the greatest and most experimental of all the American painters.

## **Giorgio De Chirico**

Italian, 1888-1978

### ***Conversation among the Ruins* [1927]**

National Gallery of Art

In *Conversation among the Ruins*, we see a well-dressed man leaning over a table, speaking to a seated woman wearing an elegant white dress. We can't see the woman's face—her back is turned to us—but the man seems to be enjoying the conversation. His posture indicates interest. It is a pleasant scene. But the room the couple is conversing in has no walls; it is a square of hardwood floor, a column, and the facade of a doorway, beyond which we glimpse an unsettling desolation: barren hills and a gray sky. What was De Chirico trying to convey?

It's important to note that De Chirico was interested in symbolism. This painting was completed in the late 1920s, a period of decadence that followed the largest war the world had seen and preceded an economic depression and an even larger war. It was a relatively calm moment in history, wedged between two massive calamities. Viewed through this lens, *Conversation among the Ruins* paints an alarmingly acute portrait of the era, showing two people pretending that everything is normal, engaging in pleasant banter, while just outside their wall-less dining room an emptiness as far as the eye can see unfurls. De Chirico is looking beyond the facades, pointing to an uncomfortable reality the world was trying to ignore.

Many of Giorgio De Chirico's paintings, especially his early works, are strange, mysterious, and disorienting, featuring dreamlike landscapes, lonely statues, and imposing architecture. These works were hugely inspirational for surrealist painters like Salvador Dalí, though De Chirico never considered himself a surrealist. De Chirico was more interested in symbolism and metaphysics than in the unconscious mind, and he eventually rejected modern art and returned to classical paintings inspired by the Renaissance masters.

## **Grant Wood**

American, 1891-1942

### ***New Road*** [1939]

National Gallery of Art

While modernist European artists like Picasso and Matisse were experimenting with warped forms and abstract works, a group of American painters known as Regionalists were composing simpler, more traditional pictorial works that depicted rural life in America. They felt this art represented their own place and time in a way that the modern art coming out of France could not.

*New Road* by Grant Wood is an example of this style of painting. The lush green hills and the sloping new road bathed in soft light are meant to provoke feelings of nostalgia for a simpler time, as well as a sense of optimism for the future of the country. This was a message that resonated deeply with Americans struggling during the Great Depression, especially people in rural areas. A native of Iowa, Grant Wood was best known for his paintings of rural America, his most famous being the iconic *American Gothic*. A great deal of his work celebrated an ideal rural America and inspired feelings of hope at a time when Modernist painters were using their work to explore fragmentation and isolation.

Though the aim of regionalist art was different from that of Modernist European art, Grant Wood took many trips to Europe to study the works of the European masters. A certain European formality runs through Wood's oeuvre. He was able to absorb the compositional achievements developed by classical painters and the sense of movement evoked by the Impressionists and apply it to his own depictions of the United States to create a style that was distinctly his own, distinctly American. Though the regionalist movement ended in the 1940s, when American artists in New York began creating entirely abstract art, regionalism's influence lived on in the works of American realist painters like Andrew Wyeth.

## **Henri Matisse**

French, 1869-1954

### ***Ivy in Flower* [1953]**

Dallas Museum of Art

Though *Ivy in Flower* was the work of a dying man, it is a work brimming with the joy of creation. Henri Matisse created this gigantic collage just a year before he died. Illness had left him unable to paint in his old age, but the will of the artist was too strong to give up creating. Bound to a wheelchair, Matisse began working in a new medium: collage.

Matisse constructed *Ivy in Flower* by carving leaves out of sheets of hand-painted green, blue, and red paper and—with the help of his assistants—carefully arranging them on a large yellow background. The bright explosion of shapes and colors is restrained by a grid that floats over the leaves, dividing the composition into nine squares. This gives the work a strong sense of balance and order. Try to imagine this work without the grid. It would feel chaotic, maybe even a bit wild. Instead, the mood is light and calming. Though his works may at first glance appear to be simplistic, Matisse was a highly intellectual and thoughtful artist who worked hard to achieve the effect he desired.

Matisse lived a long and relatively calm life. He didn't start painting until he was twenty, but once he started he never stopped. At the beginning of his career, in Paris, he pioneered the Fauvist style, which utilized loud, vibrant colors and twisted forms. Eventually he moved to the sunny French Riviera and switched to a more simplified and calmer approach to painting. Unlike Edvard Munch, who we discussed earlier, Matisse wanted to create soothing art, devoid of darkness, that would comfort people. Though his switch from painting to collage was due to his physical limitations, the works were as joyous as ever, becoming some of his most renowned and influential pieces.

## **Salvador Dalí**

Spanish, 1904-1989

### ***The Sacrament of the Last Supper* [1955]**

National Gallery of Art

It's impossible to discuss the life and work of Salvador Dalí without first talking about surrealism, the art movement that Dalí became the face of. Surrealist works are full of bizarre imagery and illogical scenes. The surrealists aimed to find ways to explore the subconscious mind—the part of the mind that creates dreams—and to paint dream worlds in a way that gave them the appearance of reality. The movement began as a reaction against the absurdity of the first World War.

The surrealist movement was created by André Breton, a French writer, but it was Dalí who is now most associated with surrealism. Dalí's works often show us vast dreamlike planes filled with strange contorted forms. Influenced by the Renaissance masters, Dalí was able to depict these dream worlds in an alarmingly realistic style. After the second World War, Dalí returned to Spain, his home country, and became interested in Catholicism. This is the period in which he created *The Sacrament of the Last Supper*.

The content of this gigantic painting differs from Dalí's best known surrealist work, but the realistic yet strange style remains constant. The piece acts as a bridge between the religious paintings of the old Renaissance masters and the works modern artists were creating in the twentieth century. The scene is the Last Supper—the same iconic scene Leonardo painted in the late 1400s—but Dalí has transformed the scene using the techniques he applied to his dreamlike surrealist works. The supper is taking place in some heavenly realm, Christ's body is transparent, and a mysterious torso floats above his head, symbolizing the temporality of the earthly body in comparison to the eternal soul. The background of the painting is a Catalonia landscape, a place Dalí painted throughout his life.

## **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. And while all these changes were taking place, artists were using their work to grapple with these new and strange times.

Two major shifts took place that separate the Contemporary Period from the Modern Period. The first is a geographical shift, from Europe to the United States. After World War 2, many artists settled in New York. The city became a cultural center for painters, writers, and musicians. Movements like Abstract Expressionism, the Harlem Renaissance, and Pop Art came out of New York during this period. All of the artists who we'll be discussing lived and worked there. The city is as important to the Contemporary Period as Florence was to the Renaissance.

The second major shift that took place was a stylistic one. Contemporary art can be characterized by a shift towards abstraction. Many artists during this period stopped painting pictures of specific subjects and instead painted totally abstract compositions—paintings of pure color, shapes, and lines. These works are meant to function in the way music does. Music affects our emotions without us really understanding why. Certain combinations of notes can make us feel happy, excited, afraid, or sad. The same can be true of paintings. Artists in this period began using abstract compositions to express their innermost feelings and illicit visceral reactions from the viewer.

## **Lee Krasner**

American, 1908-1984

### ***Blue and Black*** [1951-1953]

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

*Blue and Black* by Lee Krasner is an example of abstract expressionism, a movement that came out of New York after the Second World War. This new type of painting took inspiration from jazz and the unconscious mind. Like a skilled jazz musician, the abstract expressionist was constantly improvising, allowing their subconscious mind to guide the creation of the work. Every work was singularly individual and impossible to replicate. The creations were subject not only to the individual artist and their skills, methods, and supplies, but also to the mood that artist was in when they allowed their subconscious mind freedom to guide the work.

Lee Krasner was one of the pioneers of this art movement. Many of the abstract expressionists invented unique methods of working, then stuck to those methods and use them over and over again, creating variations of the same type of painting. Krasner's husband, Jackson Pollock, was an example of this type of painter. Pollock would lay a canvas on the ground and throw paint at it, creating gigantic paintings of splattered color. Lee Krasner did not do this. Never content with doing the same thing again and again, she was always evolving, reinventing her style, experimenting, pushing abstract expressionism forward into uncharted territory.

This particular piece, *Blue and Black*, was inspired by the works of Henri Matisse. The patterns may remind you of *Ivy in Flower*. But Krasner brings these patterns into a more modern context. Matisse's piece abstracts reality, depicting flowers in bloom, while Krasner's piece is abstraction without reality. She isn't depicting anything. The patterns and colors stand alone. They are subjects in and of themselves. She is both paying tribute to Matisse and breaking away from his influence, creating something wholly new and uniquely her own.



## **Jacob Lawrence**

American, 1917-2000

***Street to Mbari*** [1964]

National Gallery of Art

The artworks of Jacob Lawrence are vibrant, colorful, and brimming with life. This is apparent in *Street to Mbari*, Lawrence's painting of a bustling Nigerian marketplace. He's filled this painting with so many scenes that you could look at it for hours. His use of rhythm keeps your eyes bouncing between the various market stalls, taking in the countless stories being told. Lawrence painted in bright blotches of color, without shading, using only the size of objects to indicate depth. This makes it appear that the background is on top of the foreground, rather than behind it. He accomplished this effect through careful planning. Since he painted with tempera—a paint that dries quickly—he planned out where each color would be on the canvas, then painted all those areas before moving on to the next color.

Lawrence was not only an incredible stylist, but also one of the most important chroniclers of African American culture and history. As a young artist, Lawrence was taught by Harlem Renaissance painters Charles Alston and Henry Bannarn. The Harlem Renaissance was an artistic movement led by African American artists and writers in Harlem, New York in the 1920s and 1930s. This movement inspired Lawrence and would inform his art. He painted works that documented life in Harlem, the African American experience, the history of the nation, and the lives of many important figures, including Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass. Lawrence would go on to become the first African American artist to be featured in a mainstream art gallery.

*Street to Mbari* was painted during a nine-month trip to Nigeria. Lawrence was impressed by the energy of the marketplace, and wanted to capture that energy in his work. During the stay, he completed more than twenty-five pieces.

## **Romare Bearden**

American, 1911-1988

### ***Tomorrow I May Be Far Away* [1967]**

National Gallery of Art

Romare Bearden lived a full and interesting life—he studied education and science in college, illustrated political cartoons for African American newspapers, and played baseball in a semi-professional league. In the 1940s, Bearden joined the army, serving in World War II. After the war he returned to Europe to study art and philosophy, where he met Pablo Picasso and other prominent European artists. He composed jazz music in the 1950s. In the 1960s, Bearden founded an art group called *The Spiral*, comprised of important African American artists. The group met in Harlem to discuss the role of art in the Civil Rights Movement.

Bearden had been painting seriously for over two decades, experimenting with abstract expressionism, before turning to collage, the medium he's become known for. Collage gave Bearden the structure to explore his own unique identity. Just as Bearden pieced together his own childhood memories, the memories of his family, and the collective memories of African Americans to create his imagery, the collages themselves were pieced together out of hand-painted paper, magazine clippings, bits of newspaper, photographs, and other works of art.

The title of *Tomorrow I May Be Far Away* was taken from a blues song. The collage shows us a black man seated in front of a house, a woman working in a field behind him, and a train rolling along the horizon. The setting evokes the Southern United States, where Bearden was born. The train in the distance conjures images of the Great Migration and the underground railroad. The piece feels both viscerally immediate, a depiction of a present moment, and like a faded memory, a relic of the past. Bearden shows us that—like a collage—the present is built out of the past, pieced together out of bits of memory, both personal and collective.

## **Alice Neel**

American, 1900-1984

### ***Dorothy Pearlstein*** [1969]

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Like many of the paintings we've looked at, *Dorothy Pearlstein* is an example of a portrait. Compare this piece with Boticelli's *Portrait of a Youth* to get a sense of how portrait painting has evolved since the Renaissance. The style is completely different. Boticelli's painting is softly lit, perfectly composed, with invisible brush strokes. Neel's painting is loose, the colors and lines are expressive, and the brushstrokes have not been hidden. The intention of the painting is also different. In the Renaissance, the aim of a portrait was to idealize the subject, to present the subject at their most beautiful, not as they actually were. Neel was not idealizing her subjects when she painted portraits. Her ambition was to freeze time and capture the person as they really were in that moment.

Neel didn't think of her paintings as portraits, preferring to call them "pictures of people." Her paintings feel more like intimate snapshots than carefully constructed portraits. But to achieve this effect, she had to carefully construct the paintings, paying great attention not only to the physicality of her subjects, but also to their psychology, to the things happening beneath the person's surface. Unlike the Renaissance portraits, beauty was not her goal. Truth was.

*Dorothy Pearlstein* is a portrait of a friend of Neel's. Dorothy Pearlstein was an artist and the wife of painter Philip Pearlstein. When looking at the painting, you may find yourself drawn to Dorothy's eyes. Her eyes are more polished than much of the rest of the painting, and they're gazing out at the viewer defiantly. The subject, as well as the painting itself, seems to be challenging the very notion of what a portrait should be. Portraits don't have to be idealized and beautiful. Neel wasn't interested in capturing the woman's beauty, but rather, her humanity.

## **Andy Warhol**

American, 1928-1987

### ***Caroline*** [1976]

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

*Caroline* by Andy Warhol is an example of Pop Art. Warhol and the Pop Art movement radically changed art history. Pop Art can be viewed as a response to Abstract Expressionism. While Abstract Expressionism was all about emotion and the singular expression of the individual, Pop Art was about a collective culture. Pop Art challenged the very notion of what we consider to be art.

Warhol was the pioneer of this movement. He used his art to explore the relationship between pop culture and art. In the second half of the twentieth century, Americans were surrounded by images. Advertisements, celebrity photographs, comic book heroes, news reels, billboards—everywhere you turn, you find mass produced images competing for your attention. Warhol recognized this world of images and mass production, and incorporated it into his own work. Some of his most famous pictures are of Campbell's Soup cans and movie star Marilyn Monroe. Using a technique called silkscreening, Warhol was able to paint the same image over and over using photocopies and large stencils. His works—like advertisements—appear to be the product of mass production rather than an individual mind. This method of creating art was (and is) considered controversial.

Caroline Wiess Law was an art collector and philanthropist. She was a great admirer of Warhol's work, and commissioned him to create this portrait. Warhol used his silkscreen method to make several versions of her portrait, all different colors. After her death, Law donated the portraits to the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, as well as her art collection and most of her estate, making her one of the largest museum donors in American history. Warhol's portraits of Caroline were done in his signature style, utilizing only line and color to bring the subject to life.

## **Nancy Graves**

American, 1939-1995

### ***Untitled #1*** [1973]

Dallas Museum of Art

*Untitled #1* by Nancy Graves is an especially interesting abstract painting. The work is an acrylic painting, but it also feels a bit like a sculpture, with its slanted, broken, uneven canvas. If you look at the piece long enough, you may even start to wonder how abstract this painting really is. The beautiful swirls of teal and white look like waves on the ocean. Forms reminiscent of clouds and birds and plants begin to emerge out of the abstraction. It looks almost like a weather map on a cloudy summer day. But each panel fragments the image, never allowing it to become truly representational of the landscape it is almost depicting.

The relationship between representation and art was an idea that Graves explored throughout her career as a painter and sculptor. Her most famous works were life-size sculptures of camels. Upon first glance, these camels were so life-like that you might think they belonged in a science museum rather than an art gallery. Graves was also famous for painting aerial views of landscapes in an abstracted style. These pieces were as much maps as they were abstract paintings. Graves' work brought art and science together in a unique way, raising questions like: "Why can't a weather map be a work of art? What's the difference between a sculpture of a camel in an art gallery and a taxidermied camel in a science museum?"

When Graves was a child, her father worked for the Berkshire Museum in Massachusetts—a museum dedicated to both art and natural history. This museum planted the seeds in Graves' mind that would ultimately grow into her explorations of art and science, abstraction and realism. A Yale graduate, Graves was a highly intellectual artist who traveled across North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia, always on the lookout for new and exciting ideas.

<b>Painting</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Approximate Size</b> <i>(h x w in inches)</i>
<i>Portrait of a Youth</i>	Tempera on poplar panel	17 x 18
<i>Supper at Bethany</i>	Tempera on wood panel	10 x 8
<i>The Investiture of Saint Ildefonsus</i>	<i>Tempera &amp; oil on panel</i>	98 x 81
<i>Madonna and Child with St. Jerome</i>	<i>Oil on panel</i>	16 x 22
<i>Woman Holding an Apple</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	39 x 29
<i>Holy Family with Saint Anne</i>	<i>Oil on panel</i>	9 x 12
<i>The Cardsharps</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	37 x 52
<i>Self-Portrait</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	30 x 26
<i>Noah Leading the Animals into the Ark</i>	<i>Oil on paper</i>	17 x 22
<i>Young Girl Plucking a Duck</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	33 x 28
<i>Woman Holding a Balance</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	17 x 15
<i>Banquet Still Life with Roses</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	51 x 43
<i>Girls on the Pier</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	32 x 27
<i>Improvisation 31 (Sea Battle)</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	55 x 47
<i>Weeping Willow</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	39 x 47
<i>Bottle of Port and Glass</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	18 x 24
<i>Composition with Large Blue Plane, Red, Black, Yellow, and Gray</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	24 x 20
<i>House with Fence</i>	<i>Watercolor over graphite on wove paper</i>	11 x 18
<i>Delfina Flores</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	32 x 26
<i>Red Cannas</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	36 x 30
<i>Conversation among the Ruins</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	51 x 38
<i>New Road</i>	<i>Oil on canvas on mounted on board</i>	13 x 15
<i>Ivy in Flower</i>	<i>Paper, watercolor, &amp; pencil collage</i>	112 x 112
<i>The Sacrament of the Last Supper</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	66 x 105
<i>Blue and Black</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	58 x 83
<i>Street to Mbari</i>	<i>Glue tempera, watercolor, &amp; graphite on wove paper</i>	22 x 31
<i>Tomorrow I May Be Far Away</i>	<i>Paper collage with charcoal, graphite &amp; paint</i>	46 x 56
<i>Dorothy Pearlstein</i>	<i>Oil on canvas</i>	40 x 30
<i>Caroline</i>	<i>Acrylic on canvas</i>	40 x 40
<i>Untitled #1</i>	<i>Acrylic on canvas</i>	n/a

## 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 "Butinone," "Fabritius," "chiaroscuro," 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 *Borgoña*.

**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 Titian's painting if you know the story the painting represents? Or to remember that O'Keeffe painted *Red Cannas* when you know she was famous for painting flowers?

## 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 Impressionism is a Modern style and not a Renaissance one, or that Vermeer, a Baroque artist, lived before Monet, an Impressionist.



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 abstract 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 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 "20th century still life," or "Abstract Expressionist," or "Dutch 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. Blue and red mixed together create what color?
  - a) Purple
  - b) Green
  - c) Brown
  - d) Orange
  
2. Straight lines convey a sense of
  - a) sadness.
  - b) anxiety.
  - c) order.
  - d) calmness.
  
3. What are analogous colors?
  - a) Colors across from each other on the color wheel
  - b) Colors that can't be created by mixing other colors
  - c) Colors that exist in nature
  - d) Colors next to each other on the color wheel
  
4. How can artists create contrast in a painting?
  - a) By placing light and dark tones next to each other
  - b) By placing bright colors next to neutral colors
  - c) By placing contrasting subjects in close proximity
  - d) All of the above
  
5. What is a portrait painting?
  - a) A painting of carefully arranged inanimate objects
  - b) A picture of a person, usually formally posed
  - c) A painting where the art elements themselves are the main subjects
  - d) A painting of people engaged in ordinary activities

## **True/False**

6. Red is an example of a secondary color.
  - a) True
  - b) False
  
7. Shape is two dimensional, while form is three-dimensional.
  - a) True
  - b) False
  
8. Rhythm refers to the length of time it takes an artist to create a painting.
  - a) True
  - b) False

## Art Elements Grades 7 & 8

1. What is chiaroscuro in art?
  - a) A technique for adding texture to the surface of a canvas
  - b) The range of colors used by an artist in a particular piece
  - c) A contrast of light and shadow that creates a sense of depth and heightens drama in an artwork
  - d) The Italian word for “patron,” a person who financially supports and commissions an artist's work
  
2. What are zigzag lines most likely to convey in a painting?
  - a) Structure, order, and rigidity
  - b) Strength and stability
  - c) Rapid change and excitement
  - d) Delicate and refined movement
  
3. Which of the following methods would be best to create rhythm in a painting?
  - a) Using primary colors only
  - b) Repeating shapes and colors
  - c) Using a variety of brushstrokes
  - d) None of the above. Rhythm applies to music only.
  
4. Which of the following is NOT an effective method to create perspective?
  - a) Drawing objects in the background smaller than those in the foreground
  - b) Using warm colors for objects in the foreground, and cool colors for objects in the background
  - c) Drawing lines that narrow as they stretch from foreground into the background
  - d) Placing objects in the background lower down in a painting than objects in the foreground
  
5. Genre paintings
  - a) portray scenes from sacred texts.
  - b) reflect the customs, habits, and situations of everyday life.
  - c) convey messages through the careful arrangement of inanimate objects.
  - d) capture a specific person's features, characteristics, and sometimes even personality.

## **True/False**

6. Because complementary colors are opposite each other on the color wheel, they create high contrast when placed side by side in an artwork.

- a) True
- b) False

7. Shapes have three dimensions: height, width, and depth.

- a) True
- b) False

8. Blending green and yellow makes blue.

- a) True
- b) False

## Art History Grades 4-6

9. In what period of art history did Botticelli paint *Portrait of a Youth*?
- a) Renaissance
  - b) Baroque
  - c) Modern
  - d) Contemporary
10. What country was Edvard Munch from?
- a) Great Britain
  - b) Russia
  - c) The Netherlands
  - d) Norway
11. What art movement was started by Pablo Picasso?
- a) Impressionism
  - b) Cubism
  - c) Abstract Expressionism
  - d) Pop Art
12. Which of these artists was a part of the Dutch Golden Age?
- a) Caravaggio
  - b) Johannes Vermeer
  - c) Wassily Kandinsky
  - d) Romare Bearden
13. *Black and Blue* by Lee Krasner is an example of
- a) Abstract painting
  - b) Collage
  - c) Portrait painting
  - d) Still Life

**True/False**

14. Georgia O'Keeffe was famous for her paintings of flowers.

- a) True
- b) False

15. *Noah Leading the Animals into the Ark* is an example of an oil sketch.

- a) True
- b) False

16. During the Renaissance, artists began creating abstract art.

- a) True
- b) False

## Art History Grades 7 & 8

9. In Judith Leyster's *Self-Portrait*, how does she depict herself as a significant member of society rather than just a craftsman?
- a) By including symbolic objects in the background
  - b) By showing off her skills at creating genre paintings, which could only be afforded by the upper class
  - c) By painting herself in formal attire unsuitable for painting
  - d) By painting herself in an elegant pose reserved for Dutch nobility
10. What medium did Matisse work in to create *Ivy in Flower*?
- a) Tempera
  - b) Watercolor
  - c) Collage
  - d) Silk-screening
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. *Bottle of Port and Glass* is NOT an example of
- a) Abstract art
  - b) Cubism
  - c) Still life
  - d) Modern art
13. What does the empty stretch of sky in *House with Fence* symbolize?
- a) Freedom and opportunity
  - b) Isolation and emptiness
  - c) Excitement and adventure
  - d) Dreamworlds and the subconscious



## True/False

14. Florence, Italy is considered the birthplace of the Renaissance.

- a) True
- b) False

15. *The Sacrament of the Last Supper* by Salvador Dalí was painted so illiterate people could understand the Biblical story it depicted.

- a) True
- b) False

16. Andy Warhol was the pioneer of the Pop Art movement, which incorporated everyday consumer objects, advertisements, and celebrity icons into vibrant, colorful artworks.

- 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, did the boy in *The Cardsharps* get caught cheating? What is happening inside the house in *House with Fence*? What is the woman in *Woman Holding a Balance* like as a person? What will Delfina Flores be when she grows up? What brought the girls in *Girls on the Pier* to that specific bridge? Where are they going next? Take 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 “investiture” or “Madonna” or “improvisation.” For a history project, research what life was like for ordinary people living in Holland during the time Vermeer 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. Learn about the cannas, their native areas, and how best to grow and care for them. 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.

The **San Antonio Museum of Art (SAMA)** is home to collections of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman antiquities, Asian art, Latin American fine art and folk art, and American paintings. The Nelson A. Rockefeller Center for Latin American Art showcases a significant collection of Latin American art, from pre-Columbian times to the present. SAMA also has galleries dedicated to the art of Oceania and the Islamic world. Other highlights include a small collection of European art, a contemporary art collection that includes Texas and regional art, and a growing collection of decorative art.

## Answer Key for Sample Questions

### Grades 4-6

1. A
2. C
3. D
4. D
5. B
6. B
7. A
8. B

9. A
10. D
11. B
12. B
13. A
14. A
15. A
16. B

### Grades 7 & 8

1. C
2. C
3. B
4. D
5. B
6. A
7. B
8. B

9. C
10. C
11. B
12. A
13. B
14. A
15. B
16. A