

Classroom Connections

SCHOOL TOUR | *The Sacred and the Secular:
European Art from 1100 to 1700*

Grade Levels: 6th—12th

The
Nelson-Atkins
Museum
of Art



Lorenzo di Credi (Italian, 1458 or 1459-1537), *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist*, ca. 1510.

Oil on panel with tempera highlights, Unframed: 40 1/16 x 28 11/16 inches (101.76 x 72.87 cm), Framed: 4 feet 1 1/4 inches x 38 inches x 2 1/2 inches (125.1 x 96.52 x 6.35 cm). Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 39-3.



Pieter Claesz (Dutch, ca. 1597-1661), *Still Life*, 1638.

Oil on wood panel, Unframed: 25 1/4 x 20 3/16 inches (64.14 x 51.28 cm), Framed: 34 5/16 x 29 11/16 x 2 3/8 inches (87.15 x 75.41 x 6.03 cm). Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 31-114.

TOUR DESCRIPTION:

This tour introduces students to four periods of European art between the years 1100 and 1700 C.E. By exploring examples of Medieval, Renaissance, Dutch, and Southern Baroque art through discussion and hands-on activities, students will understand that European art reflects the time and place in which it was made and will learn how artists use visual elements to convey particular messages.

CURRICULUM AREAS ADDRESSED IN THIS TOUR:

Visual Arts Standards (KS)

- Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Visual Art Standards (MO)

- Analyze and evaluate art using art vocabulary.
- Explain how artworks reflect the cultures in which they were created.
- Explain how historical events and social ideas are reflected in artworks from selected cultures or historical time periods.

History, Government, and Social Studies Standards (KS)

- The student will investigate beliefs, contributions, ideas, and/or diverse populations and connect them to contemporary issues.
- The student will analyze the context of continuity and change and the vehicles of reform, drawing conclusions about past change.

Social Studies Standards (MO)

- Using a world history lens, describe how people's perspectives shaped the sources / artifacts they created.
- Analyze religion and belief systems of a place to determine their varying impact on people, groups, and cultures.
- Analyze the intellectual, architectural, and artistic achievements of the Renaissance resulting from the rebirth of Classical ideas.

TOUR OBJECTIVES:

- Students will make connections between art objects and aspects of European history.
- Students will understand that European artists use visual elements to communicate messages.

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To schedule a tour:
nelson-atkins.org/educators/school-tours

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Compare & Contrast

During their tour, students will see works of European art spanning a 600-year time period marked by great social, technological, and artistic change. To get students thinking about how art and society change over time, ask them to compare and contrast two works from different periods. Examples:

- **Lippo Memmi (Italian, active 1317—1350), *The Virgin and Child*, ca. 1325—1330.** Tempera and gold leaf on wood panel, 18 ⁷/₈ x 15 ³/₈ inches. (view at bit.ly/2mHIDSP)
- **Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1577—1640), *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, ca. 1612—1613.** Oil on wood panel, 55 ¹/₂ x 43 ¹/₂ inches. (view at bit.ly/2nhjR36)

Areas to compare might include:

- Main colors used in the work
- Subject matter — Who are we looking at? What are they doing?
- Sense of movement
- Naturalism — Are the figures and settings made to look lifelike?
- Size — What might their sizes tell us about how these works of art were used or displayed?



Consider Context

Many of the questions students will be asked to discuss during their museum tour will center on how art communicates a variety of messages. Prepare students for these conversations by doing a group brainstorming exercise:

Ask students to come up with as many reasons as they can for why people make art. Then, ask them to brainstorm as many reasons as they can for why people *buy* and *display* art. Their responses can relate to contemporary times or to the motivations people may have had in the past. At the end of this brainstorming session, explain that their museum tour will explore the function of art at different times in European history and how artists communicated messages relevant to their own time and place.

AFTER YOUR VISIT

Dig Deeper

After seeing examples of European art from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Dutch Golden Age, and the Southern Baroque, invite students to explore one of those artistic styles in depth. Using the museum's online collection search (art.nelson-atkins.org/collections), each student can choose a work of art from one of the four periods under study. Instruct students to write down observations about their chosen work. They can use the gallery label information included with the online image or other print or web sources to learn more about the work or the artist who made it. Student observations might include:

- Who made the artwork, and when and where was it produced?
- What subject matter is shown in the work?
- What might this work tell us about European culture at the time and place it was produced?

Reflect

Think back to your pre-visit discussion about why people make, buy, and display art. Discuss as a class: What new answers have we found to those questions through our visit to the Nelson-Atkins? What did art do for people at various points in European history? What does art do for people today?

GLOSSARY OF TERMS RELATED TO EUROPEAN ART

Altarpiece: A work of art made to be placed above and behind an altar in a church

Anatomy: The bodily structure of a living thing, or the study of bodily structures

Baroque: A style of art and music that developed in Europe in the 1600s and 1700s C.E.; it emphasized drama, emotion, light, and decorative details

Catholicism: The faith and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, which was the branch of Christianity that dominated European religious life during the period from 1100 to 1700 C.E.

Composition: The arrangement of individual parts within a picture or sculpture

Counter-Reformation: The Roman Catholic Church's reaction to the Protestant Reformation; it included both internal reforms and efforts to reassert the Church's authority and importance

Flanders: A historical region of Europe that today makes up a large part of Belgium, as well as parts of France and the Netherlands

Idealized: Made to look perfect

Landscape: A picture that shows a natural scene of land and sky

Madonna: A term referring to Mary, the mother of Jesus; it translates literally to "my lady"

Medieval: Relating to the period of European history from approximately 400 to 1500 C.E.

Merchant: Someone who buys and sells goods

Mythology: The collection of traditional stories, often dealing with gods and heroes, that belong to a particular group or culture

Naturalistic: Shown in a way that is true to how things look in the real world

Patron: A person who supports an artist by buying their work or providing other financial assistance

Perspective: Showing three-dimensional depth in a two-dimensional image (like a drawing or painting) by making objects that are far away appear smaller, darker, and less distinct than those up close

Portraiture: The art of creating portraits (pictures of people)

Protestantism: The faith and practices of the Protestant churches, which comprise a branch of Christianity that emerged in Europe in the 1500s C.E. as a result of the Reformation

Reformation: A religious movement that aimed to reform perceived errors within the Roman Catholic Church, and which ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Protestant churches

Renaissance: A period of European history in the 1400s and 1500s C.E. when interest in classical art, culture, and learning was renewed, particularly in Italy

Sacred: Relating to God or religion; holy

Secular: Relating to the physical world without a basis in religion

Still Life: An image that shows a carefully arranged group of objects

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

The Collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: Italian Paintings, 1300—1800
Eliot W. Rowlands

This catalog includes images, detailed descriptions, and contextual information for the Italian paintings on view at the Nelson-Atkins. Available in the ERC.

The European World, 400—1450
Barbara A. Hanawalt

This readable history textbook and accompanying teacher guide provide a thorough overview of what life was like during the Middle Ages in Europe. Available in the ERC.

The Art of Renaissance Europe: A Resource for Educators / Medieval Art: A Resource for Educators
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

These resources include lesson plans, primary source texts, timelines, and image reproductions you can use to introduce students to art of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages.

Available in the ERC or online at [metmuseum.org/art/metpublications](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications).

Images of the Middle Ages
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Five large images make up this poster set, along with a resource book with background information on the pictured works and suggestions for classroom application and art-making activities. Available in the ERC.

Smarthistory: Cultures: Medieval Europe + Byzantine / Europe 1300—1800
Smarthistory.org

Visit this informative website to view images, read explanatory information, and watch short videos on European art narrated by experts in the field of art history.

Newsela Text Sets: The Middle Ages / The Renaissance
newsela.com/text-sets/17398 / newsela.com/text-sets/17429

These pre-selected sets of leveled texts will familiarize students with concepts important to the study of medieval and Renaissance Europe.



EDUCATOR RESOURCE CENTER

The ERC can help you expand your pre- and post-visit activities to connect students' museum experience with your classroom curriculum. The ERC offers:

- Curriculum consultations
- Circulating resources
- Professional development workshops

Visit nelson-atkins.org/educators/resources for info.