

# PLANNING YOUR LESSON

## QUESTIONING STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

The following questions provide a way of looking at a Renaissance work of art. We suggest that before you plan your lessons you ask yourself the following questions while you look at the work of art. You will find useful information in the introduction and slide entries. The first four questions invite you to look at a Renaissance painting. The fifth question requires you to synthesize what you have learned from answering the first four questions with your own knowledge of the Renaissance. The sixth question asks you once again to contemplate the work of art. While this method may be used for any of the artworks, we have chosen to demonstrate the questioning strategies with the painting, *Saint Eligius* by Petrus Christus, SLIDE 6.

### 1. WHAT DO YOU SEE?

This is an open-ended question that seems simple; it is the first step to looking. Each artist invites us to see the world in a different way. The information that you gather from this observation provides a basis for the following questions.

### 2. WHAT ROLE DOES THE HUMAN FIGURE PLAY IN THE ARTWORK?

The human figure plays a central role in Renaissance works of art. It reflects the Renaissance belief in the importance of the individual, along with the period's renewed awareness of classical representations of the human figure.

### 3. HOW HAS THE ARTIST CREATED THE ILLUSION OF SPACE ON A FLAT SURFACE OR THE PICTURE PLANE?

The importance of perspective in the Renaissance is attached to the desire of the painter to create a worldly space, elegant and habitable, and ordered by the intellect.

### 4. HOW ARE UNITY AND HARMONY ACHIEVED IN THE WORK OF ART?

This question asks the viewer to observe and analyze how the parts of a painting are arranged. The development of the subject matter is an element in the design of the composition, along with line, shape, and color.

### 5. WHAT DO THE PARTICULAR DETAILS IN THE PAINTING TELL US?

This question suggests that you look at the painting as primary source material that will raise new directions of inquiry. Use your knowledge of the Renaissance along with the information in this packet; identify particular details that relate to your curriculum. Following is a detailed analysis of this question.

### 6. WHAT DO YOU SEE?

We suggest you take ten minutes to look at the painting again. Remember what you first thought and what you think now. These paintings speak to us through a shared and continuous sense of our humanity.

## AN ANALYSIS OF QUESTION 5

### SAINT ELIGIUS BY PETRUS CHRISTUS, SLIDE 6

It is important to have the image of *Saint Eligius* in front of you as you answer the questions. When you reach Question 5, which asks you about the particular details of the painting, use the following method to initiate an exploration of daily life in northern Europe during the fifteenth century. The questions investigate themes relevant to social studies, humanities, and history units: the individual, family and home, society, and the larger world.

#### BACKGROUND

In the fifteenth century, Flanders was agriculturally productive and densely populated. It was one of the principal commercial hubs of Europe. Petrus Christus lived in Bruges, which at the time was a thriving economic and cultural center.

#### INDIVIDUAL

This refers to the central Renaissance idea that “man is the measure of all things.” Personal identity is conveyed through portraits, personal emblems or coats of arms, and special commissions, such as the parade helmet, SLIDE 23, or the *Studiolo from the Ducal Palace at Gubbio*, SLIDE 9. Aesthetically, the importance of the individual is reflected in the portrayal of the human body in motion, the depiction of emotion, and the development of perspective.

#### Specifically in *Saint Eligius*:

Clothes indicate social status. The couple belongs to the urban elite. The woman’s headdress and dress reflect the highest fashion of the day. She indicates the yardage of her dress—another sign of wealth—by holding it folded under her arm. Her forehead is plucked, in keeping with the fashion of the day that considered a high forehead to be a sign of beauty.

Saint Eligius is portrayed as a goldsmith who is part of the growing, prosperous middle class. He wears the simpler clothing of an artisan.

#### FAMILY AND HOME

The growth of notable and prestigious families strongly affected the cultural, civic, and religious life of the independent cities of northern and southern Europe. The new urban middle class built homes and decorated them with both secular and devotional art. Much of the art is connected with the life cycle—birth, marriage, and death.

#### Specifically in *Saint Eligius*:

The bridal belt, the ring, and the pewter wedding cup on the top shelf are allusions to marriage.

The affection represented between the two figures in this painting may refer to marriage. (See SOURCE MATERIAL, p. 92.) At this early date marriages between people of such obviously opulent means were often arranged for dynastic, political, or economic reasons. (See SLIDE 4.) The circular convex mirror introduces a complex intertwining of religious and secular life in both family and society (see Society, below). The image of the falcon reflected in the mirror might refer to hunting, a popular courtly sport and one that allowed engaged couples to meet in public before they were married.

## SOCIETY

The independent city-states allowed, even required, families to practice civic responsibility. They valued their participation in the representative forms of government that replaced the earlier feudal hierarchies. Many Renaissance works of art describe the settings as well as the activities of political, economic, and communal daily life.

Specifically in *Saint Eligius*:

The presence of the circular convex mirror has been interpreted in other ways; for example, the fact that the mirror is cracked may indicate that the viewer's world is not a perfect one. In Christian literature, the falcon is a symbol of pride and greed, and the mirror is a symbol of *Superbia*, the personification of pride (one of the seven deadly sins). In this interpretation, Petrus Christus's painting may be contrasting sinful human behavior with the devout behavior of the couple inside the shop.

Bruges was a famous center for the production and consumption of luxury goods. While the extensive depiction of objects can be considered an inventory of a fifteenth-century goldsmith's shop, the more fabulous and exotic objects allude to the growth of cities and the rise of the middle class and their desire for show. The new medium of oil paint gave artists the freedom to render the material world in all its colors and radiance, creating a magical illusion.

The inclusion of the figure of an artisan in this painting can lead to a discussion of guilds and their place in society and religion. For example, this panel may have been commissioned by the Goldsmith's Guild of Bruges for their chapel, and the figure may represent their patron saint, Eligius.

## THE LARGER WORLD

A corollary of the increased consciousness of the individual as a force in history is the heightened awareness of others. The details in the works of art demonstrate the great extent of trade and travel during the Renaissance.

Specifically in *Saint Eligius*:

That Bruges was an international center of trade and commerce is evidenced by the following details in the painting:

The gold, coral, coconut, and silver on the shelves of the goldsmith shop are imported from other parts of the world. The Islamic influence in the pattern of the lady's dress fabric indicates that it was probably woven in Venice, which had a history of contact with the East. Textile production was the first trade in Europe to expand internationally. North of the Alps, the Flemish cities of Bruges and Ghent became centers of cloth making, while in the south, Venice and Florence built their economies on luxury textile production.

GO BACK TO QUESTION 6: At the end of this exploration, it is essential to go back and look at the painting as a whole and reconsider the first question: What do you see?

The details in this painting can also be selected to stimulate lessons in Science, Visual Arts, and Language Arts curricula.

## AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH TO THE USE OF SLIDES IN THE CLASSROOM

Looking at works of art can be enjoyable and inspiring. To truly experience art in this way, we must engage personally with it. An interactive approach engages the student! We suggest that you start your lesson with one of the following exercises, designed especially to stimulate students' visual reactions.

The following exercise gives students the opportunity to respond intuitively to a work of art. The students will discover that they do not need to have prior knowledge of the history or content of the work.

- STEP 1: Show at least five slides, leaving each slide on the screen for one minute. During the time each slide is projected ask students to jot down a word that best describes the image they are looking at.
- STEP 2: From the five slides, select a work that is relevant to your curriculum to discuss at length. Project the work again and ask the students to share their one-word reactions to it.
- STEP 3: Choose the reactions that you feel will lead the class into a fuller exploration of the work. (As the discussion proceeds, try to include each student's first reaction into the conversation.) The students' initial reactions will lead them to another level of understanding of the work.
- STEP 4: Allow time so the students can look at the entire painting. At this point begin your lesson.

This exercise draws students into the work of art by concentrating on parts or details of the work.

- STEP 1: Choose a painting from the packet that has at least two or three slides of details. It is important that the content in the painting of your choice be relevant to the curriculum you are teaching.
- STEP 2: Project the details first, one slide at a time. Ask the students to describe what they see. To spark their curiosity, ask them about clues that allude to objects or events that are not obvious or complete in the projected part.
- STEP 3: Allow time so the students can look at the entire painting. Begin your lesson.

## A SHORT LIST

### GRADE LEVEL

Junior High and High School

We have selected ten works of art with which you can present the art of the Renaissance, if your time is short.

- SLIDE 6 *Saint Eligius* by Petrus Christus
- SLIDE 10 *Annunciation* by Hans Memling
- SLIDE 13 *Adam and Eve* by Albrecht Dürer
- SLIDE 18 *The Judgment of Paris* by Lucas Cranach the Elder
- SLIDE 25 *The Harvesters* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder
- SLIDE 4 *Portrait of Man and Woman at a Casement* by Fra Filippo Lippi
- SLIDE 8 *The Birth of the Virgin* by Fra Carnevale
- SLIDE 9 *The Liberal Arts Studiolo* from the Ducal Palace at Gubbio
- SLIDE 12 *Adam* by Tullio Lombardo
- SLIDE 16 *Studies for the Libyan Sibyl* by Michelangelo

See the following checklists—a checklist is a visual inventory on specific theme.

HUMAN FIGURE	p. 115
PERSPECTIVE	p. 127
COMPOSITION	p. 139
NARRATIVE	p. 151
PORTRAIT	p. 175
DAILY LIFE	p. 195

### MEDIUM

TEMPERA PAINT	SLIDES 4, 8
OIL PAINT	SLIDES 6, 18, 25
ENGRAVING	SLIDE 13, p. 93
DRAWING	SLIDES 11, 16
SCULPTURE	SLIDE 12

# LESSON PLANS AND CHECKLISTS

The chart on the following pages is designed to facilitate selection of the lesson plans for individual classroom needs.

## MAIN HEADINGS

- Under Lower Elementary, we have grouped together three lesson plans that have been especially designed for kindergarten through third grade.
- Each subject and theme is preceded by a checklist of images for easy reference. The checklists are visual inventories of the slides included in the packet.

## INDIVIDUAL LESSON PLANS

- The LESSON PLANS are listed by name in the column on the left.
- CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS provide interdisciplinary links.
- A suggested GRADE LEVEL is identified, although teachers may adapt any of these lesson plans to the needs of their own students.
- The PAGE NUMBER of the lesson plan is given.

The textile image appearing at the top of each lesson plan is a detail from an Italian, mid-fifteenth century silk piece, 1.25 w. x 20 1/2 in. (Made/Manufactured: Venice, Italy) Fletcher Fund, 1946 (46.156.115)

LESSON PLAN	CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS	GRADE LEVEL	PAGE NUMBER
<b>LOWER ELEMENTARY</b>			
THE STORY IN ART, PART I	Visual Arts Language Arts	Kindergarten–3rd grade	p. 105
INSIDE AND OUTSIDE	Visual Arts Language Arts	Kindergarten–3rd grade	p. 109
PERSONAL ARMOR	Visual Arts Language Arts	Kindergarten–3rd grade	p. 111
<b>HUMAN FIGURE</b>			
CHECKLIST			p. 115
A FORM TO MEASURE	Mathematics Visual Arts Social Studies/Humanities	Junior High High School	p. 117
DRAWING THE HUMAN FIGURE	Visual Arts	Kindergarten–3rd grade	p. 121
CONTRAPPOSTO POSE	Visual Arts Social Studies/Humanities	Junior High High School	p. 123
GESTURE	Visual Arts Language Arts Social Studies/Humanities	Junior High High School	p. 125
<b>PERSPECTIVE</b>			
CHECKLIST			p. 127
OVERLAPPING SHAPES	Visual Arts Language Arts	Elementary Junior High	p. 129
AERIAL OR ATMOSPHERIC PERSPECTIVE	Science Visual Arts Language Arts Social Studies/Humanities	Junior High High School	p. 131
LINEAR ONE-POINT PERSPECTIVE	Visual Arts Mathematics Social Studies/Humanities	Junior High High School	p. 135
<b>COMPOSITION</b>			
CHECKLIST			p. 139
CLASSICAL COMPOSITION	Visual Arts Mathematics Social Studies/Humanities	Junior High	p. 141
DRAW THE GOLDEN RECTANGLE	Visual Arts Mathematics Social Studies/Humanities	Junior High High School	p. 147

LESSON PLAN	CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS	GRADE LEVEL	PAGE NUMBER
<b>NARRATIVE</b>			
CHECKLIST THE STORY IN ART, PART II	Language Arts Visual Arts	Upper Elementary Junior High High School	p. 151 p. 153
A WRITING ACTIVITY	Language Arts Visual Arts	Elementary Junior High High School	p. 157
<b>LANGUAGE ARTS</b>			
POETIC FORMS	Visual Arts Drama Social Studies/Humanities Music	Junior High High School	p. 159
ALLEGORY	Language Arts Visual Arts	Junior High High School	p. 171
<b>PORTRAIT</b>			
CHECKLIST THE RENAISSANCE PORTRAIT	Visual Arts Mathematics Social Studies/Humanities	Junior High High School	p. 175 p. 177
ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM	Visual Arts Language Arts Social Studies/Humanities	Junior High High School	p. 179
<b>TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS</b>			
TEMPERA	Science Visual Arts	Junior High High School	p. 185
PRINTMAKING	Visual Arts Language Arts	Elementary Junior High High School	p. 191
<b>DAILY LIFE</b>			
CHECKLIST DAILY LIFE IN THE RENAISSANCE	Humanities Social Studies Visual Arts	Junior High High School Upper Elementary	p. 195 p. 197
TIME	Visual Arts Science Language Arts Social Studies/Humanities	Junior High High School	p. 201
COMPARE AND CONTRAST TWO KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS	Visual Arts Music Social Studies/Humanities Science	Junior High High School	p. 205