

E D U C A T I O N

PRE-VISIT GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

EUROPEAN PAINTINGS

(15th–18th CENTURY)

Use this guide to prepare for your self-guided visit to the Metropolitan Museum with your students.

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



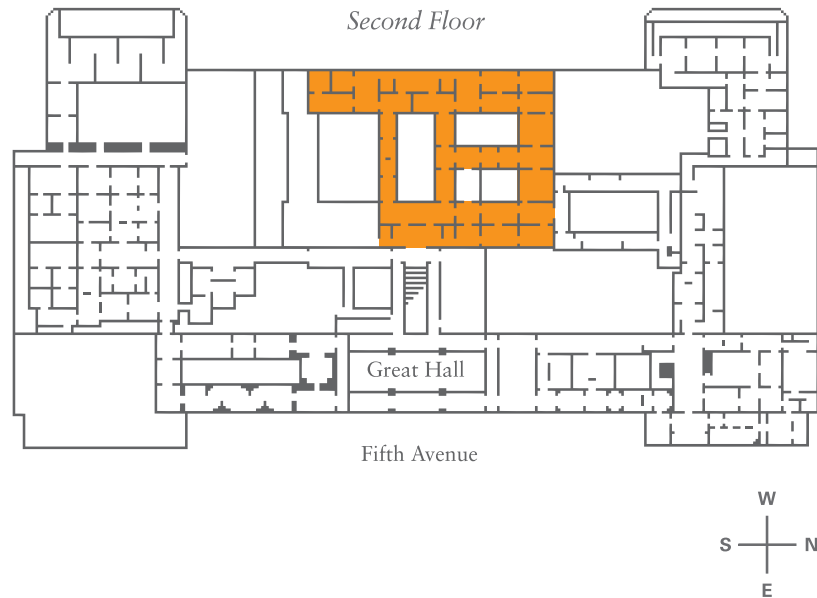
This guide will help you prepare for your self-guided visit to the Metropolitan Museum with your students. Use the links to the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History on the Museum's website to access descriptions of works of art as well as relevant thematic essays.

Introduction

The Metropolitan Museum's collection of European paintings covers a time period ranging from the twelfth through the eighteenth century. The earliest paintings in the collection—created in the twelfth to fourteenth century—are sacred works; these were produced in small workshops in northern and southern Europe upon commission by religious orders, the Church, and guilds. This guide focuses on works from the early fifteenth century—the beginning of the Renaissance—to the eighteenth century. In the Renaissance, the aristocracy and rising mercantile classes commissioned art depicting subjects from the classical world. The status of artists improved from mere artisan to artist; some were fortunate to secure professional positions attached to papal Rome and to European courts, where they had access to formidable art collections. By the seventeenth century, there was a growing demand for genre works (“themes of daily life”), landscapes, and still-life paintings. Also relevant to the history of European painting were the cultural shifts resulting from the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, exploration and colonialism, the Enlightenment, and the Age of Revolution.

The Galleries

The Museum's collection of European paintings is located on the second floor. It includes approximately 2,200 works, with many that are instantly recognizable worldwide. The French, Italian, and Dutch schools are most strongly represented, with fine works also by British, Netherlandish, German, Spanish, and Flemish masters. Depending upon the grade level and interests of the students, the collection may be explored thematically (portraits, landscapes, genre painting, history painting, still lifes, etc.), or by school (French, Italian, Spanish, etc.).



Planning a Tour

When visiting the Metropolitan Museum with your students, prepare your tour with the following in mind:

- Less is more. Select five or six works of art to discuss over the course of an hour in the galleries.
- Choose works that are located away from doorways and areas that are heavily traversed by visitors.
- Include works that are visible to all students in your group for purposes of discussion and viewing.
- Make sure that there are enough chaperones in your group to divide the students into smaller groups for gallery discussions.
- While touring the galleries, please give priority to lecturers wearing Museum IDs who are guiding groups. If they are discussing a work that you would like your students to see, please select another work to view and discuss in the interim.

Please Note: *Although most of the suggested works in this guide will be on view when you visit the Museum, some gallery installations may be subject to change. We recommend that you use [Search the Collections](#) online or come to the Museum to verify that the objects you want to discuss are on display prior to bringing your group.*

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's school tour program is made possible by the generosity of Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman.

Suggested Works of Art to Explore

Please note that titles, dates, and other object information on the website and on gallery signage may vary as the result of ongoing research.



Portrait of a Woman with a Man at a Casement, ca. 1440–44

Fra Filippo Lippi (Italian, Florentine, ca. 1406–1469)

Tempera on wood; 25 1/4 x 16 1/2 in. (64.1 x 41.9 cm)

Inscribed on cuff: LEALT[À]

Marquand Collection, Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1889 (89.15.19)

Questions: Look carefully at this woman's dress and posture. How would you describe her? What is the setting of the scene? What is the relationship between the two figures?

Learn more about [Portraiture in Renaissance and Baroque Europe](#).



Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints, altarpiece, ca. 1504

Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio or Santi) (Italian, Marchigian, 1483–1520)

Oil and gold on wood; main panel, overall 67 7/8 x 67 7/8 in. (172.4 x 172.4 cm), painted surface 66 3/4 x 66 1/2 in. (169.5 x 168.9 cm); lunette, overall 29 1/2 x 70 7/8 in. (74.9 x 180 cm), painted surface 25 1/2 x 67 1/2 in. (64.8 x 171.5 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.30ab)

Questions: What do you notice about the arrangement of the figures? How has Raphael indicated who are the most important? What attributes, or features, identify the saints depicted in this painting? How do the figures relate to one another? Where would this painting have been installed? Describe the shadows and then talk about the space in the picture.



Venus and Adonis

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) (Italian, Venetian, ca. 1488–1576)

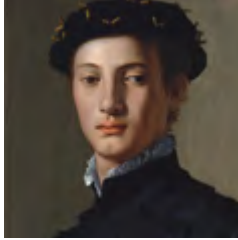
Oil on canvas; 42 x 52 1/2 in. (106.7 x 133.4 cm)

The Jules Bache Collection, 1949 (49.7.16)

Questions: How does the composition—the way the elements of the painting are arranged—emphasize the dramatic tension as Adonis leaves Venus? How does Titian use light and color to focus on the unfolding narrative? This is a mythological scene, what does that mean?

Learn more about [Titian \(ca. 1488–1576\)](#).

Learn more about [Venetian Color and Florentine Design](#) and [Couples in Art](#).



Portrait of a Young Man, 1530s

Bronzino (Agnolo di Cosimo di Mariano) (Italian, Florentine, 1503–1572)

Oil on wood; 37 5/8 x 29 1/2 in. (95.6 x 74.9 cm)

H.O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H.O. Havemeyer, 1929 (29.100.16)

Questions: What do this man's stance and costume say about him? Describe his character. How has Bronzino used light to enhance the subject? Describe the furnishings and architectural space around this man.

Learn more about [Mannerism: Bronzino \(1503–1572\) and his Contemporaries](#).

Learn more about [Portraiture in Renaissance and Baroque Europe](#).



The Denial of Saint Peter

Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi) (Italian, Lombard, 1571–1610)

Oil on canvas; 37 x 49 3/8 in. (94 x 125.4 cm)

Gift of Herman and Lila Shickman, and Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 1997 (1997.167)

Questions: What is the setting and time of day? What biblical story is unfolding here? How has Caravaggio used light and shadow to draw attention to the dramatic scene?

Learn more about [Caravaggio \(Michelangelo Merisi\) \(1571–1610\) and his Followers](#).



The Harvesters, 1565

Pieter Bruegel the Elder (Netherlandish, active by 1551, died 1569)

Oil on wood; Overall, including added strips at top, bottom, and right,

46 7/8 x 63 3/4 in. (119 x 162 cm); original painted surface 45 7/8 x 62 7/8 in. (116.5 x 159.5 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1919 (19.164)

Questions: How does Bruegel suggest distance and depth? What features suggest the heat of a summer day? What shapes recur in the painting?

Learn more about [Early Netherlandish Painting](#).



Juan de Pareja (born about 1610, died 1670), 1650

Diego Rodríguez de Silva y Velázquez (Spanish, 1599–1660)

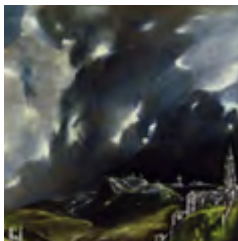
Oil on canvas; 32 x 27 1/2 in. (81.3 x 69.9 cm)

Purchase, Fletcher and Rogers Funds, and Bequest of Miss Adelaide Milton de Groot (1876–1967), by exchange, supplemented by gifts from friends of the Museum, 1971 (1971.86)

Questions: What are the different textures Velázquez has created in this portrait? Describe the man, his posture, and his costume. If you had a conversation with him, what would it be about?

Learn more about [Velázquez \(1599–1660\)](#).

Learn more about [Portraiture in Renaissance and Baroque Europe](#).



View of Toledo

El Greco (Domenikos Theotokopoulos) (Greek, 1541–1614)

Oil on canvas; 47 3/4 x 42 3/4 in. (121.3 x 108.6 cm)

H.O. Havemeyer Collection, Bequest of Mrs. H.O. Havemeyer, 1929 (29.100.6)

Questions: What makes the city of Toledo stand out? What is the mood in this painting? How did El Greco create this mood? What do the small figures in the foreground and middle ground suggest about the space in the painting?

Learn more about [El Greco \(Domenikos Theotokopoulos\) \(1541–1614\)](#).



The Fortune Teller, probably 1630s

Georges de La Tour (French, 1593–1652)

Oil on canvas; 40 1/8 x 48 5/8 in. (101.9 x 123.5 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1960 (60.30)

Questions: What is happening here? What do the facial expressions tell us? And the activity of the hands? How does the artist use light and color to lead our eyes around the composition?



Still Life with a Skull and a Writing Quill, 1628

Pieter Claesz (Dutch, 1597/98–1660)

Oil on wood; 9 1/2 x 14 1/8 in. (24.1 x 35.9 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1949 (49.107)

Questions: How has the artist made the painting seem real? Why is the glass tipped? What is barely visible in the reflection captured by the glass? What is suggested by the placement of the skull on the book with papers? Do other details echo the same theme?

Learn more about [Still-Life Painting in Northern Europe, 1600–1800](#).



Rubens, His Wife Helena Fourment (1614–1673), and Their Son Peter Paul (born 1637), mid- to late 1630s

Peter Paul Rubens (Flemish, 1577–1640)

Oil on wood; 80 1/4 x 62 1/4 in. (203.8 x 158.1 cm)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, in honor of Sir John Pope-Hennessy, 1981 (1981.238)

Questions: How does Rubens make it clear that this is a family group? Which figure is most important? Explain. Find five objects in the background that you think might relate to the figures.

Learn more about [Peter Paul Rubens \(1577–1640\) and Anthony van Dyck \(1599–1641\): Paintings](#).



Self-Portrait, 1660

Rembrandt (Rembrandt van Rijn) (Dutch, 1606–1669)

Oil on canvas; 31 5/8 x 26 1/2 in. (80.3 x 67.3 cm)

Bequest of Benjamin Altman, 1913 (14.40.618)

Questions: What artistic devices did Rembrandt use to draw your eye to his face? Why did he select a large black hat to wear? Where is the thickest paint? Look at the set of his mouth and the shadows around his eyes, especially his left eye. What mood is expressed?

Learn more about [Rembrandt van Rijn \(1606–1669\): Paintings](#).



Young Woman with a Water Pitcher, ca. 1662

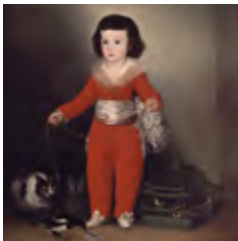
Johannes Vermeer (Dutch, 1632–1675)

Oil on canvas; 18 x 16 in. (45.7 x 40.6 cm)

Marquand Collection, Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1889 (89.15.21)

Questions: Describe the variety of textures that Vermeer has created in this scene. What is the woman doing and what room is she in? How does light play a role in this scene?

Learn more about [Johannes Vermeer \(1632–1675\)](#).



Manuel Osorio Manrique de Zuñiga (1784–1792), possibly 1790s

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (Spanish, 1746–1828)

Oil on canvas; 50 x 40 in. (127 x 101.6 cm)

The Jules Bache Collection, 1949 (49.7.41)

Questions: What makes Don Manuel stand out? How many pets does he have? What are the cats thinking about? Where did Goya sign his name?

Learn more about [Francisco de Goya \(1746–1828\)](#) and the [Spanish Enlightenment](#).



The Death of Socrates, 1787

Jacques-Louis David (French, 1748–1825)

Oil on canvas; 51 x 77 1/4 in. (129.5 x 196.2 cm)

Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, Wolfe Fund, 1931 (31.45)

Questions: Look at the poses of the figures. How many different feelings are expressed? What artistic devices did David use to make Socrates stand out? Why is a lyre placed on the deathbed?

Learn more about [Neoclassicism](#).

Selected Resources

These and many more resources are available in Nolen Library in the Ruth and Harold D. Uris Center for Education.

Ainsworth, Maryan W., and Keith Christiansen, eds. *From Van Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York: MMA, 1998.

Raditsa, Bosiljka, et al. [The Art of Renaissance Europe: A Resource for Educators](#). New York: MMA, 2000.
(Part of the circulating collection available to educators in Nolen Library)

Roberts, Warren. *Jacques-Louis David, Revolutionary Artist: Art, Politics, and the French Revolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Rosenberg, Jakob, and Seymour Slive. *Dutch Painting, 1600–1800*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Rynck, Patrick de. *How to Read a Painting: Lessons from the Old Masters*. New York: H. N. Abrams, 2004.

Schneider, Norbert. *The Art of the Portrait: Masterpieces of European Portrait-Painting, 1420–1670*. New York: Taschen, 1999.

Sturgis, Alexander, ed. *Understanding Paintings: Themes in Art Explored and Explained*. New York: Watson-Guptill, 2000.

Tomlinson, Janis. *From El Greco to Goya: Painting in Spain, 1561–1828*. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1997.

Elementary Students

Guarnieri, Paolo. *A Boy Named Giotto*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.

Shafer, Anders C. *The Fantastic Journey of Pieter Bruegel*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2002.

Ventura, Piero, and Marisa Ventura. *The Painter's Trick*. New York: Random House, 1977.

Visconti, Guido. *The Genius of Leonardo*. New York: Barefoot Books, 2000.

Middle School Students

McHugh, Christopher. *Western Art, 1600–1800*. New York: Thomson Learning, 1995.

McLanathan, Richard. *Peter Paul Rubens*. First Impressions. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1995.

Other artists in this series are: Goya, Rembrandt, Bosch, and Leonardo.

Mühlberger, Richard. *What Makes a Bruegel a Bruegel?* New York: MMA, 1993.

Other artists in this series are: Rembrandt, Raphael, and Goya.

High School Students

Arenas, José Fernández. *The Key to Renaissance Art*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1990.

Merlo, Claudio. *Three Masters of the Renaissance: Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael*. Hauppauge, N.Y.: Barron's, 1999.

Simon, Kate. *A Renaissance Tapestry: The Gonzaga of Mantua*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

Sweet, Christopher. *The Essential Johannes Vermeer*. New York: H. N. Abrams, 1999.

Other artists in this series are: Michelangelo, Bosch, and Constable.

White, Michael. *Leonardo: The First Scientist*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.