

Sample: Age of Revolution III (1865-2000)

Unlike other curricula which depend on certain books, *TruthQuest History's* commentary brings depth to any reading. Our topic-specific booklists simply show the rich possibilities! Relax; choose from whatever is available.
(*Starred books were in-print at the time of this writing.)

29É Painting a Revolution (Modern Art)

Are you noticing the words we've been using? Chaos. Unrest. You know these new ideas we've been talking about were absolutely revolutionary! You know that a whole new concept of the world had been conceived and the makers of this new world were trying to reshape every element of it! One painter, explaining his revolutionary, reality-twisting art, said, "It is a mistake to imitate what one wants to create."⁸⁹ See what I mean?!

You know the humanists (who tended to be leading society) pushed God out of the picture, for if mankind was to be his own god—his own definer of truth and life—there could be no other. In order for the universe to be *Godless*, it had to run autonomously—on its own power. Isn't that just what Adam and Eve, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the barbarian kings were all looking for?! The authority to be their own boss, to call their own shots, to decide for themselves what was right and wrong?!

Autonomy

Well, for the universe to run autonomously—and modern science seemed to 'prove' this—all life had to operate *only* because of the mechanics of chemistry, math, physics, and biology. (Remember Descartes saying that all the truths and powers of the universe would one day be fully grasped by the human mind and would be able to be expressed mathematically?!) A supervising, energizing, life-imparting, spiritual God couldn't be necessary. No God would be admitted who had actually created the mechanics and formulae of the universe...and was thus higher than everything and everyone. So far, the evolutionist humanists thought this was sounding great. They thought they were free of God! Remember how powerfully Nietzsche had worded it?!

But something completely unforeseen took place! A sad, sad irony. If *all* the universe was just mechanical, *then people were too!* The cosmos instantly became a machine and mankind become just one cog in it. He lost his specialness; he too was just a chemical reaction. Indeed! During a session with Francis Schaeffer, a Harvard professor claimed that "four hundred years ago there was a collection of molecules named Shakespeare..."⁹⁰ See?! Mankind had, unwittingly, given up his claim to specialness, and had instead made himself only chemical and mechanical, the same as slime mold and friction. *I grieve that so many walk our streets each day believing this!* I love the way Francis Schaeffer says it:

⁸⁹ Braque, quoted in: Carol Strickland and John Boswell, *The Annotated Mona Lisa* (Kansas City: Andrews and McMeel, 1992) 134.

⁹⁰ Schaeffer 164.

*Man beginning with his proud, proud humanism, tried to make himself autonomous, but rather than becoming great, he found himself ending up as only a collection of molecules—and nothing more.*⁹¹

But it gets even worse! It's even more ironic! It was the search for (*Godless*) value and freedom that led humanists to claim people were merely mechanical! And if mankind was ruled by the same mechanical formulae as the rest of the universe, *he was not autonomous or free at all!* He was just reacting to life, trying to adapt, trying to go with the flow, trying to make the best of it in this new *Godless* universe. There was no higher law, there was no basis or reason for morality, there was no ultimate good, there was no freedom from outside forces. One must just try to survive in this crazy, meaningless, chemical world driven by the random chance of mutations. All of life became a fragmented, get-what-you-can, eat-drink-and-be-merry-for-tomorrow-we-die struggle. (Remember how Marx saw everything in terms of struggle?) People were merely *existing*. How utterly dismal!

Now, don't try to take the easy way out of all of this by saying this is too hard to think about. For the sake of others, you must dig in here! Do you see how desperate and despairing people really are behind their happy-looking masks?! Understand them! Figure out what (*Who!*) they're thirsting for, so you can offer relief!

What came of all the dreams of past humanists such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and even to a certain degree, Aquinas—those who hoped in reason (ration), nature, or romanticism? Well, things were looking rather bleak! Yes, philosophy started getting pretty negative, after centuries of optimism that mankind would design one, whole, unified truth about life using his brilliant, rational mind.

But philosophers like Immanuel Kant and writers like Goethe had already shown that human reason was *not* error-free. Furthermore, Kant said the really valuable ideas in life are abstract; they are beyond reason; they are beyond human thinking. It's not that Kant turned people to God as being higher. It was more that he was discouraged

Very brief info on Kant and Hegel can be found in *Twelve Great Philosophers*, by Howard Ozmon, Ch. 9 & 10 (Gr. 5-8). Older students will find much deeper analysis in the Francis Schaeffer passage cited below, and in materials by David Noebel and David Quine, if you feel it necessary.

about people's ability to find value in life, and he made them feel that their thinking side and their abstract-knowing side were incompatible. In other words, he kind of 'split' people.⁹² And

Absolute Truth

Hegel further dissolved people's confidence in knowing truth, for you know he said truth was ever evolving as mankind tries to reconcile the various, contradictory aspects of ideas and synthesize them into one new truth, which would then need to be reconciled with new contradictions. His dialectic view of truth—which did away with *absolute truth*—was always changing, and was thus always confusing and insecure!

⁹¹ Schaeffer 164.

⁹² Schaeffer, throughout Chapter 8. Schaeffer explains it so much better.

Artists began to wonder if the things they were painting were ‘really real,’ for how could one be sure of reality and truth? Since serious humanistic reasoning only led people to discover more contradictions, it was getting downright discouraging to even think at all! This discouragement would eventually erode the ‘progressive’ confidence that had been swirling around western civilization. You *must* understand this! But by the late 1800s and early 1900s, only the painters had begun to glimpse this. Well, one philosopher had come to the same conclusions, but his ideas wouldn’t be discovered until after World War II, so we’ll leave him alone right now.

You see, while there were still many strong believers in God and His truth, there was also Mr. Average Joe who was doing his job, mowing the lawn on Saturdays, and going to church on Sundays (though his church had probably subtly changed its message, as you’ve seen). He was a very decent guy who had simply absorbed the popular ideas of his day, not because he was pondering them, but because he *wasn’t*. He was just going with the flow, instead of carefully examining each for accuracy...and consequences.

Meanwhile, these painters, who would come to be called *modern* painters because their works were radically different from past art, reflected the huge change in thinking that would soon be felt by the world at large. They were already finding that the popular beliefs of the day were utterly fragmented and led to absurdity. You can guess, then, that much of their art was purposely fragmented (cubist art) and absurd (dada art) since everything “had come about by chance,” they believed.⁹³ Some focused on the unreal, since reality itself seemed so elusive. Think this isn’t spiritual? Then, ponder Mr. Schaeffer’s comment:

*...reality becomes so fragmented that it disappears, and man is left to make up his own personal world.*⁹⁴

Of course, some artists were simply enjoying ‘freedom’ from past traditions and the liberty to focus only on color or shape, or to develop new styles. Yet, others gladly rejected God and rebelled against the models of beauty and harmony He showed in His artwork—Creation. Since we were created in His image, our sense of beauty is His, unless we choose to reject that. Anyway, you’ll understand then why any artwork—modern or not, whether a painting, sculpture, musical composition, film, novel, poem, or work of architecture—which is born from a rejection of God and His right to determine beauty, is jarring and repulsive to our souls.

Take that another step further! When God was rejected as Creator, when the presence of intelligent design in the universe was denied, so too did many artists reject the role of intelligent design in their artworks. They splashed paint, they threw it, they drew while in dream-like states. While we can appreciate the human energy these works represent, one feels saddened that the artist no longer felt he could respect intelligence or design. When I view some of these works, such as by Jackson Pollock, I feel that the artist saw himself merely as an organic creature (wouldn’t Darwin be proud), possessed of urges, feelings, and desires (wouldn’t Freud be proud), and that his role as an artist was to simply blurt those urges. This is so much less than people really are; it moves toward an animalistic view of humanity, in my opinion. God made us so high—in His own image—and likewise capable of intelligent design and great beauty

⁹³ Schaeffer 188.

⁹⁴ Schaeffer 184.

and harmony. We should glory in these things for they reflect the great gifts our Maker has bestowed upon us who are the apple of His eye.

And do you notice that there is a focus in many modern artworks on the physical aspects of humans only? The spirit seems to be gone. Many works focus even more specifically on the reproductive functions of each gender. That is the case in most modern films too; they make people seem like slaves to sexual desires, instead of respecting the beautiful qualities of a God-honoring person who takes pleasure in moral restraint, service to others, and the long, hard work necessary to accomplish great achievements, and who has the character and intelligence to behave carefully knowing how deeply consequences affect themselves and others.

I guess I could sum up my thoughts this way. Who does this art glorify? Man or God? Is the yearning you sense in these works a yearning to express fully the wonder of God's creation or is it a yearning to immerse in or blurt out one's own feelings? You see, mankind is not happy in himself; we're incomplete without God. It's a lie then that by digging into ourselves we'll find the fullness to satisfy ourselves. If the fullness was in us, we wouldn't feel empty in the first place! But I digress...or maybe I don't.

Here's one final comment on this topic from Mr. Schaeffer, and it's a good one! (p. 197)

Is this art really art? Is it not rather a bare philosophic, intellectual statement, separated from the fullness of who people are and the fullness of what the universe is? The more it tends to be only an intellectual statement, rather than a work of art, the more it becomes anti-art.

Mr. Schaeffer tells of an article written by Kandinsky—a leading modern artist—the point of which was that “since the old harmony (a unity of knowledge) had been lost, only two possibilities remained—extreme naturalism or extreme abstraction. Both, he said, were equal.”⁹⁵ Another writer said of Picasso's works: “Of course, not one of these pictures was actually a portrait but was his prophecy of a ruined world.”⁹⁶ *What had humanism actually done to humankind?!*

The same thing was happening with some musical composers. Schoenberg had “no resolution” and “perpetual variation.”⁹⁷ Webern and Cage went further. Cage, for example, overtly tried to compose the evolutionary worldview by determining the next note in his composition by chance—by the flip of a coin or by a random conducting machine.⁹⁸ What do you imagine came of that?! Right! Noise! And of Mahler's new music, Leonard Bernstein said: “Ours is the century of death and Mahler is its musical prophet.”⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Schaeffer 184.

⁹⁶ David Duncan, quoted by Schaeffer, 187.

⁹⁷ Schaeffer 193.

⁹⁸ Schaeffer 194.

⁹⁹ Bernstein, quoted by Schaeffer 193.

Well, why don't you jump in yourself now! Learn about these artists and musicians. View or listen to their works (those which are wholesome) for they surely reflect each artist's *Big 2 Beliefs*. Do you see how human beings were portrayed mechanically and fragmented? Do you sense a spirit in the people they're painting? Do you see how they searched for basic shapes that might reflect a hearty reality?¹⁰⁰ Think about all the 'isms' they invented in an attempt to portray truth—cubism, surrealism, dadaism, fauvism (*fauve* means 'wild beast'), etc. The entire conception of beauty changed, and with it so too did the design of furniture, buildings, etc.

Can you see their questions and concerns about life? This quote will help you understand how 'urgent' was their art:

The Dadaists were so revolted by the cruelty of war [World War I] that they declared Western civilization bankrupt from beginning to end. They felt they must start from scratch, respecting only one law, the law of chance, and only one reality, that of their own imaginations. Their main task, they thought, was to shock the public into the same unsettled frame of mind, and they tried to do this by exhibiting their creations, most of which were spur-of-the-moment "gestures" meant to defy all reason.¹⁰¹

What do you think God felt as He watched these men and women—those who had rebelled against Him and His truth, as well as those who were groping for meaning as they poured their hearts out onto canvas and clay? They often cared profoundly about human suffering. For example, before becoming a painter, Vincent Van Gogh served with great passion as a missionary in a desperately poor mining community. Sadly, he became very disillusioned with the unresponsiveness and stuffiness of the church. He spent the rest of his life with an aching heart and ended his own life. So right here let me give these artists some credit for thinking and caring! Of course, people must do more than think and care; they must love truth so much that they see God in all that He has made. They must surrender to the Lord and His truth when it is presented to them. Oh, how I wish the church had been able to do that more often and more vibrantly.

29aÉ General Resources

L Remember to read the cautionary notes about studying art which were included in our last listing of artists!

**How Should We Then Live?* by Francis Schaeffer, Ch. 10, beginning at p. 184 Gr. 9-12
(Or Video Episode # 8)

**Discovering Great Artists*, by MaryAnn Kohl Various
Provides hands-on projects related to the styles of many artists.

Art of America in the Early Twentieth Century, by Shirley Glubok Gr. 5-12

**In the Time of Picasso*, by Antony Mason Gr. 7-12

¹⁰⁰ Schaeffer 184.

¹⁰¹ H.W. Janson and Dora Jane Janson, *The Story of Painting* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1966) 159.

29bÉ Abstract painters and sculptors of various ‘schools’

Child’s History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey, (*Architecture* section, Ch. 30) Gr. 2-8
(Later editions tack an additional painting topic onto the *Architecture* section.)
OR, *Young People’s Story of Fine Art: Last Two Hundred Years*, pp. 104-112

Child’s History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey, (*Architecture* section, Ch. 32) Gr. 2-8
(Later editions tack an additional sculpture topic onto the *Architecture* section.)
OR, *Young People’s Story of Sculpture*, pp. 115-117

É Picasso

**Picasso*, by Tony Hart (Famous Children) Gr. 1-4

Pablo Picasso, by Ibi Lepscky Gr. 1-4

**Picasso*, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know the World’s Greatest Artists) Gr. 1-5

**Pablo Picasso*, by Linda Lowery (Carolrhoda On My Own) Gr. 2-6

**Picasso*, by Antony Mason (Famous Artists) Gr. 6-12

Fiction/Historical Fiction:

**Picasso and the Girl with a Ponytail*, by Laurence Anholt Gr. 1-4
Picture book about girl who posed many times for Picasso; fact-based.

É Matisse

**A Magical Day with Matisse*, by Julie Merberg Gr. K-2
This is actually a simple board book!

**Henri Matisse*, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know the World’s Greatest...) Gr. 1-5

**A Bird or Two: A Story about Henri Matisse*, by Bijou Le Tord Gr. 3-6

**Lives of the Artists*, by Kathleen Krull, pp. 50-53 Gr. 3-7

**Matisse*, by Antony Mason (Famous Artists) Gr. 6-12

É Paul Klee

- **Paul Klee*, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know the World's Greatest...) Gr. 1-5
- Paul Klee*, by Ernest Raboff (Art for Children) Gr. 2-8
- **Dreaming Pictures*, by Jurgen Von Schemm (Adventures in Art) Gr. 4-8
- **The Blue Rider*, by Doris Kutschbach *et al* (Adventures in Art) Gr. 4-8
Talks about the 'Blue Riders' group of modern artists, including Klee.

É Chagall

- **Chagall*, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists) Gr. 1-5
- Chagall*, by Ernest Raboff (Art for Children) Gr. 2-8
- **Lives of the Artists*, by Kathleen Krull, pp. 60-63 Gr. 3-7
- **Marc Chagall: What Colour is Paradise?* by T. David *et al* (Adventures in Art) Gr. 4-8
- **Chagall*, by Gianni Pozzi (Masters of Art) Gr. 5-12

É Jackson Pollock (though slightly later)

- **Jackson Pollock*, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know....) Gr. 1-6

É Munch, Kandinsky, Modigliani, Braque, Duchamp, Dufy, Miró, Brancusi, Marin

- **Lives of the Artists*, by Kathleen Krull, pp. 64-67 Gr. 3-7
- **The Blue Rider*, by Doris Kutschbach *et al* (Adventures in Art) Gr. 4-8
Covers Kandinsky and the 'Blue Rider' group.
- **Miró*, by Nicholas Ross (Famous Artists) Gr. 6-12

29cÉ Realistic/naturalistic artists, some of it extreme realism

Child's History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey, (*Architecture* section, Ch. 31) Gr. 2-8
(Later editions tack an additional painting topic onto the *Architecture* section.)
Young People's Story of Fine Art: Last Two Hundred Years, pp. 104-123

Child's History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey, (*Sculpture* section, Ch. 28) Gr. 2-8
OR, *Young People's Story of Sculpture*, pp. 118-123

É George Bellows

Child's History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey, (*Painting* section, Ch. 31b) Gr. 2-8
OR, *Young People's Story of Fine Art: Last Two Hundred Years*, pp. 100-103

É Edward Hopper

Edward Hopper, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know the World's Greatest...) Gr. 1-5

É Grant Wood

**Grant Wood*, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know the World's Greatest...) Gr. 1-5

**Artist in Overalls: The Life of Grant Wood*, by John Duggleby Gr. 5-10

Lives of Poor Boys Who Became Famous, by Sarah Bolton, Ch. 23 Gr. 5-12

Grant Wood: American Gothic, by Ernest Goldstein (Let's Get Lost in a Paint...) Gr. 6-12
Focuses more on Wood's artwork, then adds biographical info.

É Thomas Hart Benton

No specific youth reading resources known at this time; see your general resources.

É Georgia O'Keeffe (who has done various styles, but is best known for her flowers)

**Georgia O'Keeffe*, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know the World's Greatest...) Gr. 1-5

**Georgia O'Keeffe*, by Linda Lowery (On My Own) Gr. 1-5

**My Name is Georgia*, by Jeanette Winter Gr. 2-6

**Lives of the Artists*, by Kathleen Krull, pp. 68-71 Gr. 3-7

**Georgia O'Keeffe: The 'Wideness and Wonder' of Her World*, by B. Gherman Gr. 4-12

É Andrew Wyeth

No specific youth reading resources known at this time; see your general resources.

29dÉ Surrealistic artists–Salvador Dali & Max Ernst

Note: I'll not list any books about Dali (except one) because his images can be both disturbing and inappropriate, so parents you must doubly preview if you intend to study Dali.

**Lives of the Artists*, by Kathleen Krull, pp. 76-79

Gr. 3-7

These few pages reveal just how “eccentric” (to put it mildly) was Dali.