

Sample: Renaissance/Reformation

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.)

17É *Wow!* Artists of the High Renaissance

One thing the fabulously wealthy rulers of church and state did was sponsor the greatest artists and scholars of their age, and many dabbled in such fields themselves. For example, Lorenzo de' Medici collected Greek and Roman manuscripts, besides supporting universities and many of the world's best artists!

The older I become, the more I think (hopefully correctly!) that God actually enjoys human culture, as long as it is wholesome and appropriately based. He created us in His image and that's why we enjoy creativity and beauty! Just as we are proud of our children's scribbles, so God probably relishes the beautiful works of mankind.

However, a person has the option of seizing ownership of this God-given creativity and using it to serve himself or to express error rather than the Lord's beauty and truth. Then creativity runs amok, moving further and further from beauty, in my opinion. The art of the Renaissance period (when there was a Christian consensus in society, as Francis Schaeffer puts it) was very beautiful. As art became increasingly humanistic over the next centuries, though, it ran into man's brokenness, powerlessness, and finiteness, at which point you'll see art become fragmented, dreary, and sometimes purposely anti-beauty, since beauty reflects our Creator's character.

But back to the stunning art of 1400-1600...when the Christian consensus, a focus on individuality, and the spirit of excellence and inquiry all led to some of the greatest art in the history of the world. It was very much like that of the Greeks and Romans they emulated. Even ballet and opera were budding!

By the way, you may be wondering about Reformation art. Good question! It would not really blossom until after 1600 when victories won would end some of the persecution. It's pretty hard to paint when you're running for your life!

So, we'll keep our eyes on the beautiful art produced from the Renaissance worldview in Italy. We're also going to keep in mind Schaeffer's discussion that the ideas of the Renaissance leaders could have taken them toward God (they did have legitimate concerns and ideas at first), or else toward humanism and the license that always results.²² Because most of the

²² Schaeffer 100.

Renaissance thinkers did drift toward humanism, the Renaissance can be categorized (if it must be simplistically categorized) as a humanistic movement. This transition took time though, so the people of the Renaissance had a foot in both the religious and humanistic worlds. A crazy mix!

What of the art then? What *Big 2 Beliefs* does it expose? Certainly the glories of mankind were trumpeted, as in Michelangelo's huge statue *David*. His representation of God on the Sistine ceiling shows Him as not much greater than Adam, but was God deemed much greater than the pope, at the time?

When you combine the skepticism engendered by the church's failings and the Renaissance's fascination with all things Greek and Roman, you see why Greek and Roman mythology was treated by the artists as virtually equal with Christianity. This is revealed in Michelangelo's alternation of pagan and Christian statues around the Sistine chapel. This gives you the opportunity to research an important term—*syncretism*. What does this show about his *Big Belief #1*?

É Syncretism

Older students should note this pagan emphasis, and the philosophical uncertainty that followed, in another piece of Renaissance art—Raphael's *The School of Athens*—which cleverly shows two philosophers of ancient Greece, Plato and Aristotle. You see, the church of the Middle Ages had emphasized only the higher values of life; it said Plato's similar emphasis confirmed the Christian outlook. But without understanding God's fullness, Plato had been forced to then diminish the significance of individual people and things, and even 'real' life. Thomas Aquinas (a church scholar of the late Middle Ages) believed the teachings of Aristotle (Plato's pupil) were more accurate, for they said individual people and things were of value simply because they existed, though not because of a higher reason such as God's creation or ordination of them. While both views were incomplete, Aristotle's influence, in the end, greatly accelerated the growth of humanism in the church, science, art, mathematics, etc. The Renaissance thinkers and artists saw the need for both emphases, but, without accepting God's supremacy, could not achieve it.²³

The Bible, of course, nails it. I like the vivid paraphrase of Colossians 1:15-20 in *The Message*:

We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank of angels—everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him. He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this very moment. And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.

He was supreme in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—he is supreme in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe—people and things, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the Cross.

²³ Schaeffer 52-56.

The Renaissance encouraged observation and scientific analysis of the real world, as did the Reformation. This is seen in the intricate exactness and correctness of the plants in Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin of the Rocks*. Leonardo had expertise in multiple fields—such as painting, mathematics, military design, botany, engineering, and city planning—and that was the most esteemed attribute of the day. It made him the ultimate *Renaissance man*, as the term has been coined.

Human achievement, excellence, learning, artistry, and curiosity *are* very good, but the Renaissance giants faced the same inner choice the Greeks faced...and *we* face! What is the basis for human greatness: inherent human abilities *or* the reflection of God's image in mankind? (Do *ThinkWrite 4* now.)

ThinkWrite 4: "Idea soup!"

After you've mulled over the thoughts I've expressed here and have reviewed these Renaissance artists and their works, what do you see about the *Big 2 Beliefs* of the Renaissance in general? Who did these people believe God was? Who did they believe mankind to be? How did they show these beliefs in their art?

A profound insight into the early outcome of Renaissance humanism is seen in the final days of Leonardo da Vinci and in Michelangelo's *Unfinished* statues, made toward the end of his life.

By the way, do you see similar humanism and syncretism in our own nation?

17aÉ General overview

Any art history book will contain plenty of information on Renaissance artists, so it will be very helpful to have one on hand, especially since some of these painters have not been the subject of stand-alone children's books. Don't forget! Many art books show unclothed figures. You must preview if you want to implement your own family standards.

- * *Art of the Renaissance*, by Lucia Corrain (Masters of Art) Gr. 3-12
- * *Story of Sculpture*, by Francesca Romei (Masters of Art) Gr. 3-12
- Famous Artists of the Past*, by Alice Elizabeth Chase, pp. 19-21 Gr. 4-12
- Story of Painting for Young People*, by H.W. & Dora Janson Gr. 4-12
- * *Annotated Mona Lisa*, by Carol Strickland Gr. 8-12
- * *Sister Wendy's 1000 Masterpieces*, by Sister Wendy Beckett Various
- * *Sister Wendy's Story of Painting*, by Sister Wendy Beckett Various

17bÉ Botticelli

- * Greenleaf's *Famous Men of the Renaissance & Reformation*, Ch. 8 Gr. 3-8
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- * *Botticelli*, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists) Gr. 1-5
This is a fun series!

Child's History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey (*Painting* section, Ch. 10) Gr. 2-8
OR, *Young People's Story of Fine Art: 15,000 BC - 1800 AD*, pp. 44-49

17cÉ Leonardo da Vinci

There are so very many books on Leonardo; you'll find plenty at your library. Here are some of special note, but keep in mind that many art books show unclothed figures. You may want to preview. I've not seen all of these.

**Greenleaf's Famous Men of the Renaissance & Reformation*, Ch. 9 Gr. 3-8

Renaissance and Reformation Times, by Dorothy Mills, Part 1 of Ch. IX Gr. 6-12

* *Leonardo da Vinci*, by Alice & Martin Provensen Gr. K-3
This is a pop-up book!

* *Child's History of the World*, by V.M. Hillyer, Ch. 62 Gr. 1-4

* *Leonardo and the Flying Boy*, by Laurence Anholt Gr. 1-4
Based on a true story, Leonardo's apprentice and a street urchin are *very* curious about Leonardo's flying machine ideas.

* *Leonardo da Vinci*, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know...) Gr. 1-5
Fun, lively series.

* *Katie and the Mona Lisa*, by James Mayhew Gr. 2-4
A girl gets to travel 'inside' da Vinci's famous painting.

Child's History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey (*Painting*, Ch. 13) Gr. 2-8
OR, *Young People's Story of Fine Art: 15,000 BC - 1800 AD*, pp. 64-71

Leonardo da Vinci, KIDS Discover Magazine, Feb. 1997 Gr. 2-10

* *Leonardo: Beautiful Dreamer*, by Robert Byrd Gr. 3-8
This work is done in the rich style of Leonardo's own notebooks.

Leonardo da Vinci, by Ernest Raboff (Art for Children) Gr. 3-8
Wonderful series with a very nice way of speaking to the reader.

* *Leonardo da Vinci*, by Diane Stanley Gr. 3-8
Her biographies (in advanced picture-book format) are always lavishly illustrated.

* *Leonardo da Vinci*, by Francesca Romei (Masters of Art) Gr. 3-12

Leonardo da Vinci: Three-Dimensional, by Jerome Corsi Gr. 3-12
This is an interesting pop-up book which shows his varied accomplishments.

* *Leonardo da Vinci for Kids*, by Janis Herbert Gr. 4-8
This book contains some hands-on projects.

Leonardo da Vinci, by Emily Hahn (Landmark) Gr. 4-12

What Makes a Leonardo a Leonardo? by Richard Muhlberger Gr. 5-8
This series focuses on the more technical aspects of the artist's works.

Leonardo da Vinci: Pathfinder of Science, by Henry Gillette (Immortals of Science) Gr. 6-12
This biography focuses on his amazing scientific work.

Three Masters of the Renaissance, by Claudio Merlo Gr. 6-12
This was recently in-print, so may be at your library.

Leonardo: Master of the Renaissance, by Elisabeth Lansing Gr. 7-12

Young Leonardo da Vinci, by E.M. Aldmedingen Gr. 7-12

Fiction/Historical Fiction

* *Uh-Oh, Leonardo!* by Robert Sabuda Gr. 2-4
A curious mouse travels back in time to meet Leonardo and explore Florence.

* *The Second Mrs. Gioconda*, by E.L. Konigsburg Gr. 4-12
Girls greatly enjoy this novel based on the woman portrayed in the *Mona Lisa*.

A Weekend with Leonardo da Vinci, by Rosabianca Skira-Venturi Gr. 7-12
Leonardo tells his weekend guests of his own life, dreams, disappointments, etc.

Films

* *Leonardo: A Dream of Flight* (Inventors' Specials) All ages

* *The Life of Leonardo da Vinci* Older students
This documentary for older students is recommended in homeschooling catalogs.

17dÉ Michelangelo

There are many books on Michelangelo; you'll find plenty at your library. Here are some of special note, but keep in mind that many art books show unclothed figures; you may want to preview. I've not seen all these.

* Greenleaf's *Famous Men of the Renaissance & Reformation*, Ch. 10 Gr. 3-8

* *Child's History of the World*, by V.M. Hillyer, Ch. 62 Gr. 1-4

* *Michael the Angel*, by Laura Fischetto Gr. 1-4
Tells of young Michelangelo as a mischievous boy.

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

Michelangelo's Surprise, by Tony Parillo Gr. 2-6
Wonderful picture book about a day Michelangelo saw snow. It just went out-of-print so is probably still at your public library.

Child's History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey Gr. 2-8
(*Painting* section, Ch. 12; *Sculpture* section, Ch. 16; *Architecture* section, Ch. 20)

OR, *Young People's Story of Fine Art: 15,000 BC - 1800 AD*, pp. 57-63; *Young People's Story of Sculpture*, pp. 74-77; and, *Young People's Story of Architecture, Gothic-Modern*, pp. 46-51

Michelangelo Buonarroti, by Ernest Raboff (Art for Children) Gr. 3-8
I love the way this series reads.

* *Michelangelo*, by Diane Stanley Gr. 3-10

* *Michelangelo*, by Gabriella di Cagno (Masters of Art) Gr. 3-12

Wings of an Eagle: Michelangelo, by Anne Peck (Credo) Gr. 4-12
This book is in a distinctly Catholic series.

Three Masters of the Renaissance, by Claudio Merlo Gr. 6-12
This was recently in-print, so still may be at your library.

Great Adventure of Michelangelo, by Irving Stone Gr. 9-12
Abridged version of the adult novel, * *The Agony and the Ecstasy*.

Michelangelo, by Elizabeth Ripley Gr. 9-12

Film

* *The Agony and the Ecstasy* All ages
Charlton Heston plays Michelangelo during the painting of the Sistine Chapel. Great!
I love to quote this film at pertinent moments: "When will you make an end?!"

17eÉ Raphael

Child's History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey (*Painting* section, Ch. 11) Gr. 2-8
OR, *Young People's Story of Fine Art: 15,000 BC - 1800 AD*, pp. 50-56

Raphael (Sanzio), by Ernest Raboff (Art for Children) Gr. 3-8
I love how this series reads.

What Makes a Raphael a Raphael? by Richard Muhlberger Gr. 5-8
This series focuses on the more technical aspects of the artist's works.

Three Masters of the Renaissance, by Claudio Merlo Gr. 6-12
This was recently in-print, so still may be at your library.

Raphael, by Elizabeth Ripley Gr. 9-12

17fÉ Perugino

Fiction/Historical Fiction

Perugino's Path, by Nancy Clouse Gr. 2-6
This story of Raphael's art teacher comes from a Christian publisher!

17gÉ The Bellinis, Cellini, Giorgione, Titian, Andrea del Sarto, and Correggio

Renaissance and Reformation Times, by Dorothy Mills, Part 3 of Ch. II Gr. 6-12

* *Titian*, by Mike Venezia (Getting to Know the World's Great Artists) Gr. 1-5

Child's History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey (*Painting* section, Ch. 14-15) Gr. 2-8
OR, *Young People's Story of Fine Art: 15,000 BC- 1800 AD*, pp. 72-83

A Child's History of Art, by Hillyer & Huey (*Sculpture* section, Ch. 17) Gr. 2-8
OR, *Young People's Story of Sculpture*, pp. 78-79

Titian, by Elizabeth Ripley Gr. 7-12