

JOHANNES VERMEER

(yo-HAN-ess ver-MEER)

1632-1675

“I’d give the whole of Italian painting for Vermeer of Delft. Now there’s a painter who simply said what he had to say without bothering about anything else.”

Pablo Picasso

Grades K-2 PowerPoint Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVES

HISTORY: Places an artwork in its art historical context.
Students will be able to identify a *genre scene* and describe how they give us an idea of the daily life of people from the past.

CRITICISM: Informed talk about art.
Students will be able to explain what *texture* is.

AESTHETICS: Questions the nature, value and beauty of art.
Students will discuss whether or not it is important for us to understand the reasons an artist has for creating a work of art.

PRODUCTION: Creating art.
Students will create a drawing of *Girl with a Pearl Earring* which shows *texture*.

VOCABULARY

Note to volunteers *The vocabulary words will be in bold italics throughout the lesson. They will be defined within the text of the lesson and do not need to be presented separately. The definitions used under this section of the lesson are very detailed and intended for adults only.*

Genre scene: painting that stresses subject matter of domestic trivia, homey scenes, sentimental family life, daily life, etc.

Texture: the surface feel of an object or the representation of surface character. *Actual texture* is a surface which stimulates a TACTILE response when actually touched.

Implied (simulated) texture is a representation of an actual *texture* created by a careful copying of the light and dark patterns characteristic of its surface.

INTRODUCTION

Today I would like you to pretend that an artist is going to paint your picture. For this painting, the artist wants you to be doing some activity that you do every day. Think about all the things you do each day.

Close your eyes. Are you going to have the artist paint your picture while you are having breakfast, or playing a game with someone? Maybe you are reading a book, or sitting at your desk, playing with your pet. Picture something you do each day in your mind:

(Read the following aloud slowly for students to formulate some details about the scene they are imagining.)

- Now, let's add some details to your picture:
- Where are you?
- Are you at home or school, indoors or outdoors?
- How are you dressed?
- Are you ready for school or still in your pajamas?
- Are you eating? Playing? Reading?
- How are you feeling – happy, quiet, surprised, sad?
- Are there other people with you? Family or friends?

Now you can open your eyes. What are some of the things you imagined yourself doing?
(Let students share some of their ideas.)

A picture that shows scenes or events from everyday life like you have just imagined are called **genre** (zhan-ra) **scenes**. Say that with me “**genre scenes**”.

There are lots of details in a picture that can tell someone who is looking at it things about you as well as things about the place you live. That is one of the ways we have learned about people who lived a long time ago. When you look at a painting from another place or time it can give you all sorts of information. You can see the kinds of clothes they wore, what foods they ate, the kinds of chores they did, games they played or the kinds of objects, tools or furniture they used every day.

The paintings we are going to see today are scenes of people doing ordinary things, except they were doing them nearly 350 years ago! Johannes Vermeer (yo-HAN-ess ver-MEER) is the name of the artist who painted them. Say that with me – “Johannes Vermeer”.

HISTORY

VIEW OF DELFT 1661, OIL ON CANVAS, 38" x 46"

Delft is a city in Northern Europe in the Netherlands. It was Vermeer's hometown. This view he painted of the city, is often said to be one of the greatest pictures of a city ever painted. It is clear and bright and gives us a feeling that it still exists, and in fact, it does. The people and scenes Vermeer and other Dutch artists were choosing to paint were unusual from what most of the artists in Europe were painting four hundred years ago.

Vermeer and other Dutch artists were painting *genre scenes* because those were the kinds of paintings people wanted to buy. Remember *genre scenes* show everyday people doing everyday things.

A GIRL ASLEEP 1657, OIL ON CANVAS, 34" x 30"

Vermeer was a man we don't know much about. He grew up in the inn his father ran. An inn is a place to spend the night, like a motel today. His father encouraged his son to become a painter and Vermeer was surrounded by art from the time he was born.

This is also a *genre scene*, a view of everyday life. It shows a young girl who has fallen asleep at a table. Vermeer's paintings do something he did not intend to have happen when he painted them. They let us see the style of clothes that people wore, foods they ate, how the furniture looked, the kinds of art they had on the wall. Since he painted scenes that were of everyday life, we can get a glimpse of how people besides kings and queens lived.

GIRL READING A LETTER AT AN OPEN WINDOW 1657, OIL ON CANVAS, 33" x 25"

When he turned 20, Vermeer made two important choices: to become a painter and to marry Catherina Bolnes. He and Catherina had eleven children. Vermeer was not a wealthy or famous painter during his lifetime. He worked *very* slowly. How many paintings do you think he finished in one year? (*Only one or two.*) He didn't make very much money from only the one or two paintings he finished and so he worked as the innkeeper too.

In this painting we see a young girl standing before an open window reading a letter. Vermeer has filled this painting with many different *textures*. Can anyone tell me what *texture* means? (*Texture refers to the way things feel*). Touch your clothes, your hair, the carpet or the bottom of your shoe. They all have different *textures*. What are some words that describe the *textures* you felt? (*Soft, smooth, bumpy...*) These are all *textures*, say that with me, "*texture*". It means you can really feel them when you touch them.

THE MUSIC LESSON 1662-65, OIL ON CANVAS, 29" x 25"

This is another *genre scene*. A teacher is giving a young girl a music lesson. Look in the mirror hanging over the instrument the girl is playing. In it you see her face reflected and also the feet of the easel the artist is using to paint the scene!

Vermeer did not always sign his work. Some of his paintings were thought to have been painted by other artists for a long time. The King of England bought this painting 100 years after Vermeer had painted it. But since there was no name on it, people thought someone else had painted it. It would be another 100 years before it was finally discovered to have been painted by Vermeer. I guess that's what happens when you don't sign your work!

CRITICISM

THE MILKMAID 1658-60, OIL ON CANVAS, 18" x 16"

The figure in this painting is a humble servant girl at work. She stands alone in a back room pouring milk from a pitcher. Take a minute to see how many different kinds of *texture* you see painted here.

Sensory Properties: What do you see?

1. Point out and describe some of the different *textures* in this painting.
(*Smooth face and arms, coarse denim like dress fabric, bumpy stitching on dress, crusty bread, smooth clay pitcher, rough, bumpy black pitcher, bumpy wicker, rough wall...*)
2. Describe the smoothest *texture* you see. The roughest?
(*How would it feel to touch it - slick, hard, cold, prickly, rough, bumpy*)

Formal Properties: How is it arranged?

1. When we see something in more than one place in a painting, we say it is repeated. Where do you see the same *texture*, like something smooth, repeated in this painting? What other kinds of *texture* are repeated?
(*Smooth textures in the girl's skin, bowl and pitcher on table, brass on wall, window glass; coarse textures in clothing, fabric on table, baskets; bumpy in stitching on clothes, basket, black pitcher; crusty bread....*)

Technical Properties: What media, tools and techniques were used?

1. What size do you think this painting is? Does it make a difference?
(*It is small, 16" x 18"*)
2. Where do you think Vermeer may have used a small brush? A large one?

Expressive Properties: What mood or idea does it express?

1. What do you think Vermeer wanted us to think when we look at this painting?

AESTHETICS

Note to volunteers *These questions are meant to be open-ended; there is no right or wrong answer.*

THE LACEMAKER 1665, OIL ON CANVAS, 9-1/2 x 8-1/4”

Vermeer was an artist who painted mainly for his own pleasure and self-expression. He had his own reasons for choosing to paint the things he did and we don't really know what those reasons were.

Do you think it is important for us to know why he painted this picture or can we enjoy it as just a nice painting? Why or why not?

HISTORY (cont.)

ARTIST IN HIS STUDIO 1665-66, OIL ON CANVAS,
47-1/4” x 39-3/8”

The *Artist in his Studio* is one of Vermeer's last paintings. It shows an artist in a striped shirt with his back to us, painting a picture of a girl. The artist might be Vermeer, we don't really know. He never painted a picture of himself that we know of.

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING 1665, OIL ON CANVAS,
18-1/4” x 15-3/8”

This is a famous portrait of a young girl looking over her shoulder at us. The background is unusual because it doesn't tell us anything about where the girl is. The *textures* of her turban, her clothing, her skin and earring are each different.

Today we are going to create some *textures* on our own picture of this girl.

PRODUCTION

Artists of Vermeer's time often practiced painting by copying great works of art to learn how to be better artists themselves. Today, we are going to draw this girl and add *texture* to the picture.

Criteria: Students will create a drawing of *Girl With A Pearl Earring*, which shows *texture*.

Materials:

1 – 8 1/2” x 11” Buff or manila copy weight paper with face copied onto it
1 sheet 6” x 9” black construction paper

Colored pencils – 24-30 of each of the following Prismacolor pencils: Spanish orange, Goldenrod, True blue, White, Sienna brown, Black, Crimson red
Gesso texture board

Copy face only onto buff copy paper ahead of time. Buff paper purchased at Paper Zone. Prismacolor pencils may be ordered online through Currys.com by color. Allow time for delivery.

Note: A simpler version of this production is available, especially for kindergarten students. Eliminate the drawing of the girl and give students a copy of the entire portrait already copied onto the buff paper instead of just the face. Students will then use the texture boards as they color the drawing to create texture. It is still done as a step-by-step project with the volunteer to color the drawing. The focus of this lesson is *texture*, not learning to draw a portrait.

To create the texture boards:

Materials:

Gesso

6" x 9" matt board scraps

paint brush

texture stamps or objects which will create *texture* when pulled through the gesso (comb, pumpkin carver, brush). In choosing or creating your *textures*, use those of similar type. For example, all fine, medium or coarse.

Paint the gesso onto the matt board. Choose 3 different looking *textures* and impress them into the gesso. This will give some variation and interest to the look of the *implied texture* in the drawing.

Instructions:

1. Each student has a sheet of buff colored paper with the face of a young girl on it. Use a white board, or demonstration paper with the face on it the same as the student paper.
2. Proceed step by step with the class to draw in the headdress, neck, collar, earring and shoulder. Follow the guide in the production notes to draw in the rest of the parts. Or using the pre-drawn portrait for kindergarten, proceed to color and add the texture.
3. Begin coloring the face without the *texture* board under the drawing.
 - Color the white of the eyes. Add the highlight on her bottom lip.
 - Color the collar of her dress white.
 - Color the brown pupil of the eye.
 - Color the black iris of the eye.
 - Color the lips red, going around the highlight on the lower lip.
4. After the facial features and collar have been colored, slip the *textured* matt board under the drawing.
5. Proceed to color the portrait as follows:
 - Color the first part of the turban blue.

- The next part of the turban is Spanish orange.
 - The long drape of the turban is Goldenrod.
 - The dress is Spanish orange.
6. Try not to move the **texture** board under the drawing while coloring, but may be moved in between.
 7. Remove the **texture** board from under the drawing.
Use a bit of blue to add some color to the right side of the earring if desired.
 8. K, (1st grade, depending on time of year) - An adult needs to cut out the silhouettes and glues each onto the black background paper. The art lit volunteer may choose to do this or ask the teacher if there is a classroom volunteer who could finish them.
 9. Ask students to write their name on the back of their drawing. Volunteer who cuts them out and mounts them will need to transfer the names to the paper.

Jill Bogle 2004



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