

Changing Times, *Changing Art*

A Student Activity Guide based on the exhibition

RE-FORMING THE IMAGE IN NORTHERN EUROPE IN THE DUTCH GOLDEN AGE

February 4 - March 23, 2013



Fig. 1
Lucas van Leyden, *Adam and Eve [detail]*
Engraving, Netherlands, 1529 AD
6 ½ x 4 ½ inches. Gift of Audrey McMahon, P42



Fig. 2
Philips Wouwerman, *Riding at the Cat: A Dutch Horseman's Game*
Oil on canvas, Netherlands, c. 1650-1668 AD
31 ½ x 38 ½ inches. Gift of Dr. Joseph Schoneman, 67.134

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PRE-MUSEUM ACTIVITY

Dutch Golden Age: Changing Subject & Style



LEARN & DISCUSS: Dutch Golden Age: Where & When?

The **Dutch Golden Age** during the 17th Century (1600s) was a time of great change for the Netherlands. Locate the Netherlands (Fig. 3). As the **Eighty Years War** (1588 - 1648) came to a close, the new independent **Dutch Republic** emerged as the most prosperous nation in all of Europe. Impacted by the **Protestant Reformation**, old traditions were left behind and art became more **secular**, or non-religious. Trade, science, and art flourished in a new more democratic society with a growing middle class.

Did You Know? Dutch artists were extremely productive during the Dutch Golden Age. It is estimated that at least five million paintings were produced in the Dutch Republic during the 17th century.

LOOK & COMPARE: Changes in Subject and Style

Comparing Golden Age painting to earlier Dutch artwork helps illustrate the changes that occurred in both **subject** and **style** during the era. Look carefully at Fig. 1 and Fig. 2.

COMPARE & CONTRAST

- Working independently, write a list of observations about each work of art on a separate sheet of paper.
- Questions to consider: What **subjects** do the works of art depict? Which artwork is more **naturalistic** in style? Which image is **secular**? What is different about the **composition** of each artwork?

SHARE & DISCUSS

- Turn and talk with a partner, discussing your observations. Pairs then share their conclusions with the class.

DISCOVER & CONNECT: Genres of Painting

Distinct categories, or **genres**, of painting emerged during the Dutch Golden Age as public taste changed. According to Fig. 4, which genre was most popular from 1645-1650? _____

For each genre, draw a line from the genre to its subject. (See page 3.)

- history painting inanimate objects (natural or manmade)
- portraiture outdoor place
- genre painting person or group of people
- landscape scene from everyday life
- still life scene from history, mythology, or the bible

Which genre of painting is Fig. 2? _____

What do you see that makes you say that?

What can we learn about everyday life at the time by looking at this painting? Look at all of the details. _____

Fig. 4¹

The Most Popular Paintings

The table below indicates which types of paintings were most popular, based on inventories from Haarlem. At the beginning of the century, the religious or literary themes of history painting were favored. But by 1650, "modern" interiors were decorated with larger numbers of portraits, landscapes, still lifes, and genre scenes from daily life. In sections 4 to 8 each of these types will be explored in greater detail.

	1605 – 1624	1645 – 1650
Biblical scenes	42.2%	18%
Portraits	18%	18.3%
Land- and seascapes	12.4%	21%
Still lifes	8.5%	11.7%
Scenes from daily life (genre)	6.1%	12.9%
Other	12.8%	18.1%

Marion Goosens, "Schilders en de markt: Haarlem 1605 – 1635," PhD diss., Leiden University, 2001, 346 – 347.

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IN-MUSEUM ACTIVITY

Society, Symbolism, Influence & Impact



Fig. 5

READ, LOOK, & CONNECT: Society Reflected in Painting

Dutch Golden Age paintings provide insight into everyday life, values of society, and events of the era. Read the passages below. **For each, find one work of art in the exhibition that helps to illustrate the aspect of Dutch life it describes. Write the artist and title of each artwork and then explain why you selected it.**

"From the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, Europe experienced what is today recognized as a little ice Age. Winters were considerably colder and longer than they are today... The northerly latitude of the Netherlands caused its canals and waterways to freeze solid for many months at a time. Laid out in long, straight stretches that connected cities... man-made canals... offered optimal open spaces for skating. Sleds and sleighs facilitated movement of people and goods from one place to another when canal boats were icebound and overland travel was challenging." ²

Artist _____

Title _____

I selected this artwork because _____

"The Dutch were entranced most of all by flowering bulbs, especially tulips. After arriving in the Netherlands, probably in the 1570s, tulips remained a luxurious rarity until the mid-1630s... The price of a Semper Augustus [tulip] was 1,000 guilders in 1623, twice that in 1625, and up to 5,000 guilders in 1637... A single tulip bulb could command as much as a fine house with a garden." ³

Artist _____

Title _____

I selected this artwork because _____

LOOK & ANALYZE: Symbolism and Meaning

Find Fig. 5 in the exhibition. Many Dutch paintings, such as this seemingly simple **still life**, hold more **meaning** than first meets the eye. To the Dutch, **"permanence was considered a great virtue of art—it outlasts nature."** ⁴

What does this statement mean? How does it relate to this painting?

Why might the artist have included wilting flowers in Fig. 5? What did they **symbolize**, or stand for?

LOOK & DESCRIBE: Impacts of the Dutch Golden Age

Dutch Golden Age painting influenced artwork made in other European countries. **Find a work of art in the exhibition that was created in France, England, or Germany. Write its information below and answer the questions.**

Artist _____

Title _____

Country _____

Compare the work of art to the artwork in the exhibition made in the Netherlands. What is similar about its **subject** and **style**? What is different?

The impact of the Dutch Golden Age reached beyond Europe. The Dutch were among the first settlers of New England and their way of life helped lay the foundations for life in Colonial New England (See Fig. 6.) Find the **maps** and **artifacts** in the exhibition. How do they show the impact of the Golden Age?

3 POST-MUSEUM ACTIVITY

Everyday Life Then & Now: Make a Modern Genre Scene

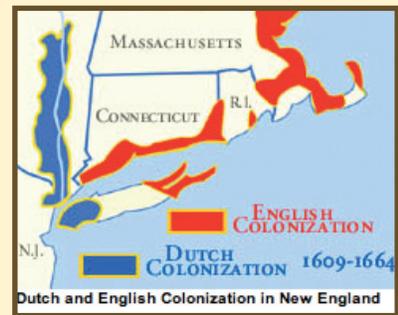


Fig. 6

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/kingston/colonization.htm>

DISCUSS: Everyday Life & Changing Times

Everyday life today in America is different than life in the 17th century Netherlands and Dutch New York in many ways. How has life changed over time? What modern inventions have impacted our daily lives? How have they changed our experience of the world we live in?

CONNECT & CREATE: 21st Century Genre Scene

Create a work of art of a 21st century genre scene. Just as Golden Age paintings reflected Dutch society at the time and what they valued and experienced day-to-day, your artwork should do the same for current society.

BRAINSTORM: What does American society in the 21st century value? What is key in everyday life? Imagine a future society were to find a work of art depicting life today. What should it include? Make a list of ideas.

CREATE: Draw or paint a genre scene using the brainstormed ideas. Include details specific to life in 2013.

SHARE: When the artwork is complete, share as a class. Do the genre scenes describe life today accurately? Why or why not? Are they similar or different from one another? Why might this be?

KNOW **Dutch Golden Age:** A period in Dutch history, roughly spanning the 17th century, in which Dutch trade, science, military, and art were among the most acclaimed in the world. The first half is characterized by the **Eighty Years' War** till 1648. The Golden Age went on in peace time until the end of the century.

KNOW **Protestant Reformation:** A religious movement of the 16th century led by Martin Luther that began as an attempt to reform the Roman Catholic Church and resulted in the creation of Protestant churches.

TO **subject:** The person, place, or thing that is depicted in an artwork; what the viewer sees in a work of art.

TO **style:** The way in which the subject of a work of art is painted (ex: **naturalistic**, abstract, impressionistic).

TO **naturalistic:** In a realistic style that is reflective of the way a person, place, or thing appears in real life.

WORDS **composition:** The arrangement or placement of elements within a work of art.

WORDS **history painting:** A painting that depicts a scene from history, mythology, or the bible

WORDS **portraiture (portrait):** A work of art with a person or group of people as the subject.

WORDS **genre painting:** A painting depicting a scene from everyday life.

WORDS **landscape:** A painting showing an outdoor place.

WORDS **still life:** A work of art depicting inanimate objects.



Learn more about Dutch Golden Age Painting

National Gallery of Art, Washington

<http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/dutch/>

¹ Painting in the Dutch Golden Age: A Profile of the Seventeenth Century, p. 40
http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/dutch/dutch_painting.pdf

² Painting in the Dutch Golden Age: Classroom Guide, p. 32
http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/dutch/dutch_classroom_guide.pdf

³ Painting in the Dutch Golden Age: A Profile of the Seventeenth Century, p. 92
http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/dutch/dutch_classroom_guide.pdf

⁴ Painting in the Dutch Golden Age: A Profile of the Seventeenth Century, p. 87
http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/dutch/dutch_painting.pdf

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