

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING

DUTCH PAINTINGS FROM THE MAURITSHUIS

Dear Educator,

Thank you for supporting your students' visit to the exhibition *Girl with a Pearl Earring: Dutch Paintings from the Mauritshuis*, on view at the de Young Museum. The de Young is the first venue in this American tour of masterpieces from the Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, The Hague. Housing one of the world's most prestigious collections of Dutch Golden Age paintings, this jewel box of a museum has not lent a large body of works from its holdings in nearly thirty years. An extensive two-year renovation makes this extraordinary opportunity possible.

The exhibition features thirty-five paintings representing the full range of subject matter and techniques characteristic of seventeenth-century painting in the Dutch Republic. Among the works traveling to the United States are the celebrated *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (ca. 1665) by Johannes Vermeer and *The Goldfinch* (1654) by Carel Fabritius. *Vase of Flowers* (1700) by the gifted Rachel Ruysch, one of the few female painters of the Dutch Golden Age, is being restored especially for the American tour.

The resources assembled here will provide you and your students with tools for viewing the works in the exhibition. They are organized around three themes:

- [Past and Present: Everyday Life during the Dutch Golden Age and Now \(grades K-5\)](#)
- [Economic Growth and Cultural Influence during the Dutch Golden Age \(grades 6-8\)](#)
- [Sight and Seeing: Then and Now \(grades 9-12\)](#)

They include the following:

- [Words to know](#)
- [Images and questions for viewing](#)
- [Pre-visit activities](#)
- [Object information sheets](#)
- [Additional resources](#)

While written to support the visual arts, language arts, and social science standards for the intended grade levels, these materials may require adjustments to meet the needs of your classroom.

Written by Cami Gordon, FAMSF School Programs, with support from Anna Slavin, FAMSF intern, and the Museum Ambassadors. K-5 lesson based on the work of Katie Quintana, Monte Vista Elementary School.

Themes to Align with California State Standards

- **Past and Present: Everyday Life during the Dutch Golden Age and Now (grades K-5)**

Engage with the ways our youngest viewers experience and understand the world around them by focusing on the differences between daily life during the Dutch Golden Age and today. Students will be asked to depict their own daily lives and comparable scenes of daily life in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.

- **Economic Growth and Cultural Influence during the Dutch Golden Age (grades 6-8)**

During the seventeenth century the Dutch experienced a seventy-five year period of unprecedented economic prosperity and political independence. Due to the Dutch Republic's command over European commerce, a prosperous new middle class emerged, as well as a strong sense of national pride. Analyze how these changes shaped artists' subject matter—everyday life, exotic new imports, the emerging middle class, and the Dutch landscape—and the way they portrayed it. Students will be asked to think about what art they would have purchased with the new wealth many accrued during the Dutch Golden Age.

- **Sight and Seeing: Then and Now (grades 9-12)**

The Dutch Golden Age coincided with the Scientific Revolution. Artists used new ideas and advancements—Galileo Galilei's improvements on the telescope, Antonie van Leeuwenhoek's improvements on the microscope, Johannes Kepler's theory of optics, and the significant improvements on the camera obscura—to explore novel and exciting approaches to perception and perspective. Analyze how new ways of seeing affected artists' subject matter and how they depicted it. Students will be asked to reflect on the ways in which contemporary advancements affect the way they see and record their own daily lives and surroundings.

Words to Know

- Dutch Golden Age
- Portrait
- *Tronie*
- Still life
- Genre scene
- Landscape
- Seascape
- Camera obscura

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING

Images and Questions for Viewing

These four images support each of the themes described on the previous page and may serve as anchors for your museum visit. The accompanying questions for students can be used as models for promoting open-ended investigations of the artworks.

1. Jan van Goyen, *View of the Rhine near Hochelten, 1653*

- Describe the painting. What's going on? What do you see? Who do you see?
- Which people and things look closer to you? Which seem farther away? If you were witnessing this scene in real life, where would you be standing?
- How do people travel and ship goods at this time? How do we ship goods today?



2. Johannes Vermeer, *Girl with a Pearl Earring, ca. 1665*

- Describe the painting. What might this girl be thinking? How do you think she feels? What do you see that makes you say that?
- This artwork is not a portrait but a *tronie*. Instead of depicting a specific person, it is a study of facial characteristics and costumes. Do you ever dress up or pretend to be someone else? Who do you pretend to be? Why?



3. Adriaen van Ostade, *The Violinist, 1673*

- What do you see in this scene? Imagine you were there. What would you hear? What do you see that makes you say that?
- How do you think people had fun and entertained themselves at this time? How do you have fun and entertain yourself today?



4. Abraham van Beyeren, *Banquet Still Life, after 1665*

- What kinds of food do you see on the table? What other objects do you see? If you could reach into the painting, what would you eat? What different textures would you touch?
- Do you think this is a real or imagined scene? What do you see that makes you say that?



GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING

Past and Present: Everyday Life during the Dutch Golden Age and Now (grades K-5)

After talking with your students about these four images, have them think about how their lives are different from the lives of the people in the paintings. In each of the yellow boxes on the following worksheets, have students draw a picture of what people in the Dutch Republic in the 1600s looked like doing the activity described below. Students may want to use ideas from the paintings they have looked at. In each of the blue boxes, have them draw a picture of what they look like when they do the same activity today.



Jan van Goyen, *View of the Rhine near Hochelten*, 1653



Adriaen van Ostade, *The Violinist*, 1673



Johannes Vermeer, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, ca. 1665



Abraham van Beyeren, *Banquet Still Life*, after 1665

Name: _____

Date: _____

GIRL WITH A
PEARL EARRING

1. Jan van Goyen, *View of the Rhine near Hochelten*, 1653



Today my family and I went to watch boats on the river.



Name: _____

Date: _____

GIRL WITH A
PEARL EARRING

2. Johannes Vermeer, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, ca. 1665



Today I pretended to be someone else.



Name: _____

Date: _____

GIRL WITH A
PEARL EARRING

3. Adriaen van Ostade, *The Violinist*, 1673



Today my friends and I listened to some music.



Name: _____

Date: _____

GIRL WITH A
PEARL EARRING

4. Abraham van Beyeren, *Banquet Still Life*, after 1665



Today my family and I ate a fancy meal.



Economic Growth and Cultural Influence during the Dutch Golden Age (grades 6–8)

During the seventeenth century the Dutch experienced a seventy-five year period of unprecedented economic prosperity and political independence. Due to the Dutch Republic's command over European commerce, a prosperous new middle class emerged, as well as a strong sense of national pride. The art of the period reflects these changes in its depictions of everyday life, exotic new imports, the emerging middle class with disposable income, and the Dutch landscape.

After talking with your classmates about these four images, think about what your life might have been like if you had lived during the Dutch Golden Age. Imagine you are a specific person (a merchant, a boatman, a banker, etc.) who has recently decided to purchase some art with your new-found wealth. Using the object information sheets, write an essay explaining who you are, which of the four paintings you would purchase, and why. Support your decision with facts from the information sheets.

When you finish, find a partner and read your essays to each other. What occupation did your partner have? Did you choose the same art object to buy? Why or why not?

Sight and Seeing: Then and Now (grades 9-12)

The Dutch Golden Age coincided with the Scientific Revolution. Artists used new ideas and advancements—Galileo Galilei’s improvements on the telescope, Antonie van Leeuwenhoek’s improvements on the microscope, Johannes Kepler’s theory of optics, and significant improvements on the camera obscura—to explore novel and exciting approaches to perception and perspective. They began to paint daily life more frequently with the help of these tools, which allowed them see and record their day-to-day experience in new and interesting ways.

Today we have also experienced a drastic shift in the way we see and record daily life: cameras are digital, cell phones have cameras, and people use Facebook and Twitter to update their friends on their daily activities. During the week leading up to your visit, keep a log of all the times you use new ways of seeing, recording, and sharing images (e.g., cell phone, camera, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) in your day-to-day life.

Date	Time	Method/Medium	Moment Captured	Genre (landscape, still life, genre scene, portrait, etc.)
10/15	5:30 p.m.	Cell phone camera, uploaded to Instagram	My dinner plated at a restaurant	Still life
10/17	12:30 p.m.	Facebook status	“Taking a run through Golden Gate Park”	Landscape

At the end of the week review your records and choose the event that occurred the most often or the one that has the most meaning for your life. Write a reflection on this representation of your daily life.

1. Explain the moment you captured and how you captured it.
2. Describe the medium you used to capture the moment (image, status, tweet, etc.) and how it reflects your daily activities.
3. Outline what elements you took into account in composing your representation (space, color, lighting, etc.).
4. Seventeenth-century Dutch painters often used symbols in their paintings that were understood by contemporary viewers. Are there any symbols in your captured moment? Describe them.
5. What insights about your daily life do you hope your audience will gain from your captured moment?
6. What insights about the daily life of a twenty-first-century teenager do you think people five hundred years from now would gain from your captured moment?

Name: _____

Date: _____

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING

Date	Time	Method/Medium	Moment Captured	Genre (landscape, still life, genre scene, portrait, etc.)

Object Information Sheet

Jan van Goyen, *View of the Rhine near Hochelten*, 1653

- During the Dutch Golden Age many artists painted seascapes to capture the bustling sea trade that the Dutch Republic dominated during this time.
- Many landscape painters used different lenses (i.e., concave, convex) and Galileo's telescope to create on-site sketches of Dutch landmarks, and then completed paintings in their studios based on those initial drawings. The final artworks often depict scenes from the artists' imaginations, even though they were inspired by sketches of real places. During his travels Jan van Goyen frequently sketched for paintings that would be finished later in his studio.
- Van Goyen was one of the most important landscape painters of the Dutch Golden Age, with more than twelve hundred paintings surviving today. His landscapes are characterized by low horizon lines, dark foreground figures to provide a sense of depth, and high, cloud-covered skies.
- Van Goyen's paintings always include characteristic Dutch imagery (boats, Holland's marshland, etc.).
- After 1627 Van Goyen's palette became more monochrome, meaning that he used fewer colors. His compositions also became simpler, with contrasting dark and light spaces.
- Jan Steen, another Dutch Golden Age painter, was Van Goyen's student and son-in-law.

Object Information Sheet

Johannes Vermeer, *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, ca. 1665

- This painting is not considered a portrait, as it does not represent a real person and his or her individual characteristics. Instead it is a *tronie*, a character study of facial expressions and costumes.
- Many artists who painted *tronies* also painted portraits. As members of the middle class gained new wealth and prosperity, many commissioned portraits of themselves to demonstrate their affluence. Group portraits also became important means for honoring and recording charities or political groups.
- Johannes Vermeer created a relatively small number of paintings—only thirty-five—but they have been well preserved.
- Vermeer started out making history paintings, but eventually concentrated on interior scenes and became admired for his technique and illusions of light.
- The girl in this painting wears exotic and expensive clothing and jewelry. The turban was imported from Turkey and was not typical attire for Dutch girls in the seventeenth century. Artists of this period often included clothing and ornamentation obtained through trade from far-off places in their artworks.
- The blue of the girl's turban, called ultramarine, was a very expensive color for artists to buy because it was made from lapis lazuli, a costly stone.
- The camera obscura was an optical device that led to the invention of the camera. Vermeer may have used the camera obscura in the making of this work. Despite the mechanism's accuracy, seventeenth-century lenses could not focus perfectly. Like objects seen through the camera obscura, Vermeer's forms are defined by contrasting areas of light and dark color rather than by hard outlines. This can be seen particularly in the softness of the girl's face and the use of light and shadow to form the bridge of her nose.

Object Information Sheet

Adriaen van Ostade, *The Violinist*, 1673

- A genre painting is a painting that depicts a scene from everyday life. During the Dutch Golden Age there was a surge of genre paintings as artists gained greater freedom to paint nonreligious subjects and as regular people earned enough money to purchase art.
- Though genre scenes depict daily life, they often have hidden messages reminding the owners of these paintings to lead humble and virtuous lives.
- Adriaen van Ostade created over eight hundred paintings, four hundred drawings, and fifty etchings, making him one of the most prolific artists of the Dutch Golden Age.
- Van Ostade was the first Dutch painter to specialize in the specific type of genre scene known as the peasant genre. He mainly painted interiors of country inns and scenes of common life including fighting or ranting figures.
- After 1665 Van Ostade's depictions become much calmer, including extremely detailed outdoor scenes probably drawn from the artist's imagination rather than reality.
- After 1672 the artist began using watercolors as well as oil paints.
- There are many details in this painting: the toddler has lost a shoe, a notice announces a cattle auction, beehives sit behind the fiddle, and a spiderweb can be seen in the inn's window.

Object Information Sheet

Abraham van Beyeren, *Banquet Still Life*, after 1665

- Artists painted many different types of still lifes during the Dutch Golden Age—banquets, kitchens, breakfasts, fish, floral arrangements, and *vanitas* scenes. These works are often illusionistic and showcase exotic foods, flowers, and other goods obtained through trade. Many still lifes also contain hidden symbols and messages reminding viewers of the necessity to lead humble lives or of the inevitability of death.
- Abraham van Beyeren mostly painted fish still lifes, but after the 1650s he painted flower and banquet still lifes as well.
- This painting does not reflect what an actual table would have looked like at this time—least of all the table of the artist, who was constantly in debt. By incorporating an overabundance of goods, the painter warns against excessive consumption.
- Unlike some banquet painters, Van Beyeren included silver dishes, golden goblets, glassware, and porcelain in his still lifes. He incorporated the tray of ham resting on the woven breadbasket, the silver pitcher, the Chinese bowl (known as a *klapmut*), the curled lemon peel, and the rug and white cloth that cover the table here into many of his still lifes. He often used foods such as large cuts of meat and fish, exotic fruit, and wine to contribute to the sense of wealth.
- The open watch next to the juicy grapes reminds viewers to consume in moderation and that life is constantly ticking away. The tipped glass reminds them that all things must come to an end.
- The artist included a picture of himself working at his easel in the reflection on the silver pitcher. Artists of the Dutch Golden Age sometimes did this to demonstrate their skills in depicting reflections and to serve as signatures.

Additional Resources for Teachers

Books

Gray, Nigel. *A Country Far Away*. Fremantle, Australia: Vivid Publishing, 2012.

- This book is an excellent supplement to the K-5 activity. Teachers can read it with students before completing the lesson to offer an example of the work the students will be doing.

North, Michael. *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age*. New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1999.

Schama, Simon. *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. London: Harper Perennial, 2004.

Westermann, Mariët. *A Worldly Art: The Dutch Republic, 1585-1718*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005.

Websites

"Famous Dutch...." <<http://www.eddyechternach.nl/english.html>>

Heilbrunn *Timeline of Art History*. "Dutch Golden Age Painting in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century European Art." The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000-2012.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hi/hi_dutchgoldage.htm>

- This page includes the Metropolitan Museum's images from and thematic essays on the Dutch Golden Age.

Janson, Jonathan. "Essential Vermeer." 2001-2012. <<http://www.essentialvermeer.com/>>

"Essential Vermeer: The Golden Age." 2001-2012. <http://www.essentialvermeer.com/dutch-painters/dutch_art/golden_age.html>

"Rembrandt van Rijn." 2012. <<http://www.rembrandtpainting.net/>>

Riddell, Jennifer. *Painting in the Dutch Golden Age: Classroom Guide*. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 2010. <http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/dutch/dutch_classroom_guide.pdf>

- This classroom resource on the Dutch Golden Age produced by the National Gallery of Art provides a profile of the Dutch Republic, explores life in the city and countryside, and investigates the different genres of painting produced during this time.

Additional Resources for Teachers (continued)

The Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis. 2006–2012. <<http://www.mauritshuis.nl/index.aspx?siteid=54>>

Schuffelen, Marco. “Hear Dutch Here.” 2012. <<http://www.heardutchhere.net/>>

- This website provides pronunciations of Dutch artist names, locations, and other vocabulary.

DVDS, Videos, and Games

Art History Genres: The Life of Johannes Vermeer. Video. 2 min. Uploaded 2009.

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwePebWCtMw>>

- This video explores Vermeer and his use of the camera obscura.

Carl Sagan’s Cosmos: Dutch Golden Age. Video clip from *Cosmos—Episode 6: “Travelers’ Tales,”* PBS documentary, 60 min., 1980. 22 min.

Part 1: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvY8dQQI13Q>>

Part 2: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMzDGLROEWY&feature=fvwp&NR=1>>

Part 3: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMet9fwerF8&feature=fvwrel>>

- This exploration of the Dutch Golden Age focuses on the scientific advancements and freedom of thought of this time period.

The Dutch Golden Age. Board game.

- http://www.amazon.com/MayFair-Games-PHA6026-Dutch-Golden/dp/B001I6QW4S/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1351965723&sr=8-2&keywords=dutch+golden+age

Girl with a Pearl Earring. DVD. 100 min. Santa Monica, CA: Lions Gate Home Entertainment, 2003.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. *Vermeer: Master of Light 4/5—Camera Obscura*. Video clip from *Vermeer: Master of Light*, DVD, 60 min., Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2001. 2 min. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leRDRL57I_Q>

- This two-minute clip from the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, demonstrates the use of the camera obscura by painters, specifically Vermeer.