

GODS AND MONSTERS

In the 15th century in Italy, many painters began to be inspired by the art and stories of ancient Rome and Greece. They worked their paintings to look as lifelike as ancient Greek and Roman sculptures.

The period between the 13th and the 15th centuries in Italy became known as the 'Renaissance', which means 'rebirth'.

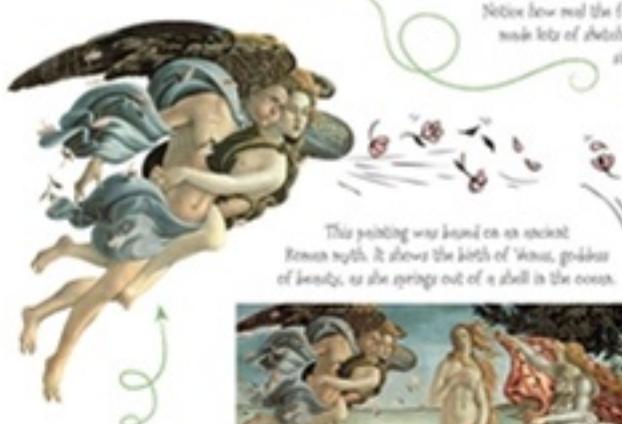
People rediscovered lots of painting skills that had been forgotten since ancient Greek and Roman times.

A monk, Fra Filippo Lippi, made this elegant painting of the Angel Gabriel visiting the Virgin Mary.



THE ANNUNCIATION
By Fra Filippo Lippi, painted in 1450–53

Notice how real the faces in the painting look - Filippo Lippi made lots of sketches from life, and was famous for his simple, natural style.



This painting was based on an ancient Roman myth. It shows the birth of Venus, goddess of beauty, as she springs out of a shell in the ocean.



This is a wind God, Zephyrus, with a goddess of the breeze, Aura. Together, they blow Venus to the shore.

THE BIRTH OF VENUS
By Sandro Botticelli, painted around 1485

The artist based the figure of Venus on an ancient Roman statue.



This dramatic painting celebrates a battle between Florence and Siena, two cities in Italy. The central figure is the leader of the victorious Florentine army.



THE BATTLE OF SAN ROMANO
By Paolo Uccello, painted around 1456–60

Uccello drew his horses from a small wooden model. That's why they all look so similar.



The artist was so fond of painting animals and birds that he became known by the nickname, 'Paolo Uccello', which means 'Paul of the birds'.



Uccello collected paintings of birds and animals.

This painting combines several scenes from a famous ancient Greek myth.



①
Perseus Andromeda is chained to a rock, and is about to be eaten by a sea monster. A hero named Perseus flew in to save her, using his magical winged sandals.



PERSEUS FREES ANDROMEDA
By Piero di Cosimo, painted around 1513

②
Perseus kills the monster.



③
Perseus and Andromeda fall in love and get married.

LANDSCAPE

In the 19th century, lots of artists painted wild, lonely-looking landscapes. They went on sketching trips to the countryside to inspire them.

This hazy seascapes
is by English artist,
J.M.W. Turner.

Turner became fascinated
by the sea when he was a
boy. He made sketches on
ships out at sea, and loved
the ocean so much, he
earned the nickname
'The Old Sea Captain'.



MARGATE (7) FROM THE SEA
By J.M.W. Turner, painted around 1820–30

Turner was sometimes seen adding the finishing touches to his paintings when they were already hanging on gallery walls.



Dramatic scenes of nature were all the rage, but John Constable just liked painting places he was fond of – such as this country lane close to his childhood home.



THE CORNFIELD
By John Constable, painted in 1816

When he was a child, Constable had walked along the lane to go to school. He probably drew from the street, just like this little boy:



WANDERER ABOVE THE SEA OF FOG
By Casper David Friedrich, painted around 1811

German artist Friedrich painted pictures of people alone in wild, beautiful places. This scene shows a man gazing out over foggy mountain peaks.

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For the time, Turner's painting methods were quite unusual. He used big, rough brushstrokes and was always experimenting with new paints. He even tried smearing tobacco on his paintings.



Notice the big,
golden brushstrokes
Turner has used to paint
the swirling waves.

LEGENDS

During the second half of the 19th century, there was a fashion for imaginary scenes inspired by poems, myths and legends.



This picture is by French
artist Gustave Moreau. It shows
a dramatic moment from the
famous legend of St. George
and the dragon, as George
slays the dragon with
his lance.



ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
By Gustave Moreau, painted in 1890–91



The dragon was just one of many
mythical beasts Moreau painted. "I have
allowed my imagination free play, and I
have not been led astray by it," he said.

George fought the dragon to
save a princess – who you can
see kneeling in the background.



The woman in this painting was
based on ancient sculptures of sleeping
magical spirits from Greek myth.



FLAMING JUNE
By Frederic, Lord Leighton, painted around 1890

She would die if she looked out of the window,
so she watched the world through a mirror.



A famous poem called 'The Lady of Shalott'
inspired this scene. In the poem, the lady was
trapped in a castle by an evil curse...



THE LADY OF SHALOTT
By John William Waterhouse, painted in 1888

When she heard a knight singing a
beautiful song, she couldn't resist
looking out at him.



Knowing the curse was going to kill her,
she ran out of the tower and floated down
a river in a boat, singing songs until she died.



BRIGHT AND BOLD

The Impressionists inspired the artists who came after them to use brighter, sunnier colours. But the new artists also invented different ways of painting, and found new subjects to paint.

These yellow sunflowers were painted by Dutch artist, Vincent van Gogh, for his friend Gauguin. For van Gogh, yellow was the colour of happiness and friendship.

Van Gogh sometimes painted straight from his tubes onto the canvas.



SUNFLOWERS
By Vincent van Gogh, painted in 1888



Up close, you can see van Gogh's brushstrokes. Notice how thick the paint is.

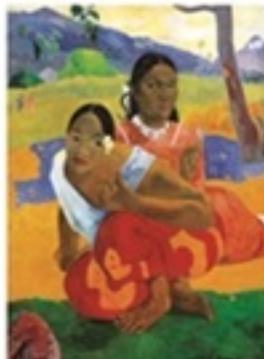
In the 1880s, Japanese prints became very fashionable in Europe. Both van Gogh and Gauguin collected them.



THE SEVEN WOODS AND MASSAKI ON THE SUMIDA RIVER
By Utagawa Hiroshige, designed in 1856

Inspired by Japanese prints, Gauguin used flat shapes and strong outlines in his paintings. He also used lots of bold, unsaturated colours – notice the bright blue shadows behind the women.

"I shut my eyes in order to see."
Gauguin



WHEN WILL YOU MARRY?
By Paul Gauguin, painted in 1892

In real life, this painting of people by a river is 3 metres (10 feet) long. At the time, it was very unusual for an artist to paint ordinary people on such a grand scale. Paintings this big usually showed kings or queens.



BATHERS AT ASNIÈRES
By Georges Seurat, painted in 1884

The people's clothes show they are workers, made from the factories in the background.



SURPRISED!
By Henri Rousseau, painted in 1891

Artist Rousseau claimed to have painted this picture after going to the jungle with the French army...

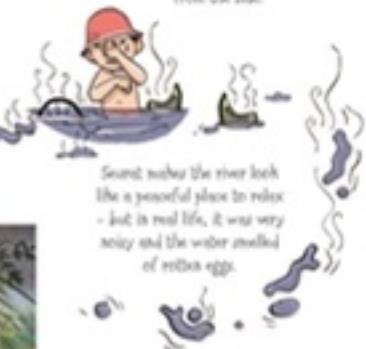
...but he never actually left France. He probably sketched this tiger at the zoo.



Rousseau probably based his jungle scenes on house plants and specimens held over at a botanical garden.



Seurat was inspired by ancient Egyptian art, which always showed people from the side.



Seurat makes the river look like a peaceful place to relax – but in real life, it was very noisy and the water smelled of rotten eggs.



AMBASSADEURS ARISTIDE BRUANT
By Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, printed in 1892