



Art Survey – by Mr. Shryock

The first semester of teaching “Art Survey” to my middle-school students has been very rewarding for me. My students have been great! They seem to be very interested in learning about the (5) great artists we have covered so far, and I have been feeding off their enthusiasm. It makes me “doubly” determined to keep it interesting and worthwhile for them this second semester.

The goal of “Art Survey” is to give the students a historical basis for judging art and to think critically. The more we study about art history, the deeper our perspectives and appreciation become for art. It is not our intention to turn all the students into professional artists, even though some of them may or may not choose art as a career.

The goal is to help our students develop into young men and women who have the basic tools to know how to discern art, and become enriched by it, something that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. All creative expression is a reflection of the one and only “Great Creator”, our Father in Heaven.

It’s a deeper level of educated discernment and the ability to appreciate the skill of the artists that I want them to remember from this class. Additionally, studies have proven conclusively that the arts (and music) education helps students to become better overall students in general. Whatever profession they select, they will be better for having some knowledge of art and music.

Up to this point, we have studied Vincent Van Gogh (a Dutch Post-Impressionist painter), Claude Monet (a French impressionist painter), Rembrandt (a Dutch realist painter), Michelangelo (an Italian Renaissance painter and sculptor) and most recently Leonardo, (who did a little bit of everything), including; map making (cartography), anatomy, architecture, painting, sculpting, and even designing war machines. We learned that he and Michelangelo were two of the most versatile artists in history. We take time to discuss what motivates these artists to create their works and how they manage their lives.

Each student had at least one favorite artist and a favorite painting. “Starry Night” by Van Gogh and “Water Lilies” by Monet seemed to be their two favorites. Someday we will go back to the Cleveland Museum of Art and see one of the 250 original “Water Lilies” paintings in person (which is out on loan right now - which means another museum has borrowed it for a while).

One of the highlights of the first semester has been our field trip to the Cleveland Museum of Art in October. After the tour was over, BOTH tour guides came up to me personally and expressed how impressed they were with the student’s courtesy, fine behavior and their overall knowledge of the artworks. We (the adults) all savored a proud moment indeed after hearing their remarks.

My hope is that we will continue to build on all this positive momentum during the second semester. As the students continue to work hard on their drawings, and develop their portfolios, we will learn about (5) new artists ...have a good time and a few hardy laughs while we’re learning!

Now, what can be any better than that?