

# Northern Renaissance: Awakenings

**Grade Level or Special Area:** Visual Arts, Fifth Grade

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**Length of Unit:** Three lessons, with the total unit occupying ten to twelve forty-minute periods

## I. ABSTRACT

During no other period in the history of the world have artists contributed to society as greatly as did the artists of the Renaissance. The accomplishments of the artists from Northern Europe may be less known, but their influence upon the world of art should never be understated. In this unit three of the most revolutionary paintings from the northern renaissance will be studied. The artists and their paintings are listed in the *Core Knowledge Sequence*. This study will also include the development of the artists as individuals, societal contributions, and the changing world perspectives.

## II. OVERVIEW

### A. Concept Objectives

1. Understand that works of art belong to various cultures, times, and places. (Colorado Visual Arts Standard 4)
2. Understand how to identify expressive qualities in a work of art. (Colorado Visual Arts Standard 18)

### B. Content from the *Core Knowledge Sequence*

1. Visual Arts: Fifth Grade - Observe and discuss paintings of the Northern Renaissance, including: (pg. 119)
  - a. Pieter Bruegel, *Peasant Wedding*
  - b. Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait* (such as from 1498 or 1500)
  - c. Jan van Eyck, *Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife* (also known as *Arnolfini Wedding*)
2. Visual Arts: Fifth Grade – Recognize the shift in world-view from medieval to Renaissance art, a new emphasis on humanity and the natural world. (pg. 119)
3. Visual Arts: Fifth Grade – Comprehend the development of linear perspective (pg. 119)

### C. Skill Objectives

1. Recognize that there are various solutions to a single art problem. (Colorado Visual Arts Standard (COVAS) 1)
2. Recognize and apply the Principles of Design: Contrast, Rhythm, Repetition, Pattern, Proportion, Balance and Emphasis. (COVAS 8)
3. Discuss artwork and identify the subject matter. (COVAS 5)
4. Learn the names of artists, style and time periods. (COVAS 14)

## III. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

### A. For Teachers

1. A rich understanding of each artist's history particularly leading up to and during the time the featured paintings were produced.
  - a. Appendix A: Jan van Eyck-*The Myth of the Renaissance 1420-1520*
  - b. Appendix B: Pieter Bruegel-*The Renaissance and Mannerism in Northern Europe and Spain*
  - c. Appendix C: Albrecht Dürer-*Northern Painting*
2. A general understanding of how to effectively use watercolor and tempera paints. Here are some good books for reference:

- a. Szabo, Zoltan. *Color-by-Color Guide to Watercolor*. Ohio, North Light Books, 1998 0-89134-772-0
  - b. Stabin, Mel. *Watercolor Simple, Fast, and Focused*. New York, Watson-Guptill Publications. 1999 0-8230-5706-2
  - c. Pearsall, Ronald. *Introduction to Watercolour, gouache and tempera*. London, Grange Books. 1994. 1-85627-323-7
  - d. Topal Weisman, Cathy. *Children and Painting*. Massachusetts, Davis Publications. 1992 87192-241-X
- B. For Students
- 1. A thorough understanding of the Elements of Design, which include Line, Shape, Form, Space, Light, Texture, and Color. (*Core Knowledge Sequence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade pg. 31, Second Grade pg. 52, Third Grade pg. 74)
  - 2. Classroom introduction and familiarity of the Italian Renaissance including major artists and philosophies. (*Core Knowledge Sequence*, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade pp.114 and 119)
  - 3. Comprehension of the Principles of Design, which include Movement, Balance, Rhythm, Pattern, Emphasis, Contrast, and Unity. (*Core Knowledge Sequence*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade pg. 74)

#### IV. RESOURCES

- A. Available print or slide of *Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride* (aka: *Arnolfini Wedding*) by Jan van Eyck (Lesson One)
- B. Available print or slide of *Peasant Wedding* by Pieter Brueghel (Lesson Two)
- C. Available print or slide of one of the self-portraits by Albrecht Dürer (such as from 1498 or 1500) (if possible the *Self-Portrait* from Munich 1500 as it was his last self-portrait) (Lesson Three)

#### V. LESSONS

##### Lesson One: Jan van Eyck – Reflections

- A. *Daily Objectives*
  - 1. Concept Objective(s)
    - a. Understand that works of art belong to various cultures, times, and places.
    - b. Understand how to identify expressive qualities in a work of art.
  - 2. Lesson Content
    - a. Observe and discuss paintings of the Northern Renaissance, including:
      - i. Jan van Eyck, *Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife* (also known as *Arnolfini Wedding*)
  - 3. Skill Objective(s)
    - a. Learn the name of the artists, style and time periods.
    - b. Discuss artwork and identify the subject matter.
    - c. Recognize and apply the Principles of Design: Contrast, Rhythm, Repetition, Pattern, Proportion, Balance and Emphasis.
    - d. Recognize that there are various solutions to a single art problem.
- B. *Materials*
  - 1. 11” x 13” newsprint (two per student)
  - 2. 11” x 13” white construction paper or watercolor paper if available (one per student)
  - 3. Drawing pencils (one per student)
  - 4. Soft erasures (one per student)
  - 5. Water color paint (a selection of primary colors or more for each student)

6. Water and containers (one per student)
  7. Watercolor paintbrushes (one per student)
  8. Paper towels or rags for clean up
  9. Convex mirrors (one per student) (the mirrors can be easily and affordably purchased at any store that carries automotive accessories; look for the type that can be adhered to the side-view mirror of an automobile)
  10. Available print or slide of *Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride* (aka: *Arnolfini Wedding*) by Jan van Eyck
  11. A close-up print, slide or illustration of the convex mirror located on the background wall in the painting (see Appendix A)
  12. Water color paintbrushes (#12 size round works well)
  13. Fixative spray (optional)
- B. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Renaissance – to be born anew; marking the transition of medieval to the modern world
  2. Flemish – the West Germanic language of the Fleming’s, very closely related to Dutch
  3. Realism – a tendency to face facts and be practical rather than imaginative or visionary
  4. Convex – curving outward like the surface of a sphere
  5. Symbolism – the representation of things by use of symbols
  6. Perspective Theory – to portray scenes as they appear to the eye with reference to relative distance or depth
- C. *Procedures/Activities*
1. The objective is for the student to comprehend Jan van Eyck’s reasoning and philosophy for implementing the various objects and images found in the *Arnolfini wedding* (use Appendix A to guide yourself and the students through the explanation of the painting).
  2. With this understanding the students will create a painting of their own using a convex mirror.
  3. The painting will reflect the objects within their current seating arrangement (one perspective), as well as some of the people and objects around them that can only be viewed in the reflections of the convex mirror (second perspective).
  4. It is therefore important to establish the same seating arrangement and placement of the pieces being viewed at the beginning of each lesson
  5. Each student may also choose to use a maximum of three personal objects like a watch, a hat, charm bracelet etc... placed within their point of view on the table in front of them.
  6. Hand out the newsprint paper, drawing pencils and erasures to the students to practice sketching their individualized scenes on.
  7. Be sure the students utilize the entire sheet of paper for the scene. This should allow ample space to include the three objects and mirror so that the reflection in the mirror can be adequately viewed and drawn.
  8. Encourage them to press as lightly as possible with their pencils so as to leave a ghost-like image on the paper.
  9. It is important that each student find the best placement of the objects in their scene by applying the concepts of the Principles of Design, which are Contrast, Rhythm, Repetition, Pattern, Proportion, Balance and Emphasis. Point out examples of each principle in the *Arnolfini wedding*.

10. Where the mirrors are positioned (in or on their hands, on their tabletop) is of little concern so long as the position can be consistently maintained and viewed clearly by the student
11. Encourage creative thought and originality.
12. When the students are ready for the final draft, hand out the 11" x 13" white construction paper.
13. Remind the students not to "write" on the paper but to "sketch" the scene in very lightly.
14. Once the scenes are sketched in completely, fix the charcoal using the fixative spray (optional) and painting may begin once dry.
15. It is important to understand how to use watercolor paint correctly in order for the scenes to be accurately portrayed (for more information on watercolor painting see Background Knowledge for Teachers).
16. Hand out the paintbrushes, watercolors, water containers and rags/paper towels.
17. Take down the *Arnolfini Wedding* for now and allow the students to focus on their own work.

D. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Re-display the *Arnolfini Wedding*.
2. Ask the students to exchange their completed pieces with that of their neighbor. In this exchange each student must say politely "thank you for the privilege of viewing your perspective." With that established, request that each student think back toward the beginning of the lesson. Van Eyck accurately displayed the wedding chamber in order to capture the moment of lawful union (marriage). One of the roles of van Eyck was to witness the union of Giovanni Arnolfini to his wife Giovanna Cenami. Because of van Eyck's fascination and curiosity of existence he chose to include some symbols like the candle representing Christ as the light of the world. Also, the fact that neither spouse is wearing shoes could suggest reverence. Now look at your neighbor's finished piece of art and think about how you might describe the symbols that you see on the paper. Keep in mind the few things that you know about your neighbor.
3. Allow each student the opportunity to respond in no more than three complete sentences. Prompt them to begin each sentence with, "From my perspective I ..."
4. After each student has had the opportunity to respond, ask for all students to return the artwork back to their rightful owner after an exchange of, "Thank you!"

**Lesson Two: Pieter Brueghel the Elder – Human Insight**

A. *Daily Objectives*

1. Concept Objective(s)
  - a. Understand that works of art belong to various cultures, times, and places.
  - b. Understand how to identify expressive qualities in a work of art.
2. Lesson Content
  - a. Visual Arts: Fifth Grade - Observe and discuss paintings of the Northern Renaissance, including:
    - i. Pieter Bruegel, *Peasant Wedding*
3. Skill Objective(s)
  - a. Recognize that there are various solutions to a single art problem.
  - b. Recognize and apply the Principles of Design, which are Contrast, Rhythm, Repetition, Pattern, Proportion, Balance and Emphasis.
  - c. Discuss artwork and identify the subject matter.

- d. Learn the name of artists, style, and time periods.
- B. *Materials*
1. 11" x 14" newsprint sheets for practice and spatial design (two per student)
  2. 11" x 14" drawing paper for final draft (one per student)
  3. Multicultural colored pencils (one box per student)
  4. Soft erasers (one per student)
  5. Charcoal fixative spray (optional)
- C. *Key Vocabulary*
1. Netherlander – a resident of the Netherlands in W. Europe on the North Sea
  2. Mannerism – a 16<sup>th</sup> century style in art characterized by distortion of realistic proportions, contorted figures, and avoidance of classical balance
  3. Inquisition – the general tribunal established in the 14<sup>th</sup> century for the discovery and suppression of heresy and the punishment of heretics
  4. Protestant heretics – loosely defined as any Christian not belonging to the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Church who holds beliefs opposed to the established views or doctrines of said churches
  5. Reformist movement – a religious movement that aimed at reforming the Roman Catholic Church and resulted in establishing the Protestant churches
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Display the painting *Peasant Wedding* by Pieter Brueghel the elder.
  2. Use Appendix B to help guide yourself and the students through the background information and thought processes that Pieter Brueghel goes through in painting the *Peasant Wedding*.
  3. Provide time for discussion and questions related to the painting.
  4. Be sure to emphasize to the students the similarity of subject matter in the *Peasant Wedding* to Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*. This similarity demonstrates van Eyck's and Bruegel's similar attempts to paint contemporary life. The paintings also tie together both of the artists' philosophies of reflecting the world as they see it.
  5. Ask the students to recall a memory in a grocery store.
  6. Tell the students that they will create a scene in which they must draw a perceived image of themselves in the store at a specific moment in time.
  7. They must also imagine how other people, who are immediately around them in the store, might perceive themselves and draw them in the same scene.
  8. The resulting drawing should contain multiple perspectives of everyday life as seen by one person
  9. Emphasize to the students that each person in the store may perceive the same situation in a slightly different way.
  10. Refer back to the *Peasant Wedding* and review with the students the multiple expressions and emotions seen on the revelers' faces.
  11. Hand out the newsprint paper and colored pencils.
  12. Have the students use the newsprint paper first to lay out the scene and choose a vantage point from which they will be depicting the event.
  13. Encourage creative thought.
  14. Refer back to the *Peasant Wedding* and look again at the tables, chairs, food, and other items that Brueghel includes in the painting.
  15. Analyze the painting referencing the Principles of Design, which are Contrast, Rhythm, Repetition, Pattern, Proportion, Balance and Emphasis, pointing out examples of the principles in the *Peasant Wedding*.
  16. Ask the students to think about the numerous items that could be around them in the grocery store besides people.

17. Where might the lighting be coming from?
  18. Is it daytime or nighttime?
  19. Have the students begin sketching on the newsprint, becoming familiar with the colored pencils.
  20. Do not encourage the students to shade in any of the figures on the newsprint; reserve that for the final draft.
  21. Once the students are satisfied with their layout of the scene, hand out the final draft drawing paper.
  22. Take down the *Peasant Wedding* for now and allow the students to focus on their own individual work.
  23. Once the drawings are complete, spray the drawings with a fixative spray to preserve (optional).
- E. *Assessment/Evaluation*
1. Re-display the *Peasant Wedding*.
  2. Ask the students to exchange their completed pieces with that of their neighbor. In this exchange each student must say politely “thank you for the privilege of viewing your perspective.”
  3. With that established, request that each student think back towards the beginning of the lesson.
  4. Bruegel attempts to portray contemporary life by capturing the festivities following a wedding of the 1500’s. One of Bruegel’s primary objectives was for the viewer to forget the fact that the partakers of the festivity were poor, persecuted and downtrodden. Where there could be emotions of fear, anger and confusion, Bruegel brings to light the joy and revelry of community, of eating, drinking and storytelling. Bruegel invites us in to a moment when laughter and joviality consume the emotions seen in the faces of the congregation.
  5. Ask the students to look at their neighbor’s finished piece of art and think about how they would describe the emotions seen in the artwork.
  6. Allow each student the opportunity to respond in no more than three complete sentences. Prompt them to begin each sentence with, “From my perspective I ...
  7. After each student has had the opportunity to respond ask for all students to return the artwork back to their rightful owner after an exchange of , “Thank you!”

### **Lesson Three: Albrecht Dürer – Self Awareness: Self Portrait**

- A. *Daily Objectives*
1. Concept Objective(s)
    - a. Understand that works of art belong to various cultures, times, and places
    - b. Understand how to identify expressive qualities in a work of art.
  2. Lesson Content
    - a. Visual Arts: Fifth Grade - Observe and discuss paintings of the Northern Renaissance, including:
      - i. Albrecht Dürer, *Self-Portrait* (such as from 1498 or 1500)
  3. Skill Objective(s)
    - a. Recognize and apply the Principles of Design: Contrast, Rhythm, Repetition, Pattern, Proportion, Balance and Emphasis.
    - b. Discuss artwork and identify the subject matter.
    - c. Learn the name of artists’, style and time periods.
- B. *Materials*
1. 11”x 16” newsprint (two per student)

2. 11" x 16" tag board, canvas-board (at least 11" x 16" size or larger), or heavy construction paper (11" x 16") (one per student) (referenced to as "final draft material" in *Procedures and Activities*)
  3. Various assortment of paintbrushes (#10 size round, filbert, and a ½ inch one-stroke brush, would be a good combination of brushes for each student)
  4. Water containers and paper towels/rags
  5. Pallet knives (if available, one per student)
  6. Drawing pencils (one per student)
  7. Soft erasures (one per student)
  8. Mirrors (one per student with the size and quality dependant upon availability, but large enough for the student to view themselves in; their shoulders, neck, and head should be visible, with a large enough mirror, their waist, chest, arms etc...)
  9. Red, yellow, blue, black and white tempera paint (enough to distribute to each student) - students will need to be familiar with mixing primary colors to make secondary and tertiary colors (see *Core Knowledge Sequence* Grade 1, pg. 31)
  10. Painting pallets (pallets could be old ceramic plates, plastic plates, or Dixie Cups, anything that could provide a surface to hold and mix paints effectively)
  11. Charcoal fixative spray (optional)
  12. Paint shirts (one per student)
- C. *Key Vocabulary*  
None
- D. *Procedures/Activities*
1. Display one of the self-portraits by Albrecht Dürer (such as from 1498 or 1500). (If possible the *Self-Portrait* from Munich 1500 as it was his last self-portrait.)
  2. Use Appendix C to help guide you through explaining the painting and Dürer's background information.
  3. Allow time for questions and observations related to the painting.
  4. It is important to recall the objectives of van Eyck, and Bruegel as artist so as to give precedence to the matured Renaissance persona of Dürer. Like Leonardo da Vinci in Italy, Dürer also becomes fully aware of the gifts and talents that he possesses. The attention to detail and spiritual symbolism is now focused upon one subject and one perspective. The opinions and perspectives of others help Dürer to understand who and what he was and how he wanted to portray himself. His objective, however, was to portray his own true nature and beliefs regardless of the opinions, criticisms or praises of others. The painting is a record of who Dürer believes himself to be.
  5. Hand out the newsprint paper, mirrors, drawing pencils and erasures.
  6. Ask the students to take a moment and think about what they know about themselves. What do they believe in? What do they value the most in their life? What do they like and/or dislike about themselves?
  7. Each student may take a moment and write out the answers to these questions if it will help them.
  8. Provide time for questions and observations.
  9. Ask the students to view themselves in their mirrors and in doing so think of their answers to the previous questions.
  10. As in Dürer's last *Self-Portrait*, the background of each painting will be black. This is to provide the students an opportunity to focus upon an image of themselves using their hands, body position, or facial expressions to dictate their thoughts and emotions.
  11. Use the newsprint and drawing pencils to lay out the self-portraits. Review the Principles of Design, which are Contrast, Rhythm, Repetition, Pattern,

Proportion, Balance and Emphasis pointing out examples of the principles in one of Dürer's *Self-Portraits*.

12. Remove the painting or paintings of Dürer so that the students may focus on their own work.
13. Once the students have sketched out their self-portraits on the newsprint, hand out the final draft material. (If finances are available the canvas boards provide the best resulting pieces.)
14. Students may use their sketched image from the newsprint as reference or redraw themselves altogether using the mirrors, sketching directly on the final draft material. (REMEMBER TO SKETCH LIGHTLY!)
15. If a fixative spray is available, spray the final draft material with a charcoal fixative to keep the charcoal from blending with the paint.
16. When the sketches are complete, hand out the tempera paints, water containers and rags/paper towels (for more information on using tempera paints see Background Knowledge for Teachers).

E. *Assessment/Evaluation*

1. Re-display Dürer's *Self Portrait*.
2. Ask the students to exchange their completed pieces with that of their neighbor. In this exchange each student must say politely "Thank you for the privilege of viewing your perspective." With that established, request that each student think back toward the beginning of the lesson. As Dürer was able to successfully portray his own thoughts and beliefs in a painting of himself, ask the students to think of how their neighbor was successful in their portrayal?
3. What kind of emotion can be seen in their neighbors painting?
4. Can they see any messages conveyed in the painting?
5. What does the painting say about your neighbor's character?
6. Allow each student the opportunity to respond in no more than three complete sentences. Prompt them to begin each sentence with, "From my perspective I ..."
7. After each student has had the opportunity to respond ask for all students to return the artwork back to their rightful owner after an exchange of, "Thank you!"

**VI. CULMINATING ACTIVITY**

- A. A good exercise for the students would be to write an expository of no less than 100 words, summarizing the past three lessons.
- B. Display all three pieces from each lesson (Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*, Pieter Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding*, and Albrecht Dürer's *Self Portrait*).
- C. Ask each student to write about what the artists did in their paintings that was unique. Also, write about how the ideas of van Eyck contributed to the ideas of Bruegel and even to the ideas of Dürer.
- D. Provide time for questions and comments.
- E. See Appendix D for a "paper/pencil" assessment.

**VII. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS**

- A. Appendix A: JAN VAN EYCK
- B. Appendix B: PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER
- C. Appendix C: ALBRECHT DÜRER
- D. Appendix D: WRITTEN ASSESSMENT
- E. Appendix E: WRITTEN ASSESSMENT ANSWERS

## VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A. Andre Chastel, *The Myth of the Renaissance 1420-1520* - Scintillation and Reflections (Card Catalog Number 73-80453) World Publications, 1969.
- B. Alastair Smart *The Renaissance and Mannerism in Northern Europe and Spain* – Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. (R01196 98641 ISBN) 1976.
- C. Charles D. Cuttler *Northern Painting*– Holt Rinehart Winston Inc. – (ISBN: 0-03-072500-3) 1987

## APPENDIX A

### JAN VAN EYCK

Print reference: *Giovanni Arnolfini and His Bride* (aka: *Arnolfini Wedding*) (Late 1400 AD)  
Text adapted from: Andre Chastel, *The Myth of the Renaissance 1420-1520 - Scintillation and Reflections* (Card Catalog Number 73-80453)World Publications 1969, Pg 120-121  
Alastair Smart *The Renaissance and Mannerism in Northern Europe and Spain* – Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. (R01196 98641 ISBN) 1976, Pg. 34-40

When we observe the remarkable large place given to reflections, the play of light, the odd effects produced by mirrors, in Flemish painting from Jan van Eyck on, we are tempted to see in this a guiding principle of Flemish art, and its supreme originality may seem to lie in a special way of handling space by the use of combined effects of direct and reflected light.

The mirror on the back wall of the room in the *Arnolfini wedding* portrait simply inverts the space inside the room, includes what we do not see in the picture proper and combines these reflective phenomena with the impact of the light from the window on the left. Obviously this device delighted the painter – hence his insistence on it. And indeed a magical effect, foreign to nature, resulted from the introduction of those tiny reflected figures into the scene: an optical concentration dominating and reorganizing the data of visual experience. This effect appealed to Van Eyck so strongly that he continued to resort to it, if in an attenuated form, in most of his later works.

The mirrors available in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were manufactured in Germany to begin with, then in France and in Venice. By the second half of the century these mirrors, not flat but strongly convex, were common in the homes of burghers and noblemen. They were also to be found in artists' studios. For Leonardo advised painters to adjust the equilibrium of their compositions by reference to their reflected image. Mirrors became almost an emblem of the painter's craft.

The Italians did not share this interest in reflections, chance effects of light and the mysterious reversal and reduction of space in a mirror image. They set too much store on fullness of effect and the constructive value of tones to indulge in these minutiae. For the Italians, light was always an organizing power, a means of consolidating the rhythms of the picture space. Jan van Eyck was the first to master the problem of spatial representation. The harmony displayed in his numerous works are not of our times, but belongs to the late/medieval world of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

An Italian writer, Bartolomeo Fazio, says in his *De Viris Illustribus*(published about 1455) that van Eyck was proficient in geometry, geography and chemistry, and that he was acquainted with the writings of Pliny; and it is of some interest that the famous motto inscribed on the frame of the London *Man in a Turban* – 'Als ich kan' ('As I can') – is written in Greek letters. All van Eyck's pictures convey a sense of solemn wonder, of a grave acceptance of the miracle of existence; and this feeling is nowhere more in evidence than in the *Arnolfini Portrait*, a work whose tiny scale belies the impressiveness, even monumentality, of its conception. To some extent, of course, this is a religious picture: various details, such as the candle, symbolic of the Light of the World, the discarded slippers, suggesting reverence, the carved statuette of St. Margaret, patroness of child/bearing women, and the scenes of the Passion in the medallions decorating the circular mirror, remind us that the imagery of medieval art often conceals allusions that may escape the modern eye.

## APPENDIX A, PAGE 2

The couple portrayed in the picture are almost certainly Giovanni Arnolfini, a merchant from Lucca who conducted his business at Bruges, and his wife Giovanna Cenami: Arnolfini's gesture suggests the enactment of a solemn vow, and this, together with the other symbolic references in the painting, led Panofsky to infer that what is shown is a marriage/ceremony performed in front of witnesses according to rites in use before the Council of Trent. According to this hypothesis, the room is a nuptial chamber, and the witnesses are the two men reflected in the mirror, one of them being van Eyck himself: added point would thus be given to the painter's elaborate signature – the most beautiful, surely, in the whole history of art – directly above the mirror: '*Johannes de eyck fuit hic*' ('Jan van Eyck was here'.) The Arnolfini Portrait represents the final triumph of Eyckian realism. The convex looking glass upon the wall of the room distorts the reality it reflects, but this distortion only draws attention to the faithfulness of van Eyck's art, the true mirror of the visible world. The picture is at once a harmonious composition and a vivid evocation of two personalities: who could forget Arnolfini's cold and pallid countenance? Historically, it is important in other ways. With the *Arnolfini Portrait*, painting enters new habitations: a door is thrown open upon the intimacy of the domestic scene, and the art of Vermeer has been anticipated by two centuries. Unless Fazio's allusion to van Eyck's knowledge of geometry is taken to imply also his acquaintance with Italian perspective theory, it would seem that van Eyck was able to solve empirically – through sheer observation – spatial problems that had defeated earlier masters. A further advance can be seen in his handling of light. The light becomes gradually more diffused as it penetrates the room; it touches the chandelier with gleaming gold, but quietens to silvery gray on the wall behind. And always it acts as a modeling agent, revealing the subtle modulations of the forms over which it plays.

## APPENDIX B

### PIETER BRUEGEL THE ELDER

Print reference: *Peasant Wedding* (Early 1500 AD)  
Text adapted from: Alastair Smart *The Renaissance and Mannerism in Northern Europe and Spain* – Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. (0-15 176826-9 ISBN) 1976  
pg. 117,122-125

In the years around 1500, with the decline of the Eyckian tradition and the incursion into the Low Countries of new ideas from Italy, Netherlandish painting entered a period of crisis and change. In brief, it was a period of assimilation, of a coming-to-terms with the ‘grand style’ of the Italian High Renaissance masters and their Mannerist followers.

Apart from landscape, Bruegel’s forte was the interpretation of the life of the peasantry: hence his sobriquet of ‘Peasant Bruegel’; a title that should not be misunderstood, for Bruegel himself was a cultured and well-educated man. After being exposed to the terrible sufferings of his own people under Titelmann’s Inquisition and, two years before his death, the Duke of Alva’s arrival in the Spanish Netherlands to intensify the persecution of the Protestant heretics (Bruegel seems to have been in sympathy with the reformist movement within the church, which was brought to the head by Luther.) Bruegel is at his happiest when the element of peasantry scarcely obtrudes and when he seems to abandon himself to the simple pleasures of ordinary people. The *Peasant Wedding* at Vienna which although undated must be a late work – the final consummation, possibly, of Bruegel’s aims as a painter of contemporary life. Not only does this painting open the way to the establishment of the genre subject as an important new class of painting to be valued in its own right, but also it reveals the artist as an absolute master of design and spatial composition. The most obvious precedents for representations of an interior with a feast are to be found in scenes of the Last Supper or the Marriage at Cana, such as Bouts’s panel at Louvain. In freeing such scenes from their traditional subject matter Bruegel added an entirely new informality, anticipating the ‘low-life’ picture of Teniers and Brouwer in the following century.

The *Peasant Wedding* brings a triumphant conclusion the new realism initiated by Jan van Eyck in the *Arnolfini Portrait*, and where in van Eyck’s masterpiece we are permitted to look in upon the room in which the betrothed couple exchange their solemn vows, here we seem to be in the midst of the throng of merrymakers, partaking of their revelry.

## APPENDIX C

### ALBRETCH DÜRER

Print reference: *Self-Portrait* (such as from 1498 or 1500)  
Text adapted from: Charles D. Cuttler *Northern Painting*– Holt Rinehart Winston Inc. –  
(ISBN: 0-03-072500-3) 1987 Pgs. 332-333

Painter, print maker and theoretician, was the first self-conscious northern artist to leave clear records of his conception of art as more than craft, and the first to conceive of himself as innovator and reformer.

Multiple influences can be seen in the Prado *Self-portrait* of 1498. The view out of the window behind the figure suggests the Flemish corner portrait, but the closeness to the picture plane and the parapet on which the arm creates a horizontal note are suggestive of Italy. Horizontals and verticals are stressed to assert a quiet, rational control over the interesting details of costume and figure. Dürer monumentalized the portrait; Flemish light, color, and detail are united to Italian solidity of form.

A culminating point in this early development is seen in the Munich *Self-portrait* of 1500, hieratical and rigidly frontal according to a theoretical schema, with a solemnity of portrayal that is astounding. In its hieratical quality it is medieval, but it is also modern, for no other artist had presented himself in this manner, which, as Panofsky has suggested, is like a portrayal of Christ, the hand lacking only an orb. Like a *Salvator Mundi*, Dürer viewed art as a matter of genius, as something from the hand of a creator. To medieval man the artist merely revealed what God had created, but the modern Italian conception of art elevated, as in Leonardo's writings, the artist to this exalted position held previously only by God. Thus the artist now had a mystical identification and quasi equality with God, in whose form he had been created. To a northerner like Dürer a religious significance was allied to the concept of genius. No longer simply the honest craftsman holding an example of his work, nor disguised as St. Luke painting the Virgin, the artist has assumed the semblance of the Creator whose hand gives life to previously nonexistent form, and so Dürer gave prominence to the curled hand. With such a characterization of the artist the medieval world has been left behind, and the new Humanistic world of the Renaissance has appeared north of the Alps. Dürer had a concept of posterity and of the position of the artist who leaves behind the record of his creative acts; thus he later signed and dated his earlier drawings. This awareness of the artist's place, his mission, and his responsibility is visible in the art of Albrecht Dürer.

The way was now open to new and different conceptions of art, to new aesthetic elements, and to the establishment of rule and order in art as there is rule and order in creation itself. Even supreme knowledge is open to the human creator and, indeed, becomes necessary to him, for the artist has to become aware of everything, has to study and learn not merely the external appearance of things but their internal order and structure.

The 1500 *Self-portrait* was Dürer's last painting ever to represent himself in this way. His theoretical basis was now resolved and it no longer needed assertion. From this point forward Dürer began focusing again upon the basic elements of his art.

## APPENDIX D

### WRITTEN ASSESSMENT

1. *To be born anew* is a definition of what the term Renaissance means. What was the term used to describe the period prior to the Renaissance?
2. In the painting, *Arnolfini wedding*, Jan van Eyck applies the Elements and Principles of Design in numerous ways. What was the object seen in the painting, which handled light and space in a totally original way?
3. In the painting, *Peasant Wedding*, Pieter Bruegel reveals a scene that is similar to a celebration we might see at a modern day reception for a wedding. Why is this painting considered to be unique for its time?
4. In the painting, *Self-Portrait*, Albrecht Durer decides to paint himself in a way that no other artist before him had. How did he do this?
5. Each of the artist studied in this unit are unique in their own way. The ideas and images portrayed in the paintings are original for their time and opened the door for other artist to expand upon their newfound insights. With this in mind, what is a phrase that could best describe these men?

## APPENDIX E

### *ASSESSMENT ANSWERS*

1. Medieval
2. A convex mirror.
3. Bruegel was one of the first artist to portray contemporary life, away from the traditional subject matter of the time, revealing the simple pleasures of ordinary people.
4. Durer presented himself in a full frontal position looking directly out from the canvas.
5. “Renaissance Men,” or “Revolutionary Artists.” Allow creative expression so long as you can tell that the students understand the impact that these artists had on the art world then and today.