

## Renaissance to Modern

This lesson provides a chronological look at European artistic styles from the Renaissance to today. Students consider the strengths and challenges of each period, and evaluate their reactions to each style.

### Grade Level

Grades 4–12

### Common Core Academic State Standards

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1](#)

### National Visual Arts Standards

- Responding: understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning
- Connecting: relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context

### C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards

- Dimension 2: History – Change, Continuity, and Context

### Suggested Learning Goals

Students will be better able to:

- Analyze the progression of European artistic styles and themes from the Renaissance to the modern era
- Relate a work of art to historical context
- Explore the transition from realism to abstraction in European painting

### Essential Questions

- How have European artistic styles and themes evolved and changed over time?
- What can a work of art tell us about the time and place in which it was made?

### Suggested Vocabulary

Abstract	Cubism	Modern	Realism/realistic	Surrealism
Commission	Geometric	Patron	Renaissance	Symbolism
Composition	Impressionism	Perspective	Saint	



*Portrait of Eugène Coppens de Fontenay, 1867*

James-Jacques-Joseph Tissot, French  
Oil on canvas

27 1/2 x 15 3/8 inches (69.8 x 39.1 cm)

Purchased with the W. P. Wilstach Fund,  
1972

W1972-2-1

### Lesson-Specific Activity

This activity is designed to prepare students for thinking and talking about artworks they may see during a “Renaissance to Modern” lesson.

- Students will work in pairs for this activity. Prepare enough copies of the art images attached here so that each pair will have its own set of images (see **Required Art Images**). Do not give the art information to students.
- Distribute an image set to each pair. Ask students to look at each of the images. Without providing any additional information, challenge them to arrange the works of art in what they think is chronological order. More advanced students might attribute each artwork to a particular time period. Younger students could simply be asked to arrange the artworks from oldest to most modern.
- Have students debate and reason as to why they believe their arrangement was correct. On what aspect of the works of art did they base their assumptions? What do they think makes an artwork look “old” or “modern”? Write “old” and “modern” on the board with a line dividing the two words. Ask students to list what characteristics they associate with one or the other.
- Can they observe any similarities among the older or more modern paintings? What are the distinguishing features of “old” or “modern”? Encourage students to use descriptive vocabulary when discussing things like clothing, architecture, and hairstyles, as well as the composition and style of the paintings.
- Show students the correct timeline, and discuss. How accurate were their arrangements? What assumptions did they make that turned out to be wrong? What is surprising about the correct timeline?

### Required Art Images — ANSWER KEY (OLDEST TO MOST MODERN; LEFT TO RIGHT)



*Portrait of a Young Gentleman before a Landscape*, c. 1500–10, by unknown artist (Italy) (John G. Johnson Collection, 1917, cat. 268)



*The Emblem of Christ Appearing to Constantine*, 1622, by Peter Paul Rubens (John G. Johnson Collection, 1917, cat. 659)



*The Bucintoro at the Molo on Ascension Day*, c. 1745, by Giovanni Antonio Canal, known as Canaletto (The Williams L. Elkins Collection, E1924-3-48)



*Portrait of Eugène Coppens de Fontenay*, 1867, by James-Jacques-Joseph Tissot (Purchased with the W. P. Wilstach Fund, W1972-2-1)



*Moored Boats and Trees (Bateaux Amarrés et Arbres)*, 1890, by Georges Seurat (Gift of Jacqueline Matisse Monnier in memory of Anne d'Harnoncourt, 2008-181-1)



*Sunday Promenade*, 1914–15, by Maurice B. Prendergast (Gift of Meyer P. Potamkin and Vivian O. Potamkin, 1964-116-1)



*Animated Landscape*, 1924, by Fernand Léger (Gift of Bernard Davis, 1950-63-1) © 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris



*Person in the Presence of Nature*, 1935, by Joan Miró (The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950-134-149) © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

### Required Art Images

Arrange these works of art in what you think is chronological order (oldest to most modern):

