

Wedding Dance

by Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Print Facts

- Medium:
- Date:
- Size:
- Location: Delporte Collection, Brussels
- Period:
- Style: Northern Renaissance
- Genre: Genre Painting
- This print is very difficult to research. The print we own states that it is by Pieter Brueghel, is called Wedding Dance, and is owned by the Delporte Collection in Brussels. However, online and in books I can only find information about a **very** similar print located at the Detroit Institute of Arts called The Wedding Dance by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. The differences are minor, but can be easily seen by looking at the men or at the left side where buildings are in the background on our print, but not on the print located at Detroit. Pieter Brueghel is especially hard to research because he had a son named Pieter Brueghel who was also a painter. To make matters worse, Pieter Brueghel the Younger often copied his father's paintings. The paragraph about the print on the blue sheet in the packet says this print was called Wedding Dance in the Open Air and was painted in 1607 by Pieter Brueghel the Younger, but searches online show a different painting with that name and date. I cannot find any information to prove who actually painted this version of The Wedding Dance or where to find it. If you have more luck than me, let me know! – Amy Stephens

Artist Facts

- Pieter Bruegel (Pronounced [pee-ter broi-guh'l])
- Born c. 1525 – It was so long ago that there is a lot of confusion about the time and place of Bruegel's birth. Most likely it was in Holland (region of Netherlands) or Belgium.
- Died 1569 (approximately 44 years old)
- He spent time in France and Italy studying art before settling back permanently in Belgium.
- He began by painting landscapes, and slowly started adding people in.
- In 1559 when he was about 34 years old, Pieter Brueghel the Elder dropped the "h" from his name and began signing his paintings as Bruegel.
- Pieter Bruegel the Elder received the nickname "Peasant Bruegel" or Bruegel the Peasant" because he dressed up as a peasant to attend weddings and other celebrations without being invited. Bruegel was wealthier and lived in the city, but he liked to mingle with peasants at their celebrations to gain inspiration and authentic details for his paintings. Some books report he even took gifts with him to the parties he crashed.
- Bruegel painted some pictures with hidden political meaning. On his deathbed he reportedly ordered his wife to destroy some of his drawings to protect his family from persecution.
- He had two sons, Pieter and Jan (pronounced [yahn]), who both became painters. Both Pieter and Jan kept the original spelling of Brueghel.
- Pieter and Jan were both very young when their father died, so it is likely that they received art instruction instead from their grandmother (Pieter Bruegel the Elder's mother-in-law) who was

also an artist. Jan Brueghel (the Elder) later had a son Jan Brueghel (the Younger) who was a painter. And Jan Brueghel the Younger then had a son Abraham Brueghel who also painted.

Key Element of Design to Teach

- **Color** is a reflection of light. Color may be described in many ways. Primary colors are red, yellow and blue. Secondary colors are orange, green and violet. Tertiary colors are red-violet, blue-violet, blue-green, yellow-green, yellow-orange, and red-orange. Color can be described as being warm (in the red-yellow range) or cool (in the blue-green range). There are also various color schemes that the artist may use to emphasize certain parts of their work.

Possible Questions and Suggestions to Teach Color

- Begin the presentation with all of the red covered using the transparencies included in the packet. Ask the students what they see.
- Remove the transparencies and ask the students how it changes the painting to add the red.
- A Metro Times article says that red can mean passion, love, courage, desire and energy. Ask questions to help students understand how these things relate to feelings that might be felt at a wedding dance? (Use language appropriate for third graders.)
- The color red has been shown to enhance metabolism, increase respiration rates, and raise blood pressure. By using the color red in the painting, Bruegel has made it possible for the viewer to physically have some of the same feelings that the dancers themselves would have been feeling.
- Red is used for things that need high visibility like stop signs, stop lights, fire engines, etc. because it moves forward and is the first color the brain recognizes.
- What color do our faces or cheeks turn when we exercise? (red!)
- What are the primary colors? (Use the color wheel to help teach students about primary, secondary and tertiary colors.)
- Can you see any of the primary colors in this painting? Where?
- Do you see any other colors in this painting?

Keywords

- Primary colors, secondary colors, complimentary colors, color wheel, form, movement

Other Possible Questions

- Use red fabric from the packet to show how fabric looks when it moves. Point out the red fabric of the women's dresses and how Bruegel painted it to have the appearance it was moving.
- How does this make you feel?
- Which woman is the bride? (The bride traditionally dressed in black at that time. Look for the woman with the red headband whose hair is uncovered.) Do they dress the way we dress for weddings today? The bride is in the center of this painting. Why do you think the artist placed her in the center? (She is the focal point of the dance. Everyone else dances around her.)
- Who is the bride dancing with? (Could be the groom, but he looks older so maybe her father?)
- Why do the men all wear knives? (They lived at a different time. Their hunting gear was part of their dress.)

- What are the buildings in the back? (The village) Why are the people dancing outside? (Probably wouldn't have had a building big enough to fit everyone.)
- What kind of shapes do you see? (Organic shapes –trees, hands, etc)
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- The bodies in this painting are plump and colorful, giving the whole image a bobbing energy. They are shaped like bouncing balls.
- How are weddings then the same as weddings today? (The people are doing some of the same things we do now at weddings like dancing.) What are the people doing that we do? Do you see anyone kissing? Smiling? Resting? Throwing a child in the air?
- Where is the music coming from for the dance? (Look at the men playing bagpipes on the bottom right corner.)
- Write out a pedigree chart on the board for students to see. You can make it funny that there were so many Brueghel painters that made things so confusing.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder

Pieter Brueghel the Younger

Jan Brueghel the Elder

Jan Brueghel the Younger

Abraham Brueghel