

Man with a Golden Helmet or Man in a Golden Helmet by Rembrandt van Rijn (but not really)

Print Facts

- Medium: Oil on canvas
- Date: c. 1650
- Size: 50 x 67 cm
- Location: Gemaldegalerie, Berlin
- Genre: Portrait
- Style: Baroque
- Man with the Golden Helmet was for years Berlin's most famous paintings and considered to be a Rembrandt masterpiece.
- In late 1985 news reports came out that Rembrandt's Man with a Golden Helmet was not by Rembrandt at all, and was probably painted in 1650 by one of his students. Tests indicated the painting's "brushed signature" was unlike Rembrandt's.
(see http://articles.latimes.com/1985-11-20/entertainment/ca-8068_1_golden-helmet)
- Despite the fact that the artist is unknown, the painting remains a masterful piece of art.

Artist Facts for Rembrandt van Rijn

- pronounced Rembrandt van Rhyne
- Born July 15, 1606 Leiden, Dutch Republic (Now the Netherlands which in its entirety is often referred to as Holland.)
- Died October 4, 1669 (age 63) Amsterdam, Dutch Republic (Now the Netherlands which in its entirety is often referred to as Holland.)
- Dutch painter and etcher
- Rembrandt is generally considered as one of the greatest painters and printmakers in European art history and the most important in Dutch history.
- His artwork was popular throughout his lifetime, and he had a good reputation as an artist.
- Rembrandt was a teacher and had many students who copied his style.
- "Rembrandt's own studio practice is a major factor in the difficulty of attribution, since, like many masters before him, he encouraged his students to copy his paintings, sometimes finishing or retouching them to be sold as originals, and sometimes selling them as authorized copies. Additionally, his style proved easy enough for his most talented students to emulate. Further complicating matters is the uneven quality of some of Rembrandt's own work, and his frequent stylistic evolutions and experiments. As well, there were later imitations of his work, and restorations which so seriously damaged the original works that they are no longer recognizable. **It is highly likely that there will never be universal agreement as to what does and what does not constitute a genuine Rembrandt.**" (Wikipedia.org)
- In 1633 Rembrandt added the "d" to the original spelling of Rembrandt. In previous years he had experimented with his signature as "R", "RH", "RHL", "RHL-van Rijn", "Rembrandt", and then in 1633 "Rembrandt" which he maintained as his signature from that time on.
- Proof of Rembrandt's fame is the fact that he is known throughout the world simply by his first name.

Key Element of Design to Teach

- **Value** is the use of light and dark in an art piece. Higher values are described as being light and lower values are referred to as being dark. In painting, value is often referred to as tint and shade. Tint is light and shade is dark.

Possible Questions and Suggestions to Teach Value

- Have a student dress up as a soldier, and have another student stand above them holding a flashlight. Turn off the lights and help the flashlight student shine the light on the soldier's helmet and face in the same way that the light source is shining on the soldier in the painting. Talk about the direction the light is coming from and how things like the nose can cast a shadow. Point out the lighter and darker values in the painting and how the artist creates darker shades by adding black and lighter tints by adding white.
- Have the students squint at the painting to help them distinguish the light areas from the dark ones. (Dark areas will fade back when you squint.)

Keywords

- Value, Tint, Shade, Texture, Mood

Other Possible Questions and Suggestions

- Who do you think this man is? (A soldier) Why do you think this? (He has on armor.)
- Do you think he is a young man or old man? Why?
- What kind of soldier do you think he could be if he is older and has been a soldier for a long time? (General, Lieutenant, etc.)
- How do you think he might feel about having to be a soldier? (serious, sad, it is hard)
- If you could touch his helmet, how do you think it would feel? (cold, bumpy, hard)
- How do you think the feather on his helmet would feel? (soft, fluffy. Bring a feather to show the students.)
- How do you think his face would feel? (scruffy, wrinkly)
- Show a picture of someone today that is famous for what they do. Maybe a singer or athlete. Talk to the students about how Rembrandt is famous (a "rockstar") of art, and that people throughout the world know and refer to him by just his first name.
- Because Rembrandt was so good at what he did, people tried to copy and imitate his work. For this reason it is very difficult today to know for sure which paintings were Rembrandt's and which ones were his followers. This painting has an unknown artist because it looks like Rembrandt's style. For over 300 years people believed it was his painting, but now most art experts agree that Rembrandt did not in fact paint this piece.