

Rembrandt van Rijn

Picture Study

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Return of the Prodigal Son

Rembrandt, c. 1661-1669



Raising of Lazarus

Rembrandt, 1630



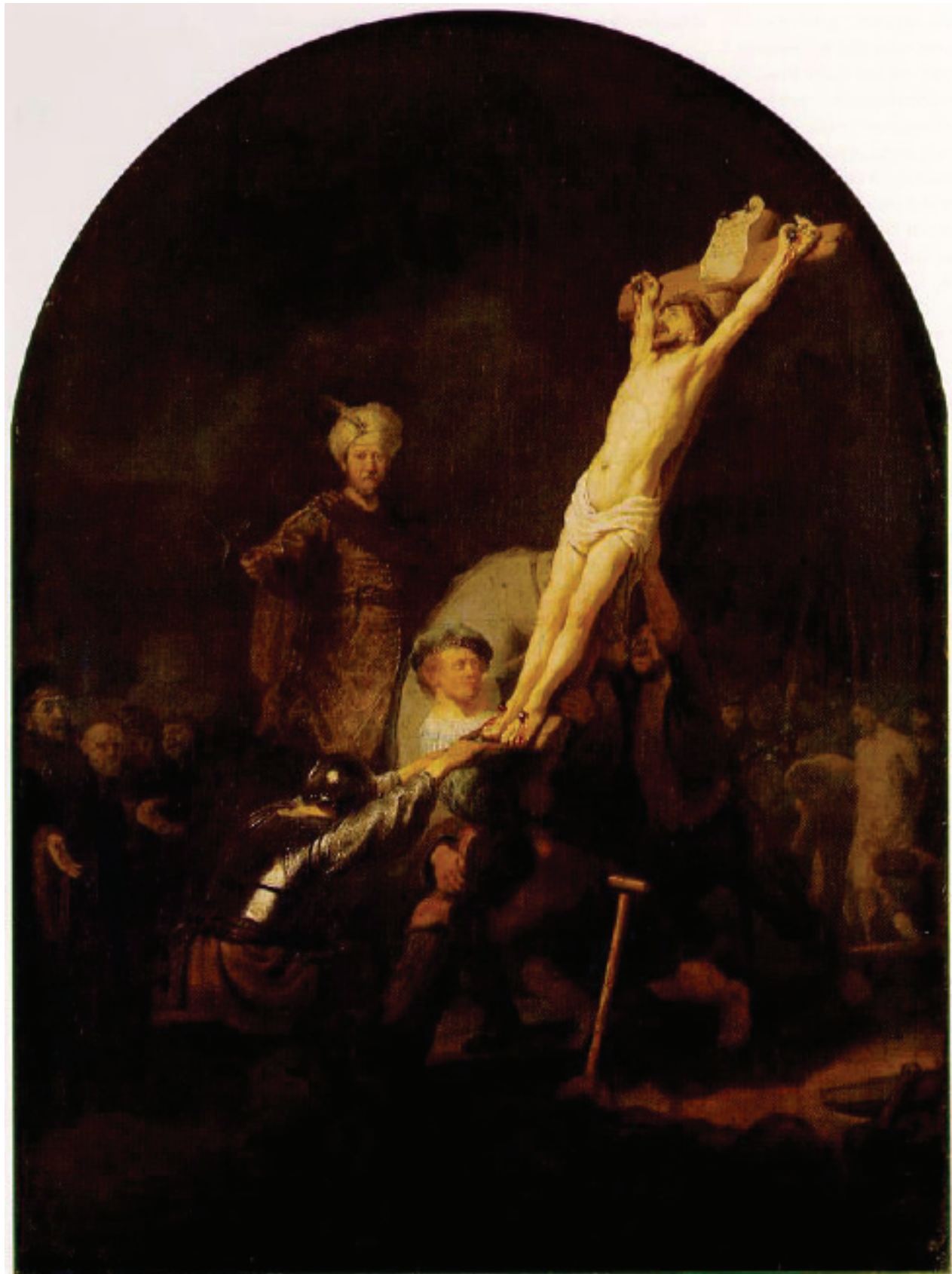
Self-Portrait

Rembrandt, c. 1636-1638



Raising of the Cross

Rembrandt, c. 1633



Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer

Rembrandt, 1653



Girl at a Window

Rembrandt, 1645



Rembrandt van Rijn

ARTIST BIO NOTES

These notes are provided to aid the teacher's own background research on the artist and his or her works. This is not meant to be presented to students as a list of facts and dates. When you first introduce the artist, tell students where the artist fits into the timeline of history, and where the artist lived and worked. Add a few more details with each new picture, but the information you share should be short and simple unless your students ask questions or wish to know more. Keep the main focus of your Picture Study time on observation and narration of the details of the picture.

Note: if a footnote appears with a fact that is not a direct quote, the fact comes from ONE source only.

LIFE AND CHARACTER

- ◆ 1606-1669
- ◆ Born in Leiden, Netherlands to a miller
- ◆ Attended Latin school and University of Leiden, but left for an apprenticeship with a local painter.
- ◆ Married woman from Amsterdam in 1634. Had three children who all died at young ages. Had fourth, a son, in 1641 who survived. Wife weakened, died the following year. Later fell in love with and married a servant. Had one daughter.
- ◆ Hobby of collecting art and interesting props to use in his paintings. Not careful with how he spent money on this hobby.
- ◆ Rembrandt declared bankruptcy in 1656, having to sell his collection of art. He continued to teach and paint.
- ◆ After the death of his second wife in 1663 and the death of his son in 1669, Rembrandt died in Amsterdam in 1669.

TRAINING AND CAREER

- ◆ First had a three-year apprenticeship with a local painter. Exhibiting great skill, he was sent to apprentice with another in Amsterdam in 1624 for half a year. Grew much more as an artist under his second teacher, who was known for his historical paintings.
- ◆ Returned to hometown to set up shop.
- ◆ Moved to more prosperous Amsterdam in 1631, finding success in portrait painting and painting historical subjects. His marriage to the cousin of an art dealer helped to boost his career
- ◆ 1634, joined a guild to train other young artists.

ART STYLE AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- ◆ Unlike Dürer, Rembrandt did not listen to the advice to visit Italy to study art. Italy, however, travelled to him in prints and other artists, influencing his style, especially his use of lighting, starting in the 1630s.
- ◆ Used lighting techniques to add character and life to his faces.
- ◆ Early works created with smooth brushstrokes. In later works, he played with medium and switched to broad brushstrokes.
- ◆ Early historical and mythological works in Baroque style of Rubens.
- ◆ In later years, had the ambition to capture in his works “the intangible essence of man, his inner life”¹
- ◆ Often used himself as a model for figures in his works. Crafted nearly one hundred self-portraits.
- ◆ Body of work: historical and mythological paintings, portraits, self-portraits, drawings, etchings.
- ◆ Considered most prestigious Dutch painter
- ◆ Contrast of early to late: From finer to rougher with richer colors. From more

¹ <http://www.abcgallery.com/R/rembrandt/rembrandtbio.html>

dramatic to more intimate scenes.

- ◆ In *Raising of the Cross*, scholars agree that the figure in the blue beret is to be a type of self-portrait, for the beret is both inconsistent with the biblical time period and consistent with painter's garb in Rembrandt's time period. Rembrandt often painted himself in a velvet beret, such as in *Self-Portrait* c. 1636-1638.
- ◆ *Return of the Prodigal Son*: one of his last and most famous works. Noted for its brilliant, emotive portrayal of the Biblical parable about undeserved forgiveness.
- ◆ *Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer* also creatively includes Alexander the Great in the portrait of his tutor – Aristotle's golden chain has a medallion hanging from it bearing the face of Alexander.

ART BIO LINKS

<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/artists/rembrandt> (informative, medium length)

<http://www.abcgallery.com/R/rembrandt/rembrandtbio.html> (more life detail, not as polished website)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/rembrandt.shtml (shorter, not as detailed)

<http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/r/rembran/painting/biblic1/samson.html> (informative, short; NOTE: link does not lead directly to biography – website trouble)

PICTURE SOURCES

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rembrandt_Harmensz_van_Rijn_-_Return_of_the_Prodigal_Son_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rembrandt_Harmensz._van_Rijn_-_The_Raising_of_Lazarus_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/94/Selfportrait_Rembrandt1641.jpg

http://www.artchive.com/artchive/r/rembrandt/rembrandt_cross.jpg

<http://artsandfacts.blogspot.com/2013/04/episode-64-northern-baroque.html>

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/62/Young_Girl_at_a_Window_-_Rembrandt_Harmenszoon_van_Rijn.png

LINKS TO ADDITIONAL PAINTINGS BY REMBRANDT

http://www.everypainterpaintshimself.com/article/rembrandts_raising_of_the_cross/ (Rembrandt as turbaned figure)

<http://www.credomag.com/2011/09/24/raising-the-cross/> (Rembrandt as blue beret figure)

http://www.wga.hu/html_m/r/rembrand/14biblic/69newtes.html (Return of the Prodigal Son)

http://www.wga.hu/html_m/r/rembrand/17histor/03histor.html (Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer)