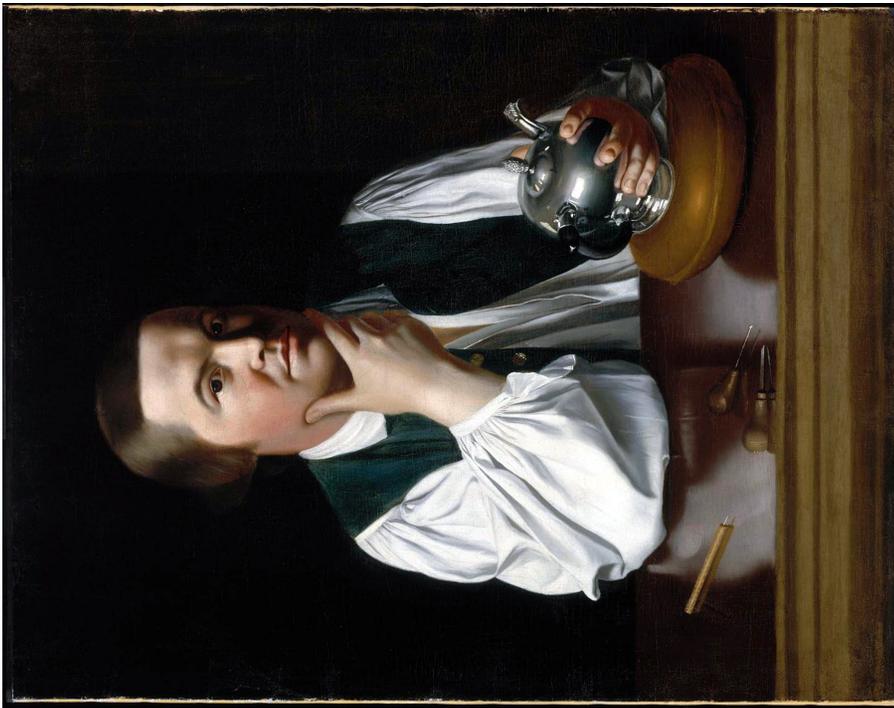




Watson and the Shark

by John Singleton Copley

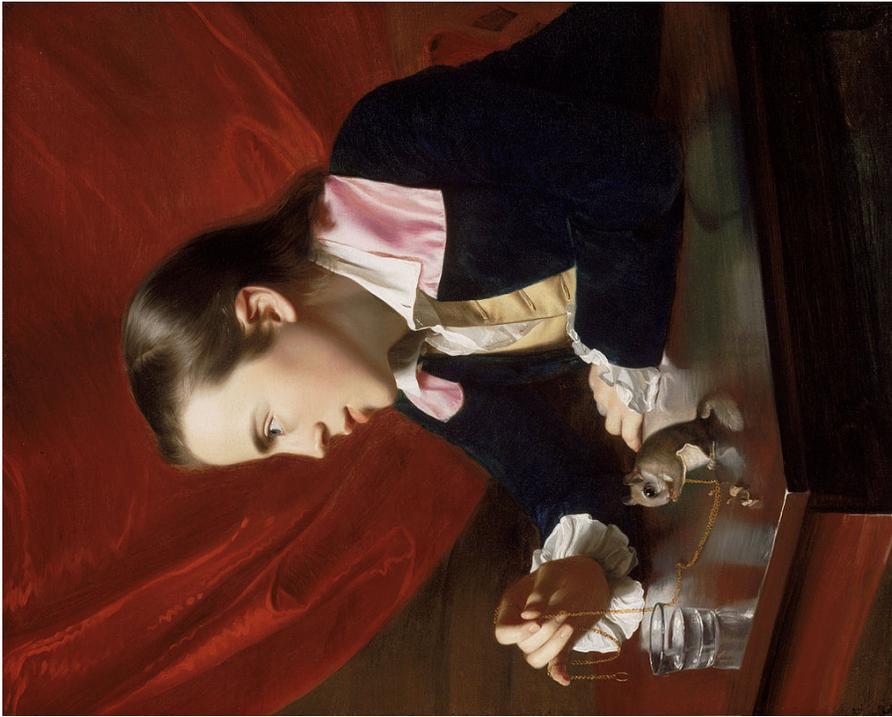
This was painted in 1782 and is oil on canvas. The painting depicts a true event of a 14 year old cabin boy, Brook Watson, who was attacked by a shark in the waters near Havana, Cuba in 1749. It took three attempts to rescue him and the shark got his leg, but he lived. Watson grew up to become a Lord Mayor of London. He met Copley when the artist went to London to study art. Watson commissioned the painting. Copley had probably never seen a shark and the one in the painting has some features not present in real sharks like lips, nostrils that blow air, and forward facing eyes. The painting is done in the romantic style. It is very dramatic yet the horrible injury of the missing leg is barely visible under the water.



Paul Revere

by John Singleton Copley

Copley painted many portraits of American Founders, including this one of Paul Revere which was done in 1768. Paul Revere was not yet a famous political figure, but he was a well known and wealthy silversmith by the time this portrait was done. He sits here in his shirt sleeves, without wig, as though glancing up from his work. The tea pot in his hand is finished, but not yet decorated. The engraving tools lie on the table ready to be picked up. But the table is a highly polished piece of furniture and not a work table, so this is an idealized setting. Teapots were among the most difficult of items for a silversmith to craft and so this painting shows off Revere's expertise. It is also significant that it is a teapot, because although the Boston Tea Party is still in the future the Townsend Acts, including a tax on tea were enacted this year.



Boy With A Squirrel by John Singleton Copley

This was painted in 1765 and is oil on canvas. It is a portrait of Copley's half brother, Henry Pelham. The painting was done so that Copley, who was self taught, could exhibit his skills in London before educated critics. He did take the painting to London where it was shown in 1766. It received acclaim and promoted Copley to international fame. The highly polished surface of the table, the boys hair, the fur on the squirrel, the folds of the shimmering drapery, and the reflection of the glass of water on the table all show high levels of skill. The composition of the portrait with the sitter in profile and the corner of the table jutting out toward the viewer are also non traditional but perfectly executed.



The Death of General Wolfe by Benjamin West

This painting, done in 1770, depicts the death of General James Wolfe during the battle of Quebec in the Seven Years War. Though Wolfe himself died in the battle he brilliantly led his men to victory and turned the war in favor of the British. The painting is composed to resemble lamentation paintings of the death of Christ. The flag and the men in the foreground are arranged in a triangle with Wolfe lying at the base of the flag, as though at the base of the cross. A Native American warrior looks on contemplatively while Wolfe's men are overcome with emotion. This is one of the earliest examples of a history painting done with historically accurate clothing; usually Classical attire would be donned regardless of the reality. This painting helped usher in more reality in historical paintings both in America and Europe.



Washington at Princeton

by Charles Willson Peale

Commissioned by the Supreme Executive Council of Philadelphia to hang in their government halls, this was painted in 1779. Born in Maryland, Peale took art lessons from John Hesselius and John Singleton Copley in America. His friends then raised enough money to send him to England to study under Benjamin West. He returned to America in 1770 and became the painter of the Revolution. He is especially famous for his paintings of George Washington.



Staircase Group

by Charles Willson Peale

This portrait of Peale's two sons, Raphael and Titian Peale, was painted in 1795 to adorn Peale's Museum of Natural History. In the museum the painting is set into a real door frame with a real wooden first step on the floor at the base of the painting. The scene is shown at full size and looks as though you could follow the boys up the steps. Three dimensional realistic painting in this style is called Trompe l'oeil, which means tricking the eye.



Head of the Nymph

by William Rush

This was carved from pine and then painted white in 1809. William Rush was apprenticed to a wood carver as a youth and made his living carving figureheads for ships. Later he turned to fine art sculpture beginning with sculptures carved from wood and later progressing to plaster and terracotta sculptures. He was the first American sculptor and most of his work was neoclassical in style. This piece is a fragment from a larger piece called *Allegory of the Schuylkill River*, a piece that was commissioned by the Philadelphia waterworks.



The Skater

by Gilbert Stuart

This was painted in 1782 and is a portrait of William Grant, a Scotsman. Gilbert painted this while he was in London studying under Benjamin West. This piece was shown in the London Royal Academy and received rave reviews for both the skill of the artist and for the originality of the composition, no one had done a skater before. This painting launched Stuart's career and made him famous in Europe as well as America.



Athenaeum Portrait

by Gilbert Stuart

Stuart returned to America from Europe in 1793 and spent the rest of his career painting the story of American Independence. He painted this famous portrait of George Washington in 1796. Though never finished it is the most famous portrait of Washington, having graced the dollar bill for more than a hundred years. Stuart and his daughter made over 100 copies of this portrait to sell during their lifetimes.



General George Washington Resigning His Commission

by John Trumbull

Though this was painted in 1817, the event it depicts occurred in 1783. The event was significant because Washington could have retained power and ushered in a military dictatorship or a monarchy, as indeed his men had urged him to do. But Washington was committed to a civil government of the people. John Trumbull painted many famous American moments, especially events surrounding the American War of Independence.

Trumbull himself served under Washington during the Revolutionary War. After the war he went to England to study painting under Benjamin West. He returned to the United States and focused on history painting.

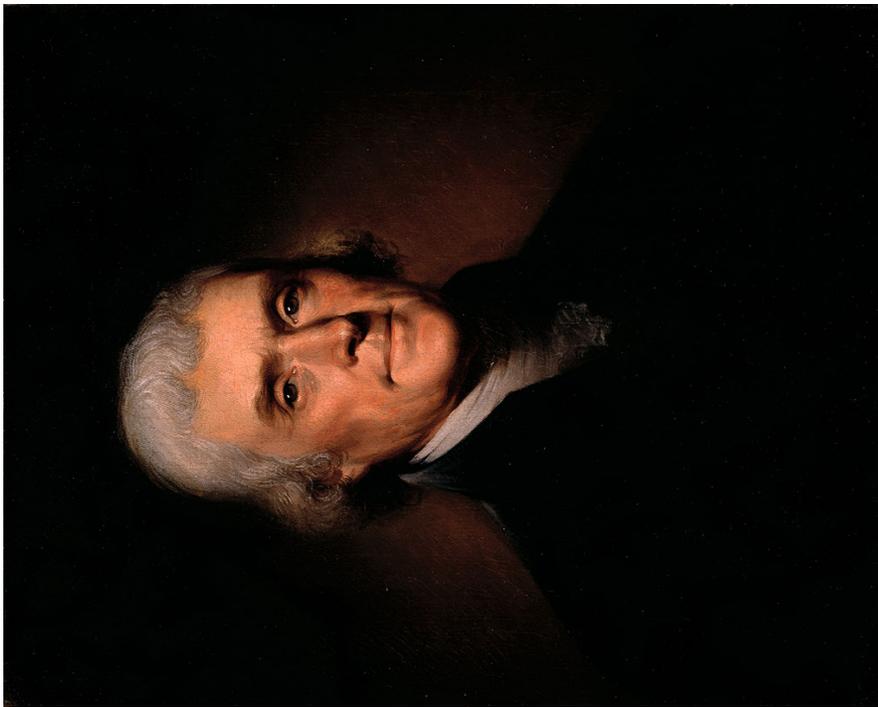


Declaration of Independence

by John Trumbull

This was painted in 1819 in oil on canvas. It shows the five member drafting committee presenting their version of the Declaration of Independence to the Continental Congress in 1776. Today the original painting hangs in the rotunda of the Capitol building in Washington D.C.

Besides the main players in this moment the rest of the figures in the painting are signers of the Declaration or men who debated the declaration, but did not sign. 42 of the 56 signers are depicted. Trumbull had wanted to show all 56, but could not because many of the signers were by 1819 dead and no images of them were in existence.



Portrait of Thomas Jefferson

by Rembrandt Peale

This was painted in 1800 in oil on canvas. Today this painting hangs in the White House. Rembrandt Peale was one of the children of Charles Willson Peale and the most accomplished artist of them. He was tutored in art by his father from the age of eight and by the time he was seventeen had gained the notice of art connoisseurs in the United States. He traveled to Europe several times to study art and while in Paris picked up a taste for neoclassical style. He is best known for his masterful portraits, which were very much to the taste of the American art buyers.

American Colonial Art Cards

American colonial art began to match European skills in the years just before the Revolutionary War in 1775. The cards in this set include art up to 1820 AD. Some of the American artists began to travel to Europe for art training and in the colonies there began to be a demand for higher priced pieces worthy of greater skill. Also in the years just after the Revolution Americans were anxious to document and glorify the struggle for freedom they had just gone through.

Print these art cards and descriptions onto white card stock. Cut the cards out on the solid lines.

Help your kids become familiar with these paintings and artists by playing matching games, sorting the cards, and quizzing over them.

1. Place the cards face down, with images in one group and description cards in another group. Choose one card from each group. Determine if they match. You can read the description of the painting to see if they do.
2. Arrange the paintings in order of date. Which were painted first? Can you see a progression of techniques or style in the cards?
3. Hold up an image card and see if your child can remember the title of the painting. After these are mastered, use the image cards to memorize the titles and artists together. Finally master the titles, artists, and a little information about the painting.
4. Go online and find more art by the same artists. Can you tell which artist painted the piece just by looking at the style?