



Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog by Caspar David Friedrich

The artist was a German, the center of the Romantic movement. The painting is oil on canvas and was done in 1818. The rocky outcrops are the tops of real mountains in Germany, but rearranged to fit the artist's idea of composition.

Most critics believe this painting represents self reflection or a lost soul in the modern world of fog. Some think it represents a man who has climbed high and still finds himself insignificant compared to the grandeur of nature. The way the figure faces away from the viewer allows the viewer to more easily imagine himself as the figure. What would you be thinking about if you were standing there looking down on the fog all around?



Liberty Leading the People by Eugene Delacroix

This was painted in 1830, in oil on canvas, just after the July revolution of that year in France. "Liberty", the woman holding aloft the French flag, leads the people over the bodies of the fallen and in to a new hope of liberty and equality for France. The fighters depicted include a bourgeois man in a top hat, a plebeian peasant boy with pistols, and a student in a bicorne hat from the prestigious military school, the École Polytechnique. The scene and most of the figures in it are realistic, but Liberty herself is allegorical. The figures in the painting are not despairing in spite of the mounds of the dead, but are instead hopeful and determined.



The Fighting Temeraire by J.M.W. Turner

This was painted in 1839 by one of the most famous British artists of all time. It depicts a real event, the Temeraire, heroic tall masted ship of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 versus Napoleon, was towed up the River Thames to be scrapped by the Navy. It is being towed by the next era of ship, a steam ship. To the right the sun sets on the old power and might of the British Navy and at the left a crescent moon rises, symbolizing the new industrial age. The painting is sentimentally nostalgic for past glories and beauties and at the same time fiercely patriotic. It is one of the favorite paintings of the British people to this day.



Calais Pier by J.M.W. Turner

Turner painted this in 1803 after traveling to Calais on a packet boat and landing in the midst of a storm. He loved to paint scenes of ships and the sea, and especially ships at sea in a storm. One of his themes was the "sublime", a Romantic era philosophy that said man is impotent before nature.



The Third of May 1808 by Francisco de Goya

Napoleon had declared himself emperor of Spain, taking advantage of the weak king of Spain, but the Spanish people did not agree. On May 2, 1808 they rose up in revolt against their new rulers. On the third of May the French rounded up the rebels or any convenient bystanders, lined them up at various locations in Spain and shot them.

Goya painted this in 1814 in oil on canvas. It is a sharp break with previous war paintings which were always idealized and composed for beauty and heroism. Goya's painting merely shows stark brutality aimed at unresisting and simple men. The lighted figure in the center lifts his arms in a crucifixion like pose and is illuminated like a saint, but no redemption or glorification can be hoped for in this scene.



The Raft of the Medusa by Théodore Géricault

This was painted in 1818-19 by an artist trying to make a name for himself. Like many Romantic paintings, it depicts a real event, the wreck of the Medusa, a French naval frigate that went off course due to an incompetent captain and ran aground. Lacking life boats the sailors hastily constructed a makeshift raft. After suffering starvation, dehydration, and exposure and resorting to cannibalism 15 of the 147 people on the raft were rescued. The event underscored the incompetence of the newly restored French monarchy.

The composition of the painting is two pyramid shapes, one peaking at the mast and the other at the upraised arm of a survivor hailing a distant ship.



Wivenhoe Park by John Constable

This was commissioned in 1816 by the owner of the estate depicted and made enough money for the young artist to marry his long time sweetheart.

Constable is famous for his idealized paintings of the English countryside at a time when the Industrial Revolution was underway, the cities were growing, and the rural way of life was disappearing. Unlike his contemporary, Turner, he liked calm weather and simple scenery.

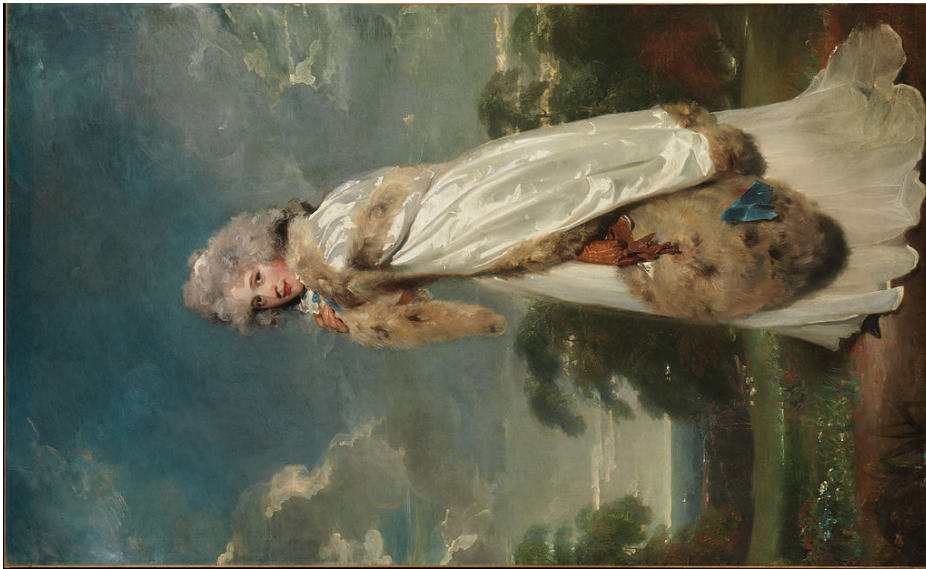


The Hay Wain by John Constable

This was painted in 1821 on a giant six foot canvas, normally reserved for the more important history paintings. Constable was making a statement that the English countryside, with all its idealized beauty was just as important a subject as the great events of mankind. Indeed he brought back the landscape painting.

Constable was the first artists to study meteorology in order to make his sky and clouds as realistic as possible. He was a product of the Age of Enlightenment and scientific progress, but also pined for the simple countryside rather than the teeming cities where the progress was happening.

This painting is one of the most beloved of English art.



Portrait of Elizabeth Farren by Thomas Lawrence

This was painted sometime before 1791 and is oil on canvas. The artist was the most celebrated portraitist of the Romantic period and was court painter to King George III and president of the Royal Academy. By the age of ten he was already supporting his family financially with his pastel portraits in Bath.

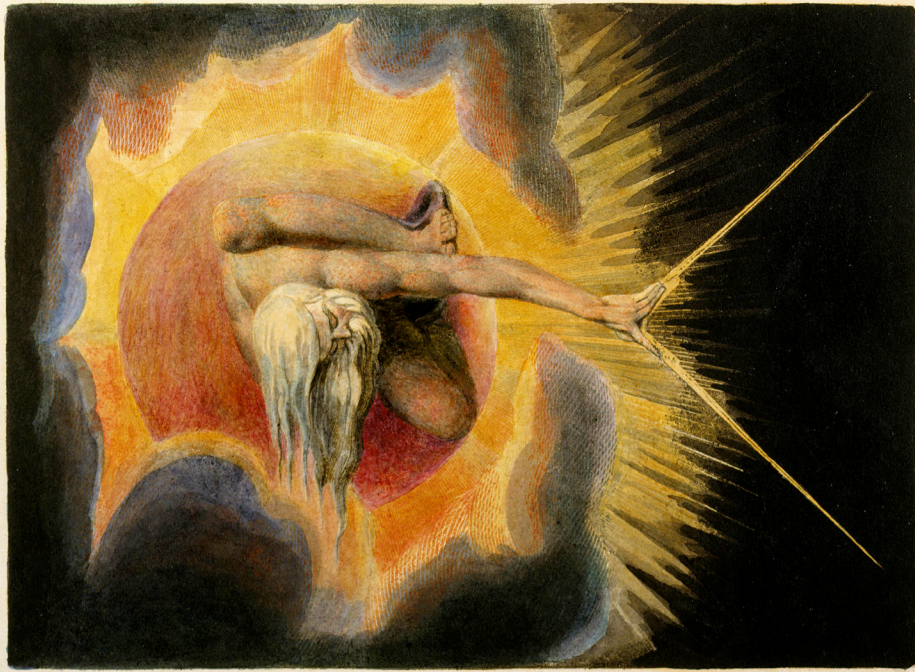
The subject is a famous actress named Elizabeth Farren who soon after this portrait was done became the Countess of Derby. It was shown at the Royal Academy in 1790.



Belley, with the Bust of philosophe Raynal by Anne-Louis Girodet

This was painted in 1797 and shows Jean-Batiste Belley, a former slave from Saint-Dominique in the French West Indies. He participated in the slave revolt in Haiti and was later elected by his island to the French National Convention, the first black man to be thus elected.

This portrait shows Belley reclining against the bust of the recently deceased philosopher Guillaume-Thomas Raynal who had spoken out against slavery. The libertarian ideas of freedom and rights for all men were sweeping the globe at this time and this early Romantic portrait reinforces these ideals.



The Ancient of Days by William Blake

Best known for his poetry, William Blake was also an artist and engraver. He created this engraving, hand colored, in 1794. It depicts Proverbs 8:27, "When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth." (See also Daniel 7:9).

This engraving shows God as a scientist, a craftsman who created the world with tools and knowledge that might be accessible to anyone. Blake believed that humans and God were equals, or at least that with the gaining of knowledge humans could one day equal God, a belief that many of his day and clear up to the present find blasphemous.



The Abbey in the Oakwood by Caspar David Friedrich

A ruin of an abbey wall remains in the midst of a cemetery and the encroaching effects of nature. This painting, finished in 1810, shows the futility of man against nature. It may also be a political statement. The abbey depicted was destroyed by invading armies during the 30 Years War, its bricks scavenged for enemy fortifications. In the bottom center of the painting a procession of monks makes their way toward an open grave for a burial. When this was painted the French were occupying Germany and using churches as barracks for the soldiers. So the burial may represent the burial of Germany's freedom and hope.

Romantic Art Cards

The Romantic period in art followed the Neoclassical period and preceded the Impressionist movement, spanning from about 1800 to 1850. Romanticism included many different styles and subjects for painting but was unified by a few characteristics, especially emotion, nature, and current events.

Romantic artists were trying to evoke feelings in their audience with the paintings they made. Often the subjects were making social or political statements. Even landscape paintings were intended to evoke feelings of regret, longing, or awe to the viewer. The movement was partially a reaction to the scientific dissection of the natural world, politics, and even human nature that had been underway for more than a century. It reverted to the emotions and instincts of mankind.

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?