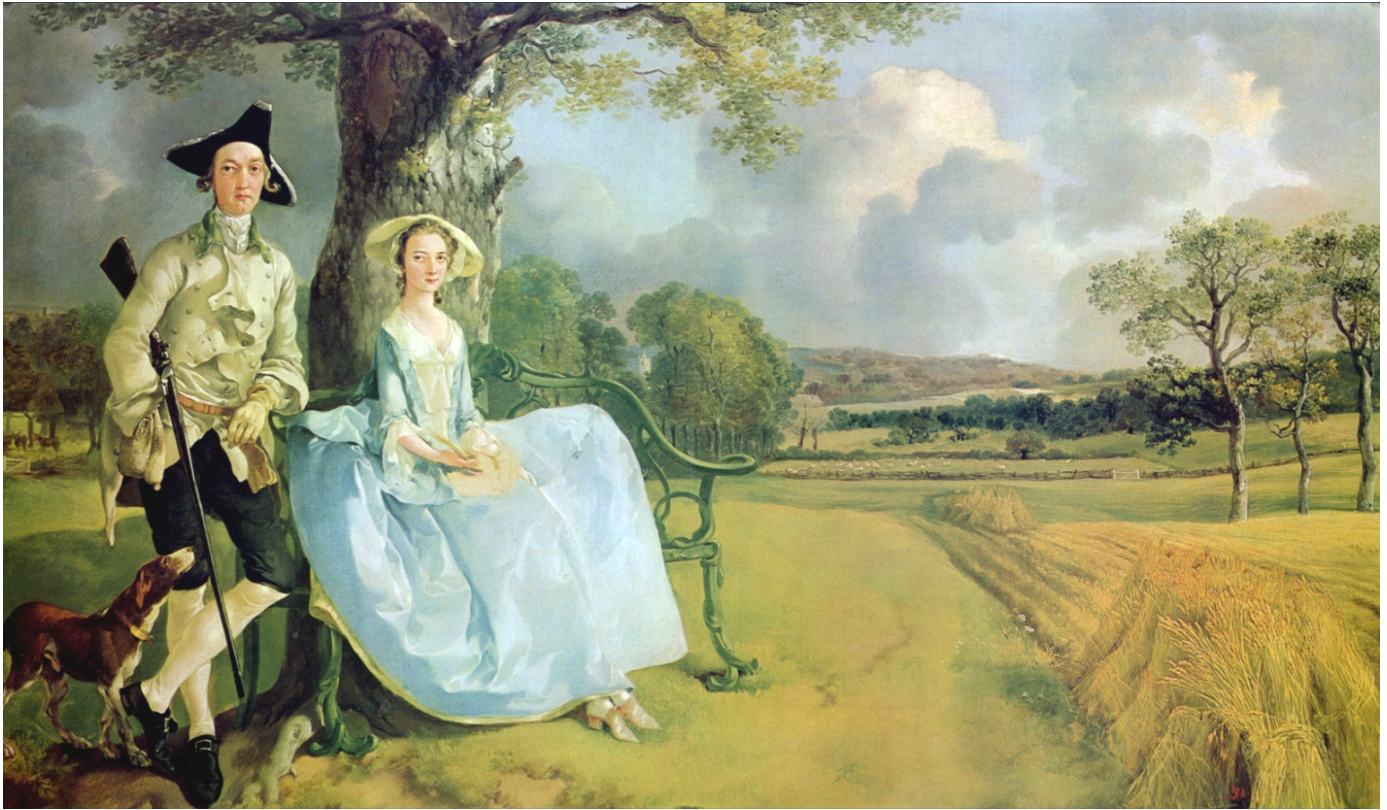


Thomas Gainsborough - *Mr. & Mrs. Andrews*, 1750
Rococo/Romantic – drawing & painting



Key Facts:

Artist: Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) was the leading portrait painter in England throughout his lifetime and was one of the founders of the Royal Academy. He is most known for his portraits and landscapes. He often made the landscapes an important part of his portraits.

Art period/style: Rococo: mid to late-1700s & Romanticism: 1800-1840

Key characteristics of that period: *Rococo* painting had light, feathery brushstrokes, soft, pastel colors, and lush textures. The Rococo depicted the opulent and luxurious lifestyle of the upper class. Gainsborough's works echoed luxury and leisure of aristocratic society through contemporary fashion. But his most influential works were ones of idealized pastoral life in the rural countryside, which would be taken further by the modern artists of Romanticism.

Romanticism is known for loose, fluid brushwork, strong colors, high contrast, complex compositions, and it celebrated emotions and subjectivity. Romantic artists challenged the Enlightenment's faith in reason and knowledge. Romanticism emerged from a desire for freedom – not only political freedom but also freedom of thought, feeling, action, worship, speech, and taste. Thomas Gainsborough's paintings weren't dramatic and emotional like the leading Romantic artists. His work fits more into the Rococo style and time period.

Techniques: Oil painting: he painted with a light palette and feathery brush strokes (Rococo style)

Some Background: He was a favorite painter of King George III and Queen Charlotte. Gainsborough's landscapes were also hugely influential and helped establish the importance of landscape as a category of painting in Britain.

The Five Core Habits:

Practice the *Five Core Habits of Grammar* with art - NAMES (found on pgs. 18-19 in the Foundation Guide). Part of teaching is learning to ask a student good questions. This is a great activity for looking at art! Plus, you get to sneak in a little art history and technique along with.

5 CORE HABITS



NAMING

1. What do you call this?
2. Where does this name come from?
3. Are there any other names for this?



ATTENDING

1. What are the parts of this?
2. Where do you usually see this?
3. What makes this special?



MEMORIZING

1. What would help you memorize this? An acronym, a song, a chant, a picture, etc.
2. What did you already know about this?



EXPRESSING

1. Could you draw a picture of this or write a song about it? Could you act it out?
2. How does this make you feel?



STORYTELLING

1. Can you tell me a story about this?
2. Can I tell you a story about this?

N names (name things specifically)

A attending (look and listen carefully. Also- taste, smell, touch. Compare things.)

M memorizing (soak up facts and ideas. Memorize facts and relations of things to recall, connect, and expand new ideas to older ones from past memorizations.)

E expressing (express ideas creatively- reciting, drawing, singing, dancing)

S storytelling (hear and tell stories)

This helps us grasp the basic elements, vocabulary, and rules of any subject, and helps us progress more quickly toward comprehension and creativity in future studies.

Using the image on the first page, go through these questions:

N – Names:

- Name the artist, era/art style, and technique
- What can you find? Name the things you see
- How many people are there?
- Who are the people? What are they doing?
- What do you see?
- What colors do you see?

A – Attending

- What do you see?
- What do the people in the painting see?
- What do they hear? Smell? Taste? Feel/touch?
- What emotions might the people be feeling?
- How is color used?
- What do you notice about the surrounding landscape?
- What is happening in the painting?
- Notice how the people are dressed. What does this tell you about them?

Attending to details – here are two close-ups. What else do you notice now?



M – Memorize

Memorize the artist, time period, and facts about the artwork/technique.

E – Express

Express your thoughts and ideas about the art. You can also express by trying the technique on your own. Have your kids create their own landscape painting with portraits. For this you will need watercolor or multi-media paper or canvas boards, acrylic paint, and paintbrushes. For adding the portraits, you can print out some figures (ideally dressed from the 1700s). You may download my PDF of Rococo figures to print out for this. Then, have the students cut out the figures and glue them onto their painting. They can paint onto the figures as well. The goal in this art project is to have your students get texture and feathery brushwork of Gainsborough (in the trees, sky, and grass).



S – Story telling

Tell the story about this work of art.

Refer to image on first page.

Gainsborough was one of the most technically proficient and, at also the most experimental artists of his time. He was noted for the speed with which he applied paint, and he worked more from observations of nature than from application of formal academic rules. His landscapes were fancy and idealized – more ideal and imaginary than real. He portrayed the opulence of the upper class and often depicted the condescending attitude of the aristocratic society with social satire. The facial expression of this couple depicts their egotistic attitude and wealthy pride.

Gainsborough aligns the man and wife on to the left to give more space for landscape, unlike such works that emphasized the sitters and placed them in the center. This distinction explains the artist's love for landscape on the one hand and yet the importance of portraiture as it was his primary source of income.

In this painting, a recently married wealthy couple wanted to commemorate their status by commissioning this art work. On the left is Mr. Robert Andrews, while Mrs. Frances Andrews is seated on a bench. Their dress reflects contemporary English aristocratic life style. The surrounding landscape with wheat fields and a sheep farm is part of their estate. Mr. Andrews is shown sporting a typical hunting hat and clasps a rifle under his right arm to show his control of the land.

Displaying their opulence, the couple seems to be looking at the spectators as if in a conversation. This work can be categorized as a 'conversation piece', a genre of informal group portraits of people in discussion, usually ignorant of the viewer, which was popular in 18th century England. However, this work is unusual and deviates from that tradition in more ways than one, for instance Mr. and Mrs. Andrews are clearly acknowledging the presence of the artist as viewer.

An unfinished area of canvas on the lady's lap where her hands rest gives a sense of mystery. Some believe Mrs. Andrews was meant to hold a dead game bird, the result of a successful hunting trip by her husband. Such an inclusion would emphasize the couple's control over their land, but a bloody animal would ruin Mrs. Andrews' elaborate dress, and therefore seems unlikely. Another possibility for Mrs. Andrews' lap is that the blank space was intended for a baby.

A few more examples of his paintings:



Conversation in the Park, 1746



Heneage Lloyd and His Sister, Lucy, 1750



Mountain Landscape with Shepherd, 1783