

Giotto di Bondone, *Virgin and Child Enthroned*, 1305–1310
Gothic painting / Proto-Renaissance



Key Facts:

Artist: Giotto de Bondone, c. 1267 – 1337, Italian, regarded as the first Renaissance painter

Art period/style: Gothic painting (1100s – 1400s) / Proto-Renaissance (1300-1400)

Key characteristics of that period: Giotto was a Gothic artist who paved the way for Renaissance art. He made a break from the flat figures and style of Gothic art, and started drawing from observation. This had been missing from art for hundreds of years and brought a new sense of life and realism to his paintings. His work bridged the Byzantine style to the Early Renaissance. He still used gold as seen in religious Gothic painting, but his figures weren't flat and elongated as seen in Gothic

art. His figures started to feel more solid and three-dimensional. A unique quality in Giotto's paintings is that he brought emotional depth to his figures.

He also used chiaroscuro, the modeling of light a dark. His sense of space doesn't quite make sense though. He used "intuitive perspective" – where he tried to create a sense of things receding back in space... but did not yet have the system of linear perspective. Linear perspective was invented during the Renaissance around 1420 and added to the realistic sense of space in art.

Techniques: Giotto's paintings were created with egg tempera paint on wooden panels. He often used gold leaf in the background and figures.

Some Background:

Giotto di Bondone is regarded as the first Renaissance painter, and a pioneer in pursuing a naturalistic approach to representation based on observation. This was the core of the Classical tradition in art that was lost during the Dark Ages. Giotto displaced the Byzantine style in Italian painting and revived the naturalism of Classical art. Although he continued to use the golden backgrounds common in Byzantine/Gothic era art... he began to give more naturalism to his figures. His figures were no longer stiff, cardboard-like cut-outs. His figures were solid and had depth (both physical and emotional). He was also interested in depicting the psychological and emotional reactions of his subjects.

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
- Name the things you see
- Who are the people? What are they doing?
- What kind of textures 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?
- What might they feel/touch?
- What emotions might the people be feeling?
- What things can you compare?
- Why did he use gold in this painting?
- Why are there circles around the heads of the people?
- Why do you think the main figure, Mary, is so large?

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.

Here is an activity where you can create your own egg tempera paint

<http://highhillhomeschool.blogspot.com/2014/05/giotto-and-assisi-egg-yolk-painting.html>

Or this

<http://ahandmadechildhood.blogspot.com/2010/03/how-to-make-egg-tempera-paint.html>

Another idea would be to create your own altarpiece triptych (three-panel piece).

Here is another altarpiece by Giotto. You can see the three panels together to get a better vision of the entire piece. Using thin cardboard or cardstock, you could fold and cut out a triptych and then have the children create their own paintings on it.



<https://www.herecomethegirlsblog.com/2013/01/16/art-ideas-for-kids.html>



S – Story telling

Tell the story about this work of art: Giotto di Bondone's, *Virgin and Child Enthroned*

Refer to image on first page

- This painting was an altarpiece, which is a work of art designed to go behind the altar in a church. It was tempera paint on wood panel.
- The image shows a traditional Christian image of Mary holding the infant Jesus, with angels surrounding them.
Giotto used light and shadow to make the fabric look realistic and give dimension to the figures. Light and shadow become important to defining form and space. This blending technique also led to the Renaissance naturalism.
- Compared to other Gothic art, Giotto's figures have more realism, movement, and real emotion.
- The traditional gold background of the Byzantine tradition is still here, but Giotto aimed to create figures that have substance, dimensionality, and bulk. The figures have a sense of movement and life, unlike figurative art from the Middle Ages.
- This painting marks the end of medieval painting in Italy and the beginning of a new naturalistic approach to art, leading into the Renaissance era.