

Art/Western Cultural History essays

Essay #1: Compare and contrast another painting from this time period to Berlinghiero's

4 paragraphs: an introduction paragraph, a paragraph about the similarities between the two paintings, a paragraph about the differences between the two paintings, and a conclusion paragraph.

Use the handouts (in your art binder/available on my website) about the art elements, art study with the 5 common topics, and the art terminology for analyzing art. The art timeline might also have helpful information. These handouts will help guide your thoughts.

Berlinghiero, *Madonna and Child*, c. 1230, 31 x 21" Tempera on wood
Italo-Byzantine, Middle Ages, Byzantine, Gothic



Compare this work to another similar Medieval/Gothic painting (Madonna/Mary and Child/Jesus) of the Italo-Byzantine style.

Talk about similarities and difference in:

- Medium/technique
- Composition (are the paintings arranged similarly? Symmetrical? Same size figures? Same number of figures? Same arrangement of figures?)
- Use of colors
- Are objects in the painting the same? Are there different objects?
- How about symbolism?
- Their treatment of space?
- Are they altar pieces? Icons?
- Were both artists influenced by the same world events or world views?

Hint: Include the two images in your paper (two additional pages). And give the information for each painting under each image. When writing about art, visuals are helpful!

About Berlinghiero:

(c. 1175 – c. 1236)

Berlinghiero, the leading Italian painter in the Tuscan city of Lucca. He worked in the Italo-Byzantine style of the early thirteenth century. He had three sons who were also successful painters.

Madonna and Child

The Madonna points to Jesus as the way to Salvation. Jesus makes a gesture of blessing with one hand and in the other he holds a scroll of Old Testament scriptures, which is also a reminder that he is the Messiah foretold by the Jewish prophets. Madonna (Mary) gestures solemnly toward the infant Christ, depicted as a miniature adult, who wears a philosopher's robes. This composition is of the Byzantine type known as the Hodegetria, which may be translated as "One Who Shows the Way," as the Madonna points to Christ as the way to salvation. Starburst-like ornaments at the crown of the Madonna's head and on her right shoulder (a third would have appeared on her left shoulder, here concealed by the figure of Christ) are also traditional Byzantine motifs, symbolizing Mary's virginity before, during, and after the birth of Christ.

Italo-Byzantine style painting was inspired by the religious icons of the Eastern Christian (Byzantine) tradition. In this style, elongated figures with solemn expressions are silhouetted against a gold background. Long, continuous lines define facial features such as the brows and nose. The Madonna and Child appear to be two-dimensional images rather than flesh and blood human presences.

This piece exemplifies several key elements that typify it as Byzantine, but it also contains later Italian elements. One can begin with the most recognizable attributes, for example, the halos, the flat gold background, and the blue and red robes of the Virgin and her long features. The golden background and halos surrounding the heads of the Virgin and Child are common in Byzantine representation of divine or holy figures, as are the colors used throughout the composition. The Madonna boasts timeless stylized features of the Virgin. Her fingers, nose, and neck are exaggeratedly long and slender and her face itself is elongated and narrow. Her soulful eyes are large

and intensely focused, lending her visage a particular elegance. Upon seeing the painting in person, one can observe a red tint in the cheeks of both Jesus and Mary that gives the flesh a lifelike quality - more vivacious, in fact, than its Byzantine predecessors. The particular depth created by the shading of the faces, Mary's in particular - an attribute of early Italian painting - also gives it an air of naturalism that Byzantine figures often lacked.

Italo-Byzantine style (1200-1400): Medieval paintings in Italy influenced by the Byzantine style. Flattened space, golden backgrounds, elongated, stylized figures with little to no emotion. Byzantine art preferred stylized imagery over naturalistic depictions. The aim of their art was to inspire a sense of wonder and admiration for the church. In this way, their use of graceful, floating figures, and gold emphasized the otherworldliness of the religious subjects.

Icons are meant to remind us that there is more beyond our everyday world. If you pray with an icon, it can seem as if heaven is drawing into you. As Franciscan Fr. Michael Scanlon wrote, "For Eastern Christians, the icon is a representation of the living God, and by coming into its presence it becomes a personal encounter with the sacred, through the grace of the Holy Spirit."

Reverse perspective is deliberate, and the purpose is to bring the subject portrayed in the icon into the present, into the immediate experience of the viewer. It also serves to remind us that, since God is omnipresent and exists outside of earthly time and place, God's view converges upon us from everywhere simultaneously.

When you look at a Western-style landscape: you can look into it, drifting farther and farther into the distance. With an icon, the image seems to look at you, coming nearer and nearer, even into your soul. This is also why eyes in an icon are so prominent; the belief is that the icon is looking at you — and at heaven — both at the same time.

"An icon is a portal, you do not pray 'to' an icon. You pray 'in the presence of' one. The light of divine grace is said to come through the icon as it does through the stained-glass windows of the West."

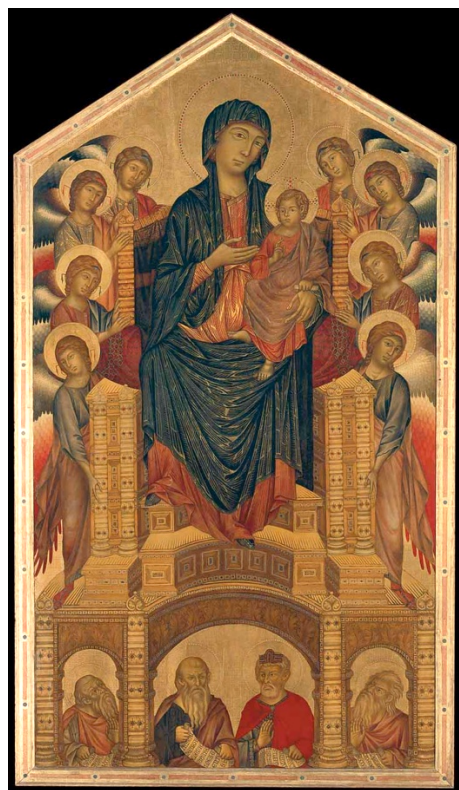
Even the colors of icons are formalized. Blue is the color of heaven, where God lives. So, an icon of Jesus always shows him wearing either gold (for heaven), white (for the Resurrection) or a blue robe (for his divine nature) draped over a red tunic (representing the blood of his human life).

Ideas for paintings to compare to Berlinghiero's below. (These are just ideas or suggestions. You could find many other artworks to compare to Berlinghiero.)

Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints*
(detail from the *Maestà* altarpiece), 1308-11



Cimabue, *Madonna Enthroned with Angels and Prophets*, c. 1280-90, Tempera on wood



Giotto di Bondone, *Virgin and Child Enthroned*, 1305–1310. 10' 8" x 6' 8 ¼"
Tempera on wood



Duccio, *Maestà (The Rucellai Madonna)*, c. 1285, Tempera on wood

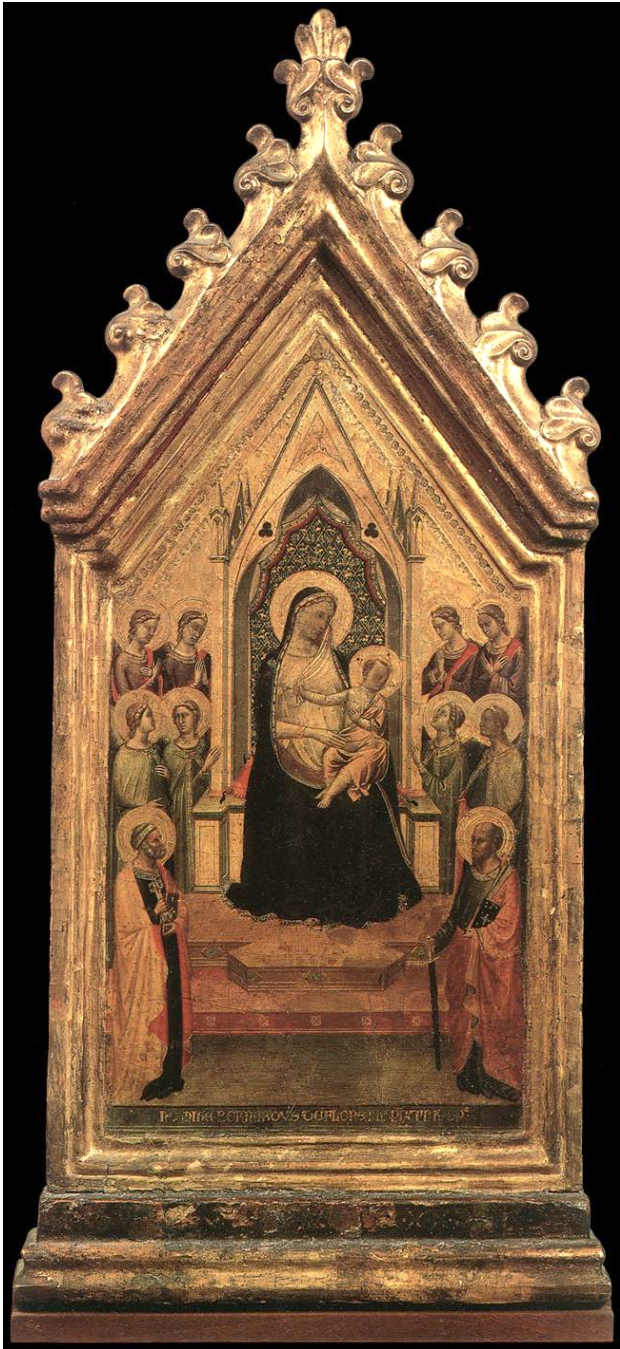


Ugolino di Nerio, *Madonna and Child with Saints Peter and Paul*, c. 1320-1325, Tempera on wood



Bernardo Daddi, *Madonna Enthroned, Angels and Saints*, 1334

Tempera on wood



Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Madonna and Child with St. Nicholas and St. Proculus*, 1332
Tempera on wood



Taddeo Gaddi, *Madonna Enthroned with Angels and Saints*, 1355
Tempera on wood



Art comparison chart

These are just a few questions to get you thinking about how to compare the works of art. All of these questions may not apply, and there might be additional questions that are relevant; this is not a complete list. The information above, your own observations, and with additional research you can complete this chart to help with your essay. I have *started* the chart to help get you going. Spend some time truly observing each work and fill in the chart.

	Artwork #1 Artist: Berlinghiero Title: <i>Madonna and Child</i>	Artwork #2 Artist: Title:
Describe the composition of each work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pyramid/triangular composition, which creates symmetry - The red of Jesus on the right side gives more visual weight and attention to that side of the composition - the figures dominate the composition 	
Describe the use of color in each piece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - gold - red - blue (Discuss symbolism of colors)	
Describe the use of values, light, and shadow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there are some highlights in the faces - soft shadows - no sense of a light source 	
Describe the use of space. Is it flat or more three-dimensional and realistic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - flattened, more 2-D, not realistic space - no sense of space or depth - minimal shading in the clothing and faces (which add a small amount of a sense of space) 	
What is the story, meaning, mood, emotions, etc.?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mary looks sorrowful or worried - serious feeling - Mary shows that Jesus is the way to salvation; Jesus holds Old Testament scroll 	
What/who is depicted? What is happening in the image?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mary and Jesus - Mary holds Jesus - both are making gestures that tell us what is happening... 	

<p>Under what conditions was this artwork created? (for example, was a war going on, persecution, were the arts thriving...?)</p>	<p>- many icons were commissioned for churches and wealthy people for devotion and prayer</p>	
<p>What was the worldview or prevailing philosophy at the time?</p>	<p>- Catholic/orthodox church</p>	
<p>Is there any symbolism used?</p>	<p>- explain symbolism of colors, halos, scroll, symbols on Mary's clothing, the gestures</p>	
<p>Is there anything about the artist that influenced their decisions making? For example, were they a Christian? Were they commissioned by someone and told what to create?</p>	<p>-</p>	
<p>Is there a focal point in each?</p>	<p>- Mary and also Jesus</p>	
<p>Did a previous art style influence this artwork?</p>	<p>- Byzantine influence</p>	
<p>Do these two works of art have a direct relationship to each other?</p>		

Essay Outline

After completing the chart, you will have it to refer to for writing your essay.

Think of your thesis. Was one artist more of a master? Did one artist impact the world more? Or did one of the artworks have more of an impact on you? Why? Or are both artists great examples of a certain style or technique? Did an event in the world or certain politics play a major role in how the artwork was made?

Thesis:

Introduction paragraph:

Do some research. Introduce each artist. Where are they from? What time period?

Some ideas to consider including: How were they trained? Did both artists work in the same style? Did they have similar artistic goals, styles, patrons, etc.? Was there something going on in the world that affected both artists? Briefly introduce each painting. What is depicted in each? What is the technique in each? What is the style for each?

Similarities paragraph:

Use the questions on page 2 and the comparison chart to put the similarities together.

Differences paragraph:

Use the questions on page 2 and the comparison chart to put the differences together.

Conclusion paragraph:

Wrap it up. Restate thesis. Back it up. Give context/circumstances to each artist and artwork (what was going on in the world, what were the artists beliefs, etc.). How did this relate to the artwork and artist? Did it impact their artwork? Did it dictate what they painted and why? Did a previous art style or artist influence these artists? Or did either of these artists influence the art world?