

Miraculous Draught of Fishes by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) - Some artists are so famous that they are known by their first name only. Raphael is one of them, which is amazing since he died at the age of 37. Although he lived half the number of years as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, he was at their level of artistry. His father was an artist for the court of Duke of Urbino (an Italian kingdom) so he had a head start.

At this time in history (the 16th century), artists experimented with many kinds of materials. This painting is large: 12 feet by 13 feet! In 1515 Raphael drew the cartoon, which is what they called the sketch, on paper. He made tempura (an egg-yolk based paint) and painted on paper which he must have folded. He mounted the paper onto canvas. Tempura lasts a very long time.

It has been a long night, and dawn is breaking over the lake. How do we know it is dawn? Red light is reflected in the reflection beneath Jesus. Based on the play of shadows and light we know the sun is not in the background. The sun is where the viewer sits, off the painting.

Two boats carry muscular men whose reflection is in the water. In the first boat are the fishermen in blue and green. The arm of the green reaches toward the viewer. The blue worships Jesus. Which disciple do you think he is? In the second boat are men retrieving the net while a third continues to row. A flock of birds fly from the background to the fishermen in foreground. The birds hover near the fisherman, hoping for a tasty morsel.

The cities in the background are Italian, not Galilean. They gradually fade in color to mainly blues and lose detail the farther they are away from the viewer. This gives the painting depth.

Young Woman with a Unicorn by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) - Raphael lived in Rome, Italy in the 16th century — a time when painting had become more realistic. He died young — at the age of 37. How did he manage to paint so many pictures? In those days, great artists had workshops. The artist would draw the cartoon (sketch) by hand but people in his workshop would do simple tasks: make the paint, prepare the materials, and even point unimportant bits.

If you ever go to an art museum, the most important rule is “do not touch the painting!” There are guards who watch to make sure that you obey. People weren’t so fussy as they are now. For hundreds of years, this painting was called Saint Catherine of Alexandria, a Catholic saint. The woman was wearing a shawl to cover her shoulders and her hand was on a wheel. She lived during a time in which the Roman empire persecuted Christians and the emperor had ordered her to be crushed by a wheel.

You may be wondering what happened to the robe and wheel. In the 1700s, not only had someone sneaky touched the painting, they added their own “improvements.” When modern restorers transferred the painting to canvas to preserve it, they noticed extra layer of added paint. Imagine their shock when they removed the robe and wheel and found a unicorn! But, wait, there’s another surprise for the careful observer. Later on, they took x-rays of the painting and underneath the unicorn Raphael had painted a dog. You can still see the dog’s ears near the unicorn’s head, only they are now red and are part of the young woman’s sleeve.

One more tidbit, most paintings of this time have a large or small section of landscape to make it look more real.

Saint George and the Dragon by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) - Saint George is the patron saint of England, not Italy. Clues clearly tie this painting to England's George. He is a saint for he wears a halo. George is wearing a blue garter (leg band) with the letters HONI (Honi soit qui mal y pense), which means "Shame on him who thinks ill of it." The Order of the Garter, one of England's highest award, was established in the name of Saint George. Why would an Italian artist paint him slaying an evil dragon?

In 1504 Henry VII of England awarded the Duke of Urbino the Order of the Garter. The king paid honor to a minor Italian ruler to show his appreciation of the Renaissance Italy's art and culture. With its sour relations with Spain and France, having some Italian friends seemed like a good idea. The Duke hired a young artist — only twenty-three years old — from Urbino to paint two small scenes of St. George, the princess, and the dragon. Each painting is less than one foot by one foot. He sent one of the paintings (we are not sure which) to England. We chose this painting because, if you ever go to Washington, DC, you can see it hanging at the National Gallery of Art. Right here in the United States!

By the time Raphael began work on his two tiny commissions, he had already moved to Florence. Florence, Italy! The flowering of all sorts of art of this time — sculpture, architecture, and painting. Today, one could spend an entire month in Florence and still not see all that there is to see. Who do we know that is from Florence? In one cathedral (there are many) lies buried Galileo Galilei, Michelangelo, and many other people you will study some day.

Guidobaldo da Montefeltro by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) - Who is this serious young man in rich, black clothing? Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, the Duke of Urbino. Italy was not really a country in the 16th century and it did not become a country for another 300 years. The Italian boot was a patchwork of small city states that was continuously ripping apart seams because each duke wanted a larger kingdom. The Republic of Florence was its western border and the Adriatic Sea was its eastern border.

Because of the need for a strong defense, many leaders of these little kingdoms were mercenary captain — strong military fighters. Such leaders followed the money. At one point, Guidobaldo fought alongside King Charles VIII of France and, a few years later, he fought against King Charles. Perhaps, he also saw the need to defend his elegant home. His court was known to be the most fashionable court of the time and there's even a fictionalized account written by an eyewitness. Sadly, Guidobaldo did not get to enjoy his reign for long. He died from a disease we could easily cure today. His body was deficient of Vitamin B3 and all he needed was a healthy diet!

Why would the Duke of Urbino call on one of the three greatest Italian artists to paint his portrait and several more of his family? The artist Raphael was born and raised in Urbino and his father had worked for Guidobaldo's father. Growing up in court gave him an important edge over other artists: he had learned proper manners and good social skills which will get you ahead in life today. After his father died, he trained under another master of art and he was ready to start working on his own before he turned twenty. He painted these portraits early in his career, right after he moved to Florence.

Saint Catherine of Alexandria by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) - At the end of his time in Florence when he was in his early twenties, Raphael did paint Saint Catherine of Alexandria. Because of the religious theme, he drew upon the teachings of his master. Raphael's father was a court painter in Urbino and, when he saw his son's talent, he wanted only the best artist to train him. He sent Raphael to be apprenticed, despite the tears of the lad's mother, to Pietro Perugino, who was known for religious paintings. His master proclaimed him to be fully trained when he was only seventeen years old.

If you are thinking of an earlier painting, we studied you would be correct! *The Young Woman with a Unicorn* was thought to be called Saint Catherine of Alexandria, a Catholic saint. A different artist had added a shawl to cover the woman's shoulders and painted a wheel over the unicorn. She lived during a time in which the Roman empire persecuted Christians and the emperor had ordered her to be crushed by a wheel.

In this painting, Catherine has the wheel on one side but she is looking away from the instrument of her torture to the light, which we know represents the Light of the world, Jesus Christ. Her attention is completely absorbed in the light. Some students thought about Leonardo da Vinci when they saw the unicorn painting (*Mona Lisa* or *The Woman with the Ermine*). Many scholars believe this painting is an echo of a da Vinci painting called *Leda and the Swan*. We cannot compare the two paintings because the swan painting is lost (and wouldn't it be fun to find it)?

Madonna Sistine by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) - Raphael lived in Florence, Italy (not Florence, South Carolina) for four years. What could possibly entice him to leave the art capital of the world? The question should be "who" not "what" for it was the newly minted pope, Julius II, who invited Raphael to Rome where the seat of the Catholic church resides. This pope loved art and architecture. He hired a distant relative of Raphael's to build St. Peter's Basilica — the main church in Vatican City (which is where the pope makes important decisions about the Catholic church even today). Julius II commissioned Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The pope first commissioned Raphael to paint three rooms, now known as the Raphael rooms. After he finished, Julius commissioned him to paint *Madonna Sistine* on canvas for a church in another part of Italy.

This painting is quite large, roughly nine feet by six-and-a-half feet. It depicts Madonna, another name for Mary, holding the Christ child. On either side of her are Pope Sixtus and Saint Barbara, standing on clouds. Below them are two cherubim glancing up at mother and child. Sixtus was the uncle of Julius II and the Sistine Chapel was named for him (Sixtus and Sistine both mean six). Barbara was the daughter of a Greek pagan who locked her in a tower to keep her safe from the world. Locks cannot hold back the Holy Spirit and she became a Christian. Her father arranged a marriage which she rejected. When he asked her why, she told him about her faith in Jesus and her father drew his sword to kill her. It is said that she prayed and a hole opened up in the wall of her tower and she was transported away. It was not far enough for her father eventually found her and had her killed.

Vision of a Knight by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) -
- Raphael painted this while he lived in Florence, Italy (not Florence, South Carolina). Before moving there, he visited different workshops in northern Italy learning from other artists. He arrived in Florence with a letter from the Duchess of Urbino, his hometown, which said, "The bearer of this will be found to be Raphael, painter of Urbino, who, being greatly gifted in his profession has determined to spend some time in Florence to study. And because his father was most worthy and I was very attached to him, and the son is a sensible and well-mannered young man, on both accounts, I bear him great love." Even back then, young people needed a good reference to get a job.

You may have heard of the Renaissance. It was a time when people became interested in reading literature and studying art from the times of the Greeks and Romans. This painting comes from an epic poem about wars Rome fought early in their history. There is a legend about a Roman general sleeping under a tree. He dreamed that he had to choose between Virtue which means doing the right thing and Pleasure which means having a lot of fun whether or not it is good. The woman holding the book, sword, and flower represents Virtue and behind her is a steep and rocky path because we know doing the right thing is not easy. The woman in fancy clothing holding a flower represents Pleasure. Does this painting remind you of any stories you have read or heard?

You may be surprised that this is a very small painting. Raphael applied egg tempura (a painting mixed with an egg yolk) to a poplar wood panel that was seven inches by seven inches.

Pope Julius II by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) -
Because of his white beard and red and white outfit, you might think this is an early portrait of Santa Claus, but it is not! This portrait is of Pope Julius the Second, who was known as the "warrior" pope, and it is said that the painting "was so lifelike and truly it frightened everyone who saw it, as if it were the living man himself." Who is the pope? He is the leader of the Catholic church and he lives in Vatican City which is next to Rome. Pope Julius was a very powerful pope and he sometimes led men in battle to protect the property owned by the Catholic church.

Raphael painted several versions of this painting. The pope always wears white and red which are the colors of high holy days such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. White symbolizes the color of the lamb, the perfect sacrifice, and red is the color of the blood spilled on our behalf. He always sits on the throne with the acorns on its posts because the acorns are a symbolize the family into which Julius was born. He always wears six rings which offended Michelangelo because priests take a vow of poverty. He also has a long beard because he was in mourning over a battle he had lost in the city of Bologna. What is different in the paintings is the background. Some are very dark but not this version which has an emerald green cloth with keys, the symbol of Peter and the keys to the pearly gates of heaven.

Pope Julius II is the reason why Raphael moved from Florence to Rome where Raphael lived the rest of his short life. In the Vatican Palace, the artist frescoed some of his most famous works which we shall study soon. The walls and ceilings of four rooms in the palace are called the Raphael Rooms and they display the largest body of his work.

Ezekiel's Vision by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) - If you have ever studied Michelangelo's frescoes of Old Testament prophets on the Sistine Chapel, you might think this is one of them. Michelangelo inspired Raphael in this small oil on wood painting — one foot by one and a quarter foot. You can hardly see the man with the vision — Ezekiel — a small figure in the bottom left corner of the painting.

One day, Ezekiel saw a windstorm — an immense cloud with flashing lightning, surrounded by brilliant light with glowing metal in the center. In the fire were four cherubim that seemed to be human and animal with faces, wings, and legs. Each cherubim had four faces — human, lion, eagle, and ox faces — all merged into one body (a tetramorph). They flew with wings and their job was to hold the throne of God.

Raphael lived in a time when many things were represented by a symbol that was rich in meaning. The four faces made people of his day think of the four writers of the Gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Since Matthew began his account with a listing of the genealogy of Jesus, the winged human represents him. Since Mark begins his account with a voice crying in the wilderness, the lion, a creature of the wilderness, seemed like the best symbol. Luke starts his account with the Zechariah's sacrifice at the temple and an ox symbolizes that. The eagle represents John's account because he wrote about high ideas such as the seven I am statements and the signs and speeches of Jesus. These animals represents four attributes of Jesus: human (he became man), lion (courage, monarchy), ox (sacrifice, service, strength), and eagle (heaven).

Christ Falling by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) - This large oil painting shows a scene from the life of Jesus created to be an altarpiece. Imagine looking at Jesus suffering as he carried the cross while his dear mother weeps and thinking about what he did for us. Every time the church celebrates communion, the body and blood of Jesus, we remember this part of his journey.

Jesus must be exhausted for he slips and falls on the ground a road on his way to Golgotha where he knows he will be crucified to death. People in the scene have different reactions but one thing is true for all — their eyes are riveted to Jesus. The group of four women are four Mary's, the most important being his mother, with her arms extended in grief. Some of the common people are sad while others look sternly at the Romans. The soldiers are so used to death that the suffering does not bother them. They have no idea that they are involved in one of the most important moments of history. Up on the hill are two crosses with an empty space in between where Jesus will hang.

Although the story is dark, the colors are bright and colorful which soften the tone. Raphael does not show the grisly nature of how a man who has been whipped and beaten might appear. The sky is not as dark and threatening as one would imagine when the creator of the world is enduring extreme agony.

Perhaps, Raphael chooses to remember the hope. In three days, tears of mourning will become tears of joy. God resurrects Jesus who has faced and conquered death.

The School of Athens by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) - Pope Julius II lured Raphael from Florence, the crown jewel of the art world, to Rome. Not only did he paint Madonna of the Sistine but he painted four rooms of Vatican palace where the pope lived.

This painting represents wisdom by showing the greatest thinkers known to the world. You might be surprised that there are quite a few pagans in the scene! In this school are Greek philosophers. Because Raphael did not follow typical symbols nor did he try to paint from statues with their likeness, we are not exactly sure who is who. We do know Plato (the image of Leonardo da Vinci) who points to heaven stands beside Aristotle, the teacher of Alexander the Great who is wearing the winged helmet. Some scholars hold books they have written while others are writing. Many are either speaking, listening, or wondering. The mathematician Pythagoras is helping a young student holding a slate while Nicomachus, another mathematician, looks on and on the opposite side from them is Euclid making studies of geometry with his compass. Raphael makes a cameo appearance as a man in a black hat near the two men with globes (Zoroaster holding one of the stars and Ptolemy holding one of the earth). His painting master Perugino is next to him in white. Michelangelo represents Heraclitus, the man in blue wearing a green wreath on his head.

Since Raphael was a bit sloppy about naming who is who, we still debate whether the man in blue on the steps is Socrates or Diogenes who was cheeky enough to tell Alexander the Great not to block the sun. Socrates might be the severe looking man in drab colors who is talking to Alexander for Diogenes would not give anyone the time of day. Some people think the four writers of the Gospels are in the crowd as well.

Parnassus by Sanzio Raphael (16th century Italian artist) - Pope Julius II lured Raphael from Florence, the crown jewel of the art world, to Rome. Not only did he paint Madonna of the Sistine but he painted four rooms of Vatican palace, home of the pope.

This painting represents poetry by showing the mythological mountain known as Parnassus where Apollo the god of poetry loved spending time with the muses who inspired him to write songs and poems. Apollo, of course, is in the center playing his lyre. All the women in the painting are the muses — mythical beings who inspire poetry, music, literature, dancing, chorus, and other arts. The man in dark blue with his eyes closed is the poet Homer, author of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. The man in pink next to him is Dante, an Italian author who wrote *The Divine Comedy* and on the other side is the Roman author Virgil who wrote *The Aeneid* (what happens to people who fled war-torn Troy). The other figures of literature are not as well known to us.

The most interesting face is that of the blind poet Homer. One thing that got the Renaissance rolling was the discovery of ancient sculptures. The Italians became interested in large scale building projects and, in the process of that, they dug up sculptures that had been buried for fifteen hundred years. Five years before Raphael arrived in Rome, a very famous statue had been recovered. Art historians had written about this sculpture as the finest example of Greek art but many thought it was lost. How did they know this statue was the right one? It showed a priest from the city of Troy and his two sons. The father is in great agony and he is looking up to heaven for help because two sea serpents are attacking them and dragging them into the water. Raphael used the father's face as the model for Homer who never mentioned the priests in his epic poems.