

Picture Study, April 27-28, 2020

Some of you may be wondering why the blue in last week's and [today's fresco](#) is flaking off. Fresco is a mural technique in which plaster is applied to a wall and then the paint is added while the plaster is still wet. Wet plaster absorbs readily but the artist has to work quickly and finish before the plaster dries. You can make your own fresco: [younger students might like this](#) and [older students can try this](#).

Fresco means “fresh” because the plaster is still wet. Different colors of pigments were made by crushing minerals into a powder. With “buon” fresco, the artist applies pure pigments and water to the wet plaster. As you

can see in the painting, several layers of color were applied. Underneath the blue layer of clothing is a flesh-toned layer. With “secco” fresco, the plaster is dry. To make the pigments stick, artists mixed it with binders like egg, oil, or glue. “Secco” frescos are not as durable and can flake off over time.

The banker who funded the murals in the chapel balked at the cost.

“Buon” frescos are more expensive because more of the pigment soaks into the wet plaster. Giotto cut on cost by painting everything but the most expensive color “buon.” Since blue is made by an expensive mineral called lapis lazuli, he applied that color after the plaster dried.

After you have studied the painting, focus on the composition. Not only does Giotto group people who have varied facial expressions and body language, he connected [today's painting](#) about birth to [last week's painting](#) about death. What do you notice about how Mary and Jesus are grouped? What other things do both paintings have in common?

Middle and high schoolers who need to do make up work can watch the following videos about the chapel and write a narration: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#), and [Part 4](#). Send a picture of the narration to Ms. Tammy by text or [Myschoolworx](#).