

Simply Charlotte Mason presents

Botticelli



Picture Study Portfolios
by Emily Kiser

Breathe a sigh of relief—you, the teacher, don't have to know about art in order to teach picture study!

With Picture Study Portfolios you have everything you need to help your family enjoy and appreciate beautiful art. Just 15 minutes once a week and the simple guidance in this book will influence and enrich your children more than you can imagine.

In this book you will find

- A living biography to help your child form a relation with the artist
- Step-by-step instructions for doing picture study with the pictures in this portfolio
- Helpful Leading Thoughts that will add to your understanding of each picture
- Extra recommended books for learning more about the artist

"We cannot measure the influence that one or another artist has upon the child's sense of beauty, upon his power of seeing, as in a picture, the common sight of life; he is enriched more than we know in having really looked at even a single picture."—Charlotte Mason

Simply
Charlotte Mason
.com

Botticelli
(1446–1510)

by Emily Kiser

To be used with the Picture Study Portfolio: Botticelli
published by Simply Charlotte Mason

Botticelli
© 2012 by Emily Kiser

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or distributed in any form by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or storing in information storage and retrieval systems—without written permission from the publisher.

Published and printed by
Simply Charlotte Mason
P. O. Box 892
Grayson, Georgia 30017

ISBN 978-1-61634-199-2

Cover Design: John Shafer

SimplyCharlotteMason.com

Contents

Picture Study	5
How to use a Picture Study Portfolio	9

Botticelli

The Story of Botticelli	11
For Further Reading	18
Botticelli Picture Study	19
Madonna of the Magnificat	20
La Primavera (Spring).	21
Calumny	22
The Mystic Nativity	24
The Annunciation	25
Adoration of the Magi	26
Portrait of a Young Man.	27
Venus and Mars	28

Picture Study

Why do we do Picture Study?

A Charlotte Mason education is full of variety. Parents spread a feast before their children, giving them endless opportunity to taste, savor, enjoy, discover, and appreciate many different kinds of intellectual food, otherwise known as ideas. Nature study, music, and art are just as important in this balanced feast as math, reading, and science. Picture study doesn't take much time, just fifteen minutes or so each week, but its benefits are far reaching: "We cannot measure the influence that one or another artist has upon the child's sense of beauty, upon his power of seeing, as in a picture, the common sights of life; he is enriched more than we know in having really looked at even a single picture" (*Home Education*, p. 309).

Charlotte Mason says that it rests with parents and no others to provide an *intellectual culture* by which she means, "not so much the getting of knowledge, nor even getting the power to learn, but the cultivation of the power *to appreciate, to enjoy, whatever is just, true, and beautiful in thought and expression*" (*Formation of Character*, p. 212, emphasis mine).

Through conscientious study of the great masters of art, children take delight in the "just, true, and beautiful" expression that these artists have given us. Charlotte Mason went so far as to tell us that God "whispers in the ear" of the great artists and we owe it to Him to study their works and read their messages rightly (*Ourselves*, Part 2, p. 102). This ability to appreciate and read a painting rightly is a skill to be developed over time, one that develops naturally as we, the teachers, expose our children to great works of art. "As in a worthy book we leave the author to tell his own tale, so do we trust a picture to tell its tale through the medium the artist gave it" (*Towards A Philosophy of Education*, p. 216).

How do we do Picture Study?

“But the reader will say, ‘A young child cannot appreciate art; it is only the colour and sentiment of a picture that reach him. . . .’ But, as a matter of fact, the minds of children and of their elders alike accommodate themselves to what is put in their way; and if children appreciate the vulgar and sentimental in art, it is because that is the manner of art to which they become habituated” (*Home Education*, pp. 307, 308).

Art appreciation is an integral part of the abundant feast that parents should spread before their children. Just as we weed the “twaddle” out of our bookshelves, and replace it with high quality literature, we should be feeding our children’s intellects with high quality art, not “vulgar, sentimental” illustrations that are common in children’s books. Our children are born persons who appreciate *real* art, from a very young age.

“We recognise that the power of appreciating art and of producing to some extent an interpretation of what one sees is as universal as intelligence, imagination, nay, speech, the power of producing words. But there must be knowledge and, in the first place, *not the technical knowledge of how to produce*, but some reverent knowledge of what has been produced; that is, ***children should learn pictures, line by line, group by group, by reading, not books, but pictures themselves***” (*Towards a Philosophy of Education*, p. 214, emphasis mine).

The first step in doing picture study is supplying your children with good art. Charlotte Mason believed that art appreciation, in the form of picture study, should be included in a student’s lessons from the age of six onwards. Each term the student studies six or so works by a single artist. It is not important to study artists in chronological order, and we do not give young children teaching on art history periods; rather, they will assimilate this information as their history reading progresses, and their knowledge of art increases. Breathe a sigh of relief—you, the teacher, don’t have to know about art in order to teach picture study! “[T]he first and most important thing is to know the pictures themselves” (*Towards a Philosophy of Education*, p. 216). It can be helpful to choose artists to study who painted during, or pictured scenes from, the history period you are studying, although this is not necessary. More important, make sure that the styles of the artists studied during the year are different from one another to avoid confusion for your children.

When we begin to study a new artist Charlotte Mason suggested that we read a short story of that artist’s life. Then we let the children study one picture, silently taking

it all in, noticing every detail until they know it and see it in their mind's eye. This type of study will furnish them with a portable gallery hung in their mind that they will carry with them throughout their lives. They will have made connections with hundreds of great works of art over the course of their school studies, and will know these works intimately.

After studying the picture, the reproduction is turned over or hidden from sight, and a six- to nine-year-old then describes what he saw with all the details he took in, maybe drawing a few lines to show where various objects were located—all from memory. An older child adds to this narration a description of the lines of composition, light and shade, and the style of this artist, as he is able. (All of this knowledge comes through the simple study of pictures in this manner, week after week, short after short lesson.) High school students may render in mono-chrome (all one color), and from memory, as many details of the picture as they can remember. Don't have your children attempt to reproduce the picture exactly; Charlotte Mason said this lessens a child's reverence for the artwork (*Towards a Philosophy of Education*, p. 216).

When the narrations, oral or drawn, are complete, a discussion about the picture may occur. Teachers should keep in mind that they are not the dispensers of knowledge, but should tell the name of the piece and ask the child's response to it. Did you like this painting? What did this picture make you think of? Did it remind you of anything you've read about? These simple questions further a child's interaction with the piece, helping him connect the new painting to his previous knowledge. Many works of art have subjects from literature, mythology, the Bible; your children will recall the stories that they have read or will remember the picture when they do read about the subjects portrayed.

All of these things occur in one short lesson each week. Fifteen or twenty minutes once a week is not hard to fit in, even though your school schedule may seem full. The change in type of lesson, the enjoyment afforded by looking at great art, and the relations your students will make are just some of the rewards you will discover by including picture study in your home school.

How to use a Picture Study Portfolio

1. Read the story.

At the start of the term, read the story of the artist included in this portfolio. It may take one or two lessons to complete the reading, but keep the lessons short—fifteen to twenty minutes maximum. Make sure students narrate the reading, either orally or in written form according to their ability.

2. Select a picture.

After this introduction to the new artist for the term, select one picture to study per lesson. Charlotte Mason recommended six different pictures. This allows students to become familiar with the style of the artist, after even just six pictures they will recognize paintings they have not seen before as the work of an artist they have studied. We have included more than six pictures so that you may choose which you would like to study. There is no particular order to the pictures; it isn't necessary to study some over others. The choice is yours; select pictures that appeal to you and your children. Spread the individual works out over the term, or introduce one painting each week for six weeks and then allow the students quiet time over the remaining weeks to look over the pictures at their leisure.

3. Do a picture study.

During the picture study lesson follow these steps:

- Ask the children to tell you about the picture you looked at last time. If this is the first picture study of the term, ask them to tell you a little about the artist's life, where he was from, or something else they remember about him.

- Before they look at the picture, you may want to tell them how large the actual work is, comparing it to some object they are familiar with. Do not tell them the title yet.
- Have the children look at the picture silently for 3–5 minutes, looking closely at all the details in the painting until they can see it in their mind’s eye. Have them check to make sure they can see the whole picture with their eyes closed.
- Next, ask the student(s) to narrate the picture, telling as much as they can about the painting. If you are doing picture study with more than one child, start with one and stop him after he has narrated some of the picture, then have the next child add to his sibling’s narration. Older students may do a drawing of the piece from memory if they are able.

4. Have a Picture Talk.

Last, have a “Picture Talk.” Now tell the children the title of the work. Does this shed any light on what they thought was happening in the picture? What do they think of this picture? Do they like it? How does it make them feel? Can they tell what time of day it is? This is not a time to quiz the student(s) on what they may have missed; it is a time for them to engage and contemplate the picture further. Charlotte Mason tells us that questions about what they think never bore the students, but quizzing them does! If there is a story behind the picture, you may want to look that up and read it if there is time. But keep the lesson short!

5. Display the picture in your home.

Put the picture of the week on display somewhere in your home where everyone can see it.

That’s all there is to it. Enjoy this course of your educational feast. Your family will be blessed by having “a couple of hundred pictures by great masters hanging permanently in the halls of [your] imagination” (*Towards a Philosophy of Education*, p. 43).

The Story of Botticelli

from *The Stories of the Painters* by Amy Steedman, edited by Emily Kiser

There was in Florence a good citizen called Mariano Filipepi, an honest, well-to-do man, who had several sons. These sons were all taught carefully and well trained to do each the work he chose. But the fourth son, Alessandro, or Sandro as he was called, was a great trial to his father. He would settle to no trade or calling. Restless and uncertain, he turned from one thing to another. At one time he would work with all his might, and then again become as idle and fitful as the summer breeze. He could learn well and quickly when he chose, but then there were so few things that he did choose to learn. Music he loved, and he knew every song of the birds, and anything connected with flowers was a special joy to him. No one knew better than he how the different kinds of roses grew, and how the lilies hung upon their stalks.

“And what, I should like to know, is going to be the use of all this,” the good father would say impatiently, “as long as thou takest no pains to read and write and do thy sums? What am I to do with such a boy, I wonder?”

Then in despair the poor man decided to send Sandro to a neighbour’s workshop, to see if perhaps his hands would work better than his head.

The name of this neighbour was Botticelli, and he was a goldsmith, and a very excellent master of his art. He agreed to receive Sandro as his pupil, so it happened that the boy was called by his master’s name, and was known ever after as Sandro Botticelli.

Sandro worked for some time with his master, and quickly learned to draw designs for the goldsmith’s work.

In those days painters and goldsmiths worked a great deal together, and Sandro often saw designs for pictures and listened to the talk of the artists who came to his master’s shop. Gradually, as he looked and listened, his mind was made up. He would become a painter. All his restless longings and day-dreams turned to this. All the music

that floated in the air as he listened to the birds' song, the gentle dancing motion of the wind among the trees, all the colours of the flowers, and the graceful twinings of the rose-stems—all these he would catch and weave into his pictures. Yes, he would learn to paint music and motion, and then he would be happy.

“So now thou wilt become a painter,” said his father, with a sigh.

Truly this boy was more trouble than all the rest put together. Here he had just settled down to learn how to become a good goldsmith, and now he wished to try his hand at something else. Well, it was no use saying “no.” The boy could never be made to do anything but what he wished. There was the Carmelite monk Fra Filippo Lippi, of whom all men were talking. It was said he was the greatest painter in Florence. The boy should have the best teaching it was possible to give him, and perhaps this time he would stick to his work.

So Sandro was sent as a pupil to Fra Filippo, and he soon became a great favourite with the happy, sunny-tempered master. The quick eye of the painter soon saw that this was no ordinary pupil. There was something about Sandro's drawing that was different to anything that Filippo had ever seen before. His figures seemed to move, and one almost heard the wind rustling in their flowing drapery. Instead of walking, they seemed to be dancing lightly along with a swaying motion as if to the rhythm of music. The very rose-leaves the boy loved to paint seemed to flutter down to the sound of a fairy song. Filippo was proud of his pupil.

“The world will one day hear more of my Sandro Botticelli,” he said; and, young though the boy was, he often took him to different places to help him in his work.

So it happened that, in that wonderful spring of Filippo's life, Sandro too was at Prato, and worked there with Fra Diamante. And in after years when the master's little daughter was born, she was named Alessandra, after the favourite pupil, to whom was also left the training of little Filippino.

Now, indeed, Sandro's good old father had no further cause to complain. The boy had found the work he was most fitted for, and his name soon became famous in Florence.

It was the reign of gaiety and pleasure in the city of Florence at that time. Lorenzo the Magnificent, the son of Cosimo de Medici, was ruler now, and his court was the centre of all that was most splendid and beautiful. Rich dresses, dainty food, music, gay revels, everything that could give pleasure, whether good or bad, was there.

Lorenzo, like his father, was always glad to discover a new painter, and Botticelli

For Further Reading

If you are interested in reading more about Sandro Botticelli, check your library for the following resources:

Katie and the Mona Lisa, James Mayhew (Orchard, 1998)

Picture book of a young girl's adventures "inside" famous Renaissance paintings, including Botticelli.

Botticelli (Getting to Know the Great Artists of the World), Mike Venezia (Children's Press, 1991)

This series is well-loved by younger readers.

Famous Old Masters of Painting, Roland McKinney (Dodd, Mead, 1951)

Chapter biographies of great artists. For elementary through middle school readers.

Young Master Artists: Boyhoods of Famous Artists, Irene Wicker (Bobbs-Merrill, 1960)

Narrative stories of famous artists when they were young based on known facts of their lives. Upper-elementary and above readers.

Botticelli, Elizabeth Ripley (Oxford University Press, 1960)

A very good series of biographies of the artists, much recommended if you can locate these out-of-print gems! For middle school on up.

Botticelli Picture Study

Choose **six** of the following pictures to study with your students; select those you like best, or that your students will enjoy the most. There is **no order to the following pages**, though the first few pictures are generally the artist's best known works; the extra pictures are included to give you options when choosing pieces to study.

In each lesson, use the "Leading Thoughts" to lead your students in a Picture Talk *after* they have studied the piece and given their narrations. You may choose to talk about or ask any, all, or none of the questions and comments. These are included to provide any helpful information that you and your students may not be familiar with, and to draw your attention to significant points of the work of art. Remember not to lecture your students; ask them what *they* think of the painting. After even a short time you will be amazed at the number, and quality, of relations your students will have formed with great artists and their works!





Madonna of the Magnificat

c. 1483–85, tempera on panel, 46.5" diameter,
Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Present this picture as described on pages 9 and 10.

Leading Thoughts

As we read in the biography of Botticelli, this painting of the Madonna and Child depicts Mary writing down her Magnificat found in the Gospel of Luke 1:46–55. Read the full text of the Magnificat and reflect on Mary's heart as she uttered these words. Do you think Botticelli captured the expression you imagine she'd have had as these words came from her lips?

There is quite a bit of artistic license taken in this painting. When did Mary speak the Magnificat? Would the scene have looked like this one? Why do you think Botticelli chose to paint it this way?

The pomegranate in Christ's hand has long been a symbolic motif in art. In Exodus we read of God's design of the tabernacle and its furnishings—a pomegranate design was woven into the hem of the priest's robes. In Christian art the fruit symbolizes the power of Christ's resurrection and the promise of eternal life.