

Simply Charlotte Mason presents

Rembrandt



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

Rembrandt

by Emily Kiser

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

Rembrandt
© 2011 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 978-1-61634-116-9

Cover Design: John Shafer

SimplyCharlotteMason.com

Contents

Picture Study	5
How to use a Picture Study Portfolio	9

Rembrandt

The Story of Rembrandt	11
For Further Reading	15
Rembrandt Picture Study	17
The Malitia of Captain Frans Banning Cocq, or ‘The Night Watch’	18
The Return of the Prodigal Son	19
Jacob Blessing Joseph’s Second Son.	19
Titus as a Monk	20
The Denial of Peter	21
Self-Portrait	21
Christ Shows His Wounds to Doubting Thomas	22
Jacob Wrestling with the Angel.	22

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 Rembrandt

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

A child, who was to be one of the world's greatest artists, was born at Leyden, a town in Holland, in the year 1606.

This child's father was a well-to-do man, who owned a mill. And as this mill was turned by the waters of the Rhine, it came to pass that when the child was christened "Rembrandt," there was added to his name "Van Ryn," which meant "Rembrandt of the Rhine."

Leyden was by no means such a rich, prosperous city as Amsterdam, but it had something it was very proud to possess, and that was a university. It was the ambition of most fathers in Leyden to send a son to this university, and so when the little Rembrandt began to show signs of being cleverer than his brothers, his father began to plan how to send him to college that he might learn to become a lawyer. The other brothers were following their father's trade, but Rembrandt seemed fit for something greater than to be a mere miller.

So when the boy was fourteen he was sent to study law at the university. Now the study of law would seem rather a solemn and dull job for any boy of fourteen, but for Rembrandt it was specially difficult. He had no love for book learning, and not the least desire in the world to be a lawyer. What he longed for above all else was to possess paint brushes and pencils, canvases, palette, and paints.

It was a bitter blow to the miller to find that the boy, who was expected to do such great things, wanted to leave the university when he had only been there one year, and wished instead to go to Jacob van Swanenburgh's studio to learn to be a painter.

It was a clear case of throwing away all his chances, but the boy was so sure he knew his own mind that there was no gainsaying him. For three years he worked in the master's studio, and then went for a few months to Amsterdam to learn more of his

craft from Pieter Lastman, who was the fashionable portrait-painter of the day.

But it was not from masters in studios that young Rembrandt learnt his real lessons. His own keen observant eyes taught him where to find the key to art and beauty. Eagerly he watched the clouds that swept across the sky above his father's mill, carefully he noted how the willows grew by the water's edge, and how the branches of the trees spread themselves into lacy patterns. But more especially he loved to study the faces of the people he met, the workers at the mill, the country people in the fields, his own home people whom he saw every day. Old faces were always a fascinating study for him, for on an old face the character is written most clearly.

He was a kindly, simple young boy, this Rembrandt of the Rhine; not very fond of company or gay doings, but quite content to wander about the country-side painting his pictures and looking for subjects; satisfied with a meal of bread and cheese and a herring, eaten in the green dining-room of a flowery meadow with the blue sky overhead.

But as time went on the boy found he needed a studio in which to work if he was to paint from models, and study faces as well as trees and clouds. He needed, too, beautiful stuffs with which to drape his sitters, and he began to collect all kinds of lovely things, which pleased his eye and lent an exquisite depth of colour to his painting.

It was not long before the fame of the young painter of portraits spread beyond the town of Leyden, and Rembrandt decided to take up his abode in Amsterdam. Artists were held in higher favour there than in Leyden, where solemn professors and learned men had not much leaning towards Art.

At Amsterdam there would be no lack of commissions, and there would be plenty of models too, so that he could make pictures of other faces as well as his own.

Then one day, in the studio at Amsterdam there came a young girl of noble family to have her portrait painted by the new young painter, who was beginning to be the fashion. And suddenly there dawned a new day for Rembrandt. The whole world grew more beautiful as he looked at the fair Saskia van Uylenborch, and straightway he fell deeply in love with her.

The family of Saskia did not approve of such a suitor, and made many objections to the marriage, but the lovers insisted on having their own way, and Rembrandt carried off his bride to the beautiful home he had prepared for her. Nothing was too good for his beloved Saskia.

"See, I will deck thee in silks and velvets and fine lace," he said gaily, "and I will hang

For Further Reading

If you are interested in reading more about Rembrandt van Ryn (or Rijn, as it is also spelled), check your library for the following resources:

Rembrandt (Getting to Know the Great Artists of the World), Mike Venezia (Children's Press, 1988)

This series is well-loved by younger readers.

Hana in the Time of the Tulips, Deborah Noyes (Candlewick, 2004)

A beautiful picture book about a girl who meets Rembrandt.

Rembrandt (Art for Children), Ernest Raboff (Trophy Press, 1987)

I love this series of art books. They not only give biographical information, but also guide the reader in looking closely at individual paintings. For elementary students on up.

Rembrandt (Oxford Books for Boys and Girls), Elizabeth Ripley (Oxford University Press, 1955)

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.

The Night Watch: Adventure with Rembrandt, Isabelle Lawrence (Rand McNally, 1952)

This is a historical novel for middle school on up, where fictional children have an adventure with Rembrandt.

Rembrandt 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!





***The Militia of
Captain Frans Banning Cocq,
known as ‘The Night Watch’***

1642, oil on canvas, approx. 12' x 14' 4",
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Present this picture as described on pages 9 and 10.

Leading Thoughts

In Rembrandt's day, it was popular for members of guilds, political groups, and societies to commission a great artist to paint a "group portrait" or picture of all the members together. *The Night Watch* is just this, a picture of a company of militia, but Rembrandt painted it like no one ever had before. Instead of a line of all the members, Rembrandt created a scene, like a historical painting. If you would like to compare Rembrandt's picture to a traditional group portrait, look up Frans Hals' *Officers of the St. George Civic Guard, Haarlem*.

About seventy-five years after its completion, the painting was moved; and, unfortunately was cut down on all four sides so it would fit in its new location. This practice of cutting off parts of paintings was all too common in the past.

Notice how Rembrandt leads your eye to different parts of the painting by using almost stage-like "spot-lighting." Which figures do you notice first? What other objects and figures stand out?