

Renaissance Frescoes

This lesson is about frescoes, a type of painting used to apply images to walls, used during the Renaissance, a time filled with important artistic production around the world. We will focus today on Europe from the 14th to the 17th centuries, or 1300-1699 CE. Renaissance fresco paintings reflect the exciting inventions and new knowledge happening at the time!



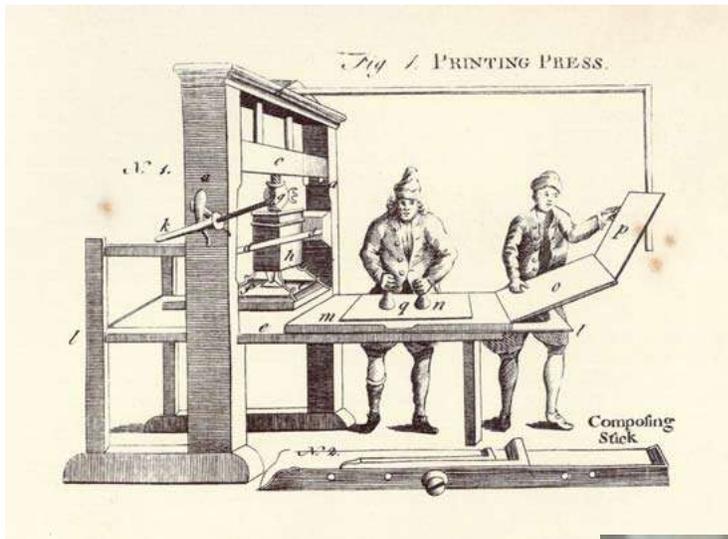
Giotto
Lamentation
In the Arena Chapel
Padua, Italy,
1305-1306

What do you think is happening in the fresco above?

What is the Renaissance?

The Renaissance is an important period of time that happened all over the world in which there were new inventions in art, architecture, science, politics, and literature. There were a lot of new ideas at the time, and it was important for people to learn new things.

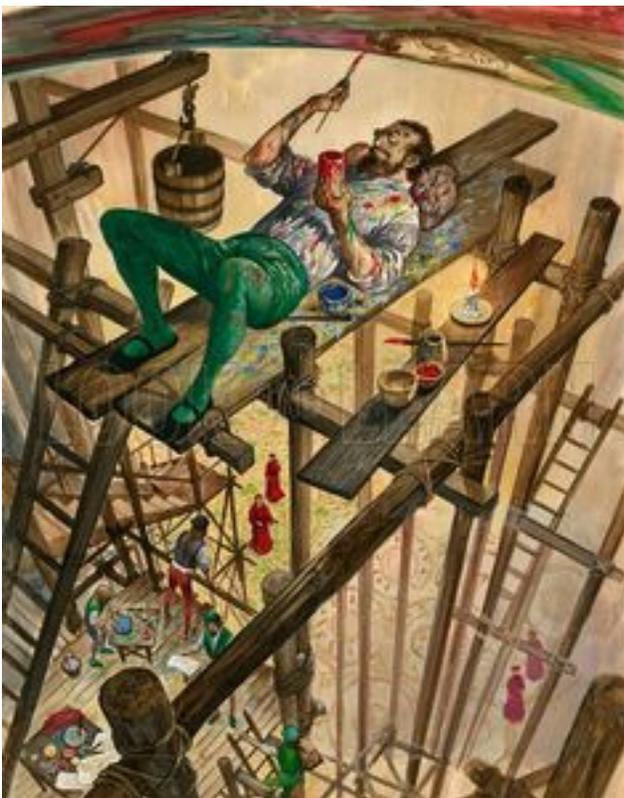
Some things that were invented include the printing press in c. 1440, which helped to print books really fast. In the 1500s, people in Italy learned the recipe for sherbet, which led to making ice cream! The telescope was invented in roughly 1608.



What is fresco?

A fresco is a special kind of paint made from water that is put on walls that have wet plaster, which is a special material used to cover walls. After the fresco paint goes onto the wall, it is a part of the wall, and you can't take it off!

Plaster goes onto a wall like this, and then you scrape it so it is very thin, and then you can start painting on it:



When artists painted frescoes, since it is applied to walls or ceilings, they had to stand up, or sometimes lay on their backs, and paint above them!

Let's look at some famous frescoes!

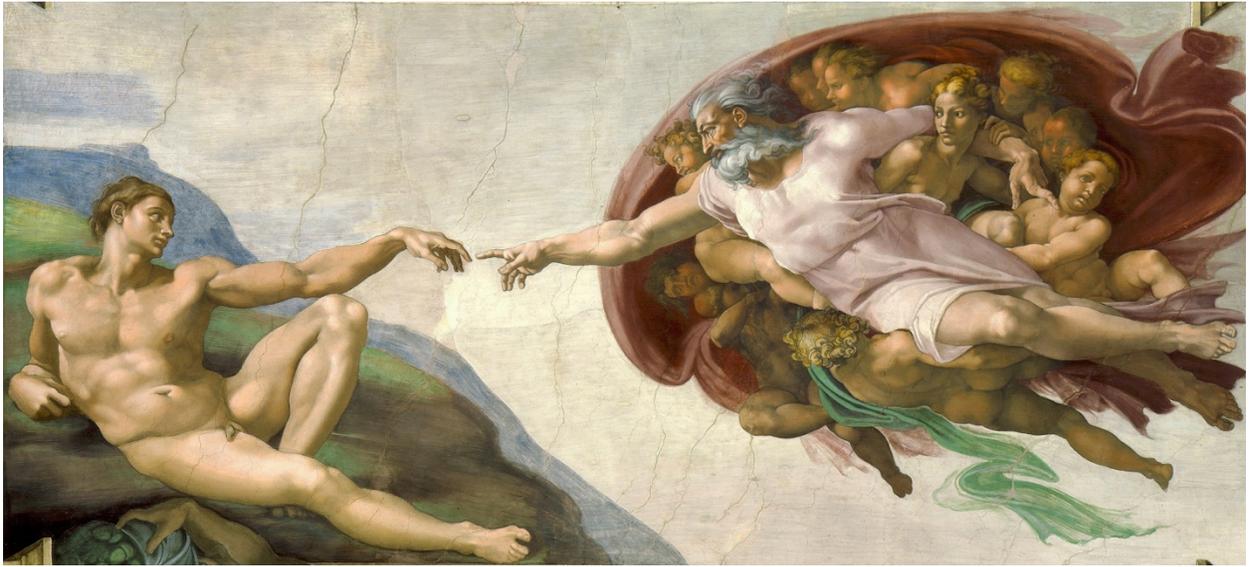


This is the Sistine Chapel, which was painted by Michelangelo between 1508-1512.

What do you see in this image? Can you tell that it was painted?

One of the most famous parts of the Sistine Chapel is the Last Judgement, which is a scene from the Bible, a moment in which God comes down from heaven to judge the people.

This scene is on the ceiling! Can you imagine laying on your back and painting above you? Can you see the cracks in the walls?



Scenes from Renaissance frescoes are also seen in paintings on canvas. This is a painting that you can see at the AD&A Museum! What do you think is happening in this painting?



Lamentation
Late 15th-16th century
Oil on Panel

The Lamentation tells a story about the Virgin Mary being sad after her son has died.

Other Renaissance frescoes also tell us about how people are learning new things and sharing their ideas! What do you think is happening here? What ideas are they sharing?



Raphael
School of Athens
1509-1511

This is a scene in which smart men known as philosophers talk about new ideas with each other!



Now, let's try to make a fresco at home! Since we can't paint on walls, we will practice drawing above our heads, like Renaissance painters did!

Materials you need:

- Paper – either butcher paper, or white paper – the bigger the better!
- Pencils, colored pencils, markers, and paint.
- Tape
- A tall surface that you can lay under and tape your paper above



Steps:

- Tape your paper above you so you can lay down and draw above you
- Lay down under your paper
- Try to draw while laying down with your paper above you. You can draw whatever you want!
- After you draw an outline of your scenes, you can either grab your markers and color the scene in; or you can take the paper down, and go to a craft space to paint it.
- Let it dry!