

Simply Charlotte Mason presents

Titian



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

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Titian
(1488–1576)

by Emily Kiser

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published by Simply Charlotte Mason

Titian
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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 Titian

from *The Stories of the Painters* by Amy Steedman
and *Pictures Every Child Should Know* by Dolores Bacon, edited by Emily Kiser

We have seen how most of the great painters loved to paint into their pictures those scenes which they had known when they were boys, and which to the end of their lives they remembered clearly and vividly. Giotto never forgets the look of his sheep on the bare hillside of Vespignano, Fra Angelico paints his heavenly pictures with the colours of spring flowers found on the slopes of Fiesole, Perugino delights in the wide spaciousness of the Umbrian plains with the winding river and solitary cypresses.

So, when we come to the great Venetian painter Titian we look first with interest to see in what manner of a country he was born, and what were the pictures which Nature mirrored in his mind when he was still a boy.

At the foot of the Alps, three days' journey from Venice, lies the little town of Cadore on the Pieve, and here it was that Titian was born. On every side rise great masses of rugged mountains towering up to the sky, with jagged peaks and curious fantastic shapes. Clouds float around their summits, and the mist will often wrap them in gloom and give them a strange and awesome look. At the foot of the craggy pass the mountain torrent of the Pieve roars and tumbles on its way. Far-reaching forests of trees, with weather-beaten gnarled old trunks, stand firm against the mountain storms. Beneath their wide-spreading boughs there is a gloom almost of twilight, showing peeps here and there of deep purple distances beyond.

Small wonder it was that Titian should love to paint mountains, and that he should be the first to paint a purely landscape picture. He loved those strange solemn mountains and the wild country round, the deep gloom of the woods and the purple of the distance beyond.

The boy's father, Gregorio Vecelli, was one of the nobles of Cadore; but the family was not rich, and when Titian was ten years old he was sent to an uncle in Venice to be taught some trade. He had always been fond of painting, and it is said that when he was a very little boy he was found trying to paint a picture with the juices of flowers. His uncle, seeing that the boy had some talent, placed him in the studio of Giovanni Bellini.

But though Titian learned much from Bellini, it was not until he first saw Giorgione's work that he dreamed of what it was possible to do with colour. Thenceforward he began to paint with that marvellous richness of colouring which has made his name famous all over the world.

At first young Titian worked with Giorgione, and together they began to fresco the walls of the Exchange above the Rialto bridge. But by-and-by Giorgione grew jealous. Titian's work was praised too highly; it was even thought to be the better of the two. So they parted company, for Giorgione would work with him no more.

Venice soon began to awake to the fact that in Titian she had another great painter who was likely to bring fame and honour to the fair city. He was invited to finish the frescoes in the Grand Council chamber which Bellini had begun, and to paint the portraits of the Doges, her rulers.

These portraits which Titian painted were so much admired that all the great princes and nobles desired to have themselves painted by the Venetian artist. The Emperor Charles V himself when he stopped at Bologna sent to Venice to fetch Titian, and so delighted was he with the painter's work that he made him a knight with a pension of two hundred crowns.

Fame and wealth awaited Titian wherever he went, and before long he was invited to Rome that he might paint the portrait of the Pope. There it was that he met Michelangelo, and that great master looked with much interest at the work of the Venetian artist and praised it highly, for the colouring was such as he had never seen equalled before.

"It is most beautiful," he said afterwards to a friend; "but it is a pity that in Venice they do not teach men how to draw as well as how to colour. If this Titian drew as well as he painted, it would be impossible to surpass him."

But indeed there is little fault to be found with Titian's drawing, though it is in his colouring that the great Venetian school reached its height of glory. He seemed to have

For Further Reading

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

Titian (Getting to Know the Great Artists of the World), Mike Venezia (Children's Press, 2003)

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.

Titian, Elizabeth Ripley (J. B. Lippincott, 1962)

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.

Living Biographies of Great Painters, Henry Thomas and Dana Lee Thomas (Garden City, 1940)

These slightly longer chapter biographies are for middle school readers on up.

Titian 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!





Portrait of a Man

c. 1510, oil on canvas, 32" x 26.1"
National Gallery, London

Present this picture as described on pages 9 and 10.

Leading Thoughts

Titian was well-regarded as a portrait painter. What qualities do you see in this painting that demonstrate

Titian's gifts in this genre?

Rembrandt used this pose in his own self-portrait of 1640, and frequently employed the same three-quarter-view, half-length pose in many of his other portraits. Why do you think a pose with the face turned partially away from the view became so popular?

Would you consider this a simple or complex picture? What details did Titian include that make this composition successful, in your opinion?