VERMEER, REMBRANDT & THE GOLDEN AGE OF DUTCH ART:
Masterpieces from the Rijksmuseum

Albert Cuyp
Portrait of a Young Man, c. 1651
oil on panel
On loan from the City of Amsterdam
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TEACHER'S STUDY GUIDE
SPRING 2009

Contents Page

Vancouver Art Gallery
Teacher's Guide for School Programs

Vermeer, Rembrandt and the Golden Age of Dutch Art presents an extraordinary array of artworks created by Dutch artists in the seventeenth century. The range of works produced in this period is unequalled at any single time in history, and includes <u>still lifes</u>, <u>portraits</u>, <u>landscapes</u>, architectural studies and paintings of everyday life. The works are from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, which houses the world's foremost collection of Dutch art from this period. The exhibition includes decorative art forms such as ceramics, glass, silver, furniture and textiles as well as drawings and paintings. The paintings include major works by Rembrandt van Rijn, Johannes Vermeer, Frans Hals and Jan Steen, to name but a few.

DEAR TEACHER:

This guide will assist you in preparing for your tour of *Vermeer, Rembrandt and the Golden Age of Dutch Art.* It also provides follow-up activities to facilitate discussion after your Gallery visit. Engaging in the suggested activities before and after your visit will reinforce ideas generated by the tour and build continuity between the Gallery experience and your ongoing work in the classroom. Most activities require few materials and can be adapted easily to the age, grade level and needs of your students. Underlined words in this guide are defined in the Vocabulary section.

The tour of *Vermeer, Rembrandt and the Golden Age of Dutch Art* has three main goals:

- to understand the historic period that produced such a proliferation of art and artists,
- to provide a context for the artwork in terms of social, cultural, geographic and artistic structures,
- to examine individual works by historical masters.

THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition *Vermeer, Rembrandt and the Golden Age of Dutch Art* takes us back to a time of extraordinary prosperity in Dutch history. As economic, political and cultural power shifted dramatically from the hands of nobility to the merchant classes, art flourished. The artists' guild system gave support, learning structures and a modicum of economic stability to artists, and the merchant classes revered—and bought—art to lay claim to their new-found status. It is no accident that under these conditions, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Hals, Steen and countless other artists prospered.

The works in this exhibition have travelled from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, which houses the world's finest collection of seventeenth-century Dutch art. The exhibition is organized into eight areas, each of which explores and illuminates a different aspect of Dutch life and art in the 1600s:

1. Maritime Power
In 1602 the Dutch East India Company was granted a monopoly on Dutch colonial activities, including shipping, in Asia. Giving this amount of power to a company—a commercial enterprise—was unprecedented. The company was authorized to enter into trade agreements, maintain diplomatic relations, and even wage war. The impact of this kind of power and the trade that ensued was nothing short of astounding—not only did previously unavailable products like silk, ivory, sugar and spices fill the warehouses of Amsterdam, but imported items such as Chinese porcelain strongly influenced Dutch artisans for centuries. The shipping industry blossomed as traders commissioned new vessels to sail the high seas, and the resulting economic boom spread far and wide among citizens of the Dutch Republic. The freshly formed middle class wielded their new-found economic power and status, entering into far-reaching commercial dealings. It was their support of artists and their willingness to purchase artwork en masse that gave rise to the Golden Age of Dutch Art. Artists like Ludolf Bakhuysen specialized in depicting dramatic images of vessels being tossed in stormy seas as well as serene scenes of ports, waterways and shipbuilding activity.

2. The Artists and Their World
For the first time in western history, art was not being made exclusively for the church or the nobility. Wealthy merchants, holding the economic power of the new Dutch Republic in their hands, sought, and bought—amongst other commodities—art. Art was not only commissioned by wealthy patrons and religious institutions, it was also widely and enthusiastically bought and sold on the free market. Artists would generally choose a niche in the art market and become skilled and known specifically as a painter of portraits, seascapes, landscapes or still lifes. Painters were organized into professional organizations known as guilds. Each city had its own professional artists' guild of which it was very proud, and artists had to join the local guild—after a rigorous period of apprenticeship with a member artist—in order to produce and sell work locally.

3. Still Life
Still life paintings were very popular during this period. Artists would specialize even further in the genre, becoming known for paintings of fruit, flowers, food or even glassware. They would show off their skills at rendering surface detail and lighting effects. Objects displayed in the still lifes might include items from a client's collection that would provide them with an opportunity to display their wealth twofold—through both the painting and the objects

themselves. Some still lifes, known as <u>vanitas</u> pieces, included <u>symbols</u> that emphasize the passing of time, such as burnt-out candles, hourglasses or faded flowers.

Rachel Ruysch was one of a small number of women artists whose flower still lifes became known and sought after at this time.

4. The City

Two factors radically changed the shape and demographic of Dutch cities:

- Trade and industry brought great prosperity to the Dutch Republic.
- People fled religious persecution in southern countries and were welcomed into the Dutch Republic.

The expanding population and wealth brought urbanization on a scale previously unknown in Europe. Merchants and regents (public office holders), particularly in Amsterdam, spent their new-found wealth on grand houses, clothing, furniture and artworks. Religious tolerance became one of the hallmarks of the newly constructed society, and Catholics, Jews, Calvinists and Protestants lived alongside one another with unprecedented acceptance. Rembrandt's painting *Dr. Ephraim Bueno, Jewish Physician and Writer of Amsterdam* and Frans Hals' *Portrait of a Man, Possibly a Clergyman* attest to the city's tolerance of religious and cultural diversity.

5. The Dutch Landscape

During this period, Dutch artists began to take increased pride in the particular terrain of their surroundings. Unlike previous Dutch artists who created fantasy landscapes, the newer generation of artists painted the flat Dutch countryside scattered with locally recognizable fields, waterways, dunes and windmills. Many paintings depicted winter scenes, exploring the effects of light on ice and snow, and included people playing, skating and working.

Jacob van Ruisdael was one of many artists to paint a very low horizon line; in *View of Haarlem from the Northwest, with the Bleaching Fields in the Foreground*, this technique allowed the dramatic stormy skies to dominate the scene.

6. Travelling Artists

Throughout the seventeenth century, Dutch artists travelled to Italy as an almost essential part of their artistic training. They were expected to learn from the art of classical antiquity and Renaissance artists, as well as studying the effects of the strong southern light. Some artists returned to their homeland and its particular physical features and imposed the hilly, sun-drenched Italian terrain over the reality of their flat surroundings. This often resulted in imaginative Italianate/Dutch hybrid landscapes.

7. Portraiture

Wealthy citizens began to commission portraits of themselves and their families in settings that would display their wealth and status. They then showed their paintings with pride, not only asserting their own status and personal worth, but also affirming their support of local artists—as commissions could only be given and received by artists from the local <u>guild</u>. Frans Hals was an exception to this rule, a testament to his high status as a painter; he received commissions from numerous other cities. His companion paintings *Portrait of a Man* and *Portrait of a Woman* were both personal portraits of a couple and reflections of social and gender expectations of the times.

8. Genre Painting

Paintings depicting detailed scenes from everyday life—<u>genre paintings</u>—were immensely popular during the Golden Age. Most genre paintings were small in scale and depicted generalized everyday scenes showing "types" rather than specific personalities, although

some were portraits of real people. They usually contained subtle moral messages that people enjoyed trying to discern. Although these works appear to have been copied from life, most were created in artists' studios. Johannes Vermeer's *The Love Letter* contained many symbols that would have been easily understood at the time, including a dog (symbolizing loyalty or fidelity) and a background painting of a ship at sea (sea symbolizing love, ship symbolizing lover).

This exhibition has been organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery in collaboration with the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and curated by Ruud Priem and Lynn Orr.

ARTISTS' BACKGROUND

Ludolf Bakhuysen (1631–1708) (Maritime Power)
Bakhuysen was born in Emden but moved to Amsterdam, where he lived most of his adult life. He began working as a clerk and calligrapher, but discovered a talent for drawing and began making pen-and-ink drawings of ships. He then studied art under some of the most established artists of his day and became a member of the artists' guild. He became very well recognized for his marine scenes and was soon being courted internationally by illustrious clients from the ranks of royalty and the aristocracy.

He is known to have married four times and to have become a very prosperous artist—one of the most successful of his time. He had many talented students and opened his own gallery in Amsterdam.

Many of Bakhuysen's unusually large canvases depict stormy seas with dramatic skies. *The Man-of-War* Brielle *on the Maas near Rotterdam* is a seascape that records a significant historical event in Rotterdam harbour—under stormy skies. *Shipyard in Amsterdam,* c. 1655–60, is a "pen-painting" that Bakhuysen made with pen and ink on a white painted wooden panel, depicting the burgeoning shipbuilding industry in the large port of Rotterdam.

Frans Hals (1582/83–1666) (The City, Portraiture)
Hals was born in Antwerp, but his family fled the Spanish Netherlands and moved to Haarlem when he was a few years old. After serving his apprenticeship as an artist, he joined the local painters' guild and worked as an art restorer for the city. He began painting portraits around this time and was soon recognized for his lively and dramatically lit compositions.

Twice married, he had ten children to whom he was devoted. He refused to travel far afield for work, insisting that his patrons come to him in order to have their portraits painted. Although he achieved considerable success as an artist and his work remained in demand throughout his life, it appears that he managed his finances badly, frequently fell into deep debt and died in poverty.

Portrait of a Man, Possibly a Clergyman and the companion paintings *Portrait of a Man* and *Portrait of a Woman* are prime examples of Hals' exacting technique. He painted them fluidly, with loose brushstrokes, making it seem as if the paintings were executed with great speed—which we know not to be the case. His paintings have frequently been cited as the precursors of Impressionism. It is interesting to note how differently the male and female figures are rendered, in keeping with the gender expectations of the times: the men are accorded greater freedom of gesture, the women more formally and decorously posed.

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) (The Artist & His World, The City)
Rembrandt van Rijn was the youngest of ten children born to a prosperous family in Leiden. He attended Latin school for seven years and briefly enrolled in academic studies at the University of Leiden, but he was always interested in art. He was apprenticed to an artist with whom he studied painting and drawing. He soon became known as a portrait and history painter, later turning his hand to landscape and biblical subjects. He soon had a steady stream of students of his own who paid handsomely to study under him, and numerous commissions from local wealthy patrons and art dealers, as well as from international collectors. His work also sold well on the open market.

His beloved—and much painted—wife Saskia bore him four children, but only the last one survived into adulthood; she died soon after his birth. Despite his considerable success as an artist, Rembrandt managed his personal life and finances poorly and was plagued by debt and misfortune. Soon after his son Titus died of the plague, Rembrandt also died, and was buried in an unmarked grave.

Early in his career, Rembrandt was recognized for his ability to express emotion through gesture and dramatic contrasts of light and dark. In his later years, his energetic brushstrokes and rough, <u>textured</u> paintwork were not in accordance with the prevailing taste for smooth, refined surfaces, and his work fell somewhat out of favour. Rembrandt made <u>etchings</u> as well as paintings for most of his career, until he was forced to sell his etching equipment to raise money.

Many of his paintings, such as *An Oriental* and *Portrait of His Son Titus, Dressed as a Monk,* were not intended as studies of specific personalities, but as types—people dressed in detailed, fanciful costumes—and were intended for sale on the open market.

Rachel Ruysch (1664–1750) (Still Life)
Ruysch was born in The Hague and moved to Amsterdam with her family when she was three. Her father was a scientist who taught her to observe nature closely. At age fifteen she became apprenticed to a prominent still life painter. She soon became a member of the artists' <u>guild</u> in The Hague, well known for her large-scale flower pieces—usually commissioned for prominent citizens. She was invited to Düsseldorf as court painter, and she remained there for eight years.

Ruysch married a <u>portrait</u> painter and had ten children. She continued to paint flower pieces until shortly before her death at the age of eighty-five. Ruysch was one of the few women artists of her time to achieve recognition as an artist. Unusually for the period, she had parents and a husband who supported and encouraged her work. There is no doubt that she was widely acclaimed in her time for her flower studies, and had international clients clamouring for her work.

Still Life with Flowers on a Marble Table Top is very representative of her work. It shows detailed observation, a dark background and a brightly lit central focus. The insects crawling around the flowers are a common feature in her work. The flowers (often in impossible arrangements containing blooms from varying seasons) are so realistically portrayed that contemporary botanists have been able to identify them.

Johannes Vermeer (1632–1675) (Genre Painting)
Vermeer was born in Delft; his father was a prosperous weaver and art dealer. Not much is known about his personal life, but it is thought that he trained as an artist in Delft, where he became a member of the artists' <u>guild</u>. He quickly established himself as a painter of everyday scenes, and although well known in Delft as a <u>genre</u> artist, he seems not to have been recognized any further afield. He worked slowly and meticulously; only 35 of his works are known to be in existence today.

He and his wife Catherine had eleven children, whom he struggled to support. He died young and suddenly, leaving his family in deep debt.

The Love Letter is a prime example of the kind of work Vermeer is best known for. It is a carefully constructed, detailed study of a woman and her servant. It seems to present a real

moment caught in time—although we now know that it was painted in his studio—a quiet, intimate moment in the relationship between the two central characters, who we find ourselves intruding upon. The painting is full of symbols—clues that would have helped contemporary viewers interpret the narrative and meaning contained in the imagery.

Jacob Isaacksz van Ruisdael (1628/29–1682) (Dutch Landscape)
Van Ruisdael was born in Haarlem into a family of established artists and was probably apprenticed to his father. He was recognized as an accomplished <u>landscape</u> artist when very young, and soon became a member of the Haarlem artists' guild. He settled in Amsterdam as a young man and lived there for the rest of his life, although he was buried back in Haarlem after he died. He was a prolific artist, and some 700 paintings have been attributed to him.

Little is known of his private life; he seems never to have married or had children. Although van Ruisdael painted numerous coastal scenes and seascapes, it is because of his rugged woodland scenes that he has been repeatedly called the most gifted Dutch landscape painter of all time. In his compositions he often includes a distant city, dramatic skies and lively, precisely rendered foliage. His vigorous brushstrokes, strong colours and focused lighting serve to imbue his paintings with a heightened sense of emotion and drama.

In *View of Haarlem from the Northwest, with the Bleaching Fields in the Foreground,* the moody sky dominates the evidence of labour laid out in the landscape, while in *Bentheim Castle* it is the brooding castle that rises above the dense foliage of nature at its most inhospitable.

PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Life/Styles of the Artists (All grades)

Objective:
Students research some of the Golden Age artists and the contexts within which they worked.

Materials:
- the Internet; the following websites are helpful:
  http://www.wga.hu/tours/lowcount/index.html (The Web Gallery of Art)
  www.artcyclopedia.com
  www.wikipedia.com
- Information sheet: The Artists (page 11)
- Student Worksheets: Information Collecting (page 12), Thumbnail Sketches (page13)

Process:
1. Explain to students that the works in the exhibition will be found in sections such as:
   - Maritime Power
   - Still Life
   - The City
   - Dutch <u>Landscape</u> Painting
   - <u>Portraiture</u>
   - <u>Genre</u> Painting

   In the Teacher's Background notes (pages 4-5), you will find information on each section.
   For younger students: a few sentences on each section might be enough information.
   For older students: more in-depth Internet research would provide a better understanding of the times.

2. Divide students into six groups, and give each group a copy of the Information Sheet: The Artists (next page). Ask each group to figure out in which section they would expect to find each artist. These are the sections where the artists' work will be found in the exhibition, but certain works might have been placed elsewhere.
   - Maritime Power (Bakhuysen)
   - Still Life (Ruysch)
   - The City (Rembrandt, Frans Hals)
   - Dutch Landscape Painting (van Ruisdael)
   - Portraiture (Frans Hals)
   - Genre Painting (Vermeer)

3. Assign each group one of the artists to research.
   www.wga.hu/tours/lowcount/index.html is a good place to start. Click on 17th century, and then scroll down to "Holland" to find information on most of the artists.
   For further information, look on:
   www.artcyclopedia.com
   www.wikipedia.com
   Note: When conducting research, students should be sure to use first as well as last names, as many of the artists come from families of artists with the same or similar names.
   Also, many of the artists' names are spelled in numerous ways—e.g., Backhuysen, Bakhuysen and Bakhuisen are used interchangeably to identify the same person.

4. Ask students to:
   - find some background information about the artist,
   - find some information about significant artworks,
   - make one or two sketches of the artist's work.
5. Have each group present their work to the class, showing and explaining the sketches.
   - Younger students might enjoy dressing up as the artist and presenting their information as a performance.
   - As each group is explaining their artist's work, have the rest of the class use the Information Collecting Worksheet (page 12) to record information, and make a thumbnail sketch of one of the works (Worksheet: Thumbnail Sketches, page 13).

Conclusion:
Discussion:
- What were some of the most interesting things that students learned?
- Which artists and/or kinds of artwork made students curious about seeing the actual work in the exhibition?
- What connections can students make between seventeenth-century Dutch artists and our lives today?

Information Sheet: The Artists

Ludolf Bakhuysen
- Painted ships, stormy seas and dramatic skies
- Lived in Amsterdam
- Married four times
- Well-recognized, successful and wealthy

Rachel Ruysch
- Painted detailed flower pieces with realistic insects
- Lived in The Hague
- Married with ten children; father and husband supported her art
- Known internationally, painted till she died in her eighties

Johannes Vermeer
- Painted everyday scenes with hidden meanings
- Lived in Delft
- Married and had eleven children
- Worked very slowly, died young and poor

Frans Hals
- Painted individuals and groups; used loose, lively brushstrokes
- Lived in Haarlem
- Married twice, had ten children
- Very successful but died poor

Jacob van Ruisdael
- Painted outdoor scenes with low horizons and moody skies
- Lived in Amsterdam
- Not known to have married or had children
- Made more than 700 paintings, very well regarded

Rembrandt van Rijn
- Painted individuals and historical scenes with strong light/dark contrasts
- Lived in Leiden
- Married with a son, later had other relationships and a daughter
- Very well recognized in his time, but died very poor

Information Collecting Worksheet

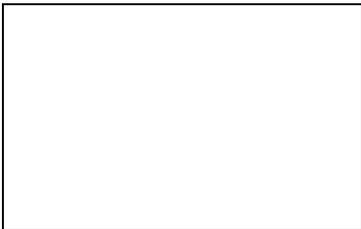| Artist	Type of Art	Personal Life	Recognized for	A Painting

Student Worksheet: Thumbnail Sketches
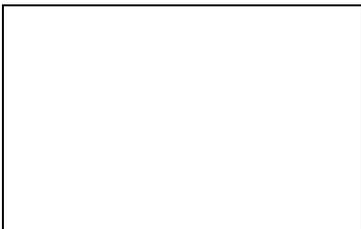
Landscape:
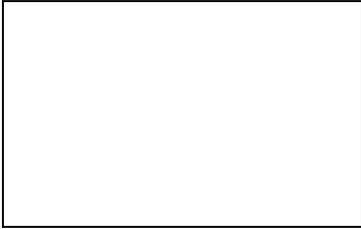
Artist:_____

Title:_____
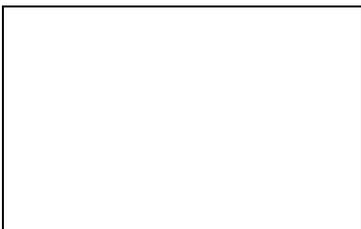
Portrait:

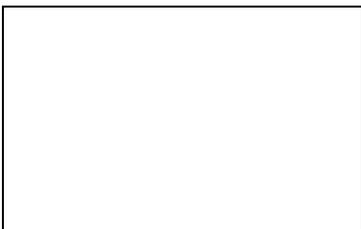Artist:_____

Title:_____

Still Life:

Artist:_____

Title:_____

Seascape:

Artist:_____

Title:_____

Genre Painting:

Artist:_____

Title:_____

PRE- or POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: Light Explorations
(All grades)

Objective:
Students look at some examples of Rembrandt's work and analyze his use of light and dark. In the classroom, students examine the effects of light using various light sources, cameras and drawing tools.

Discussion:
<u>Chiaroscuro</u> is an art term used to describe extreme contrasts of light and dark. Artists use chiaroscuro (sometimes simply referred to as shading) to create the illusion of volume in painting. During the Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci worked with the technique, which was popularized by Caravaggio, and later taken up and refined by Rembrandt, whose use of light and dark has become his trademark. The photography term "Rembrandt lighting" has come to denote a technique of placing one side of the photographic subject in light and the other in complete shadow.

Materials:
- ❑ Rembrandt images; available on the Internet:
  www.wga.hu/tours/lowcount/index.html. Click on 17th century, and then scroll down to "Holland," click on Rembrandt. Two good examples are *Titus Reading* and *Hendrickje Stoffels in the Window.*
- ❑ large and small flashlights, movable desk lights, candle
- ❑ digital cameras (four or five would be optimal; one will work)
- ❑ sheets or large pieces of fabric
- ❑ drawing paper, charcoal or soft pencils
- ❑ a few white conte crayons (optional)

Process:
1. Show students copies of one or two Rembrandt images (see above).
   - Draw their attention to which parts of the composition are in light and which are in shadow. Complete or partial shadow?
   - Ask them why they think the artist might have chosen to light the composition in this way. (Think about mood, dramatic moment, emotional intensity.)
   - Examine details of how light falls in the images; e.g., on folds of clothing, highlights on jewellery, light caught on white fabric or book pages. What colours or techniques has the artist used to bring attention to these parts?
2. Darken the classroom as much as possible, or move to a room that can be effectively darkened.
3. Ask one student to be the subject (model), and drape that student in sheets, blankets or other fabrics. Ask some students to be photographers and take photographs when required.
4. With all the lights off, the teacher can hold a candle close to the model's face and have students discuss the kind of light that falls on the subject, and what they see as the light tapers off. Move the candle to the side, below, above. Take photographs.
5. Change to a single small flashlight, repeat the discussion, take more photographs. Use larger (stronger) then multiple flashlights. Repeat with desk lights. Make sure that students notice how the light changes, what is isolated or highlighted, and have them take photographs showing each change.

6. Have the students work in groups to look at the photographs in the camera(s) and notice the differences in lighting, areas that are easily visible, areas that are dark. What different moods are created by changing the lighting?
7. Discuss as a class.
8. Tell students they are now going to make a sketch using pencil or charcoal, paying attention to the way the light falls on a subject. Ask them as a class to arrange light on a subject (teacher or a different student) and then sketch, carefully isolating—perhaps exaggerating—light and dark areas.
9. *Optional:* When the students have completed their drawings, give each one a turn using a white conte crayon to add highlights to their drawings. (It is important to add this feature only at the very end. If smudged, the conte turns grey and disappears, and the effect is lost.)
10. Display the sketches.

Conclusion:
Have the students discuss what they learned about light and dark.
- Are the same parts highlighted in all their sketches? How or why might there be differences?
- Do different lighting effects change the overall mood of the image? How?
- How would they arrange the lighting to show specific moods, emotions or dramatic moments?

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Objects That Speak
(All students)

Objective:
Students look at the ways objects can be used to represent or symbolize personality traits, status, professions, interests, or moral stances.

Discussion:
The Dutch art-buying public of this time would have looked at a painting and understood that each object depicted contained deeper meanings: a burnt-out candle wasn't simply a candle, it was a symbol of life's transience. The image of a mother de-lousing her child's hair showed not only that she was fulfilling her parental obligations but also that her house was a place where Dutch codes of morality and order were upheld. A calm sea in a background painting-within-the-painting represented a faithful lover. Everywhere, in still life, vanitas and genre paintings, objects and gestures contained messages that imparted clues as to how they should be understood. People took pleasure is discerning the true meanings hidden in an artwork.

Materials:
- ❑ copies of some paintings by the following artists (easily available in books or on the Internet by googling the artist's name and "image"):
  Johannes Vermeer: any genre paintings, showing everyday activities
  Rachel Ruysch: any of her still life paintings
  Frans Hals: portraits of both a man and a woman
  Pieter Claesz: vanitas paintings, showing the transience of life
- ❑ personal objects, paper bags
- ❑ regular or watercolour pencil crayons
- ❑ large sheets of white paper

Process:
Part 1
1. Divide students into small groups and give each group a copy of a different Dutch painting. Ask them to look at the details and guess what each thing might symbolize; e.g., dog, candle, dead flower, mop, slippers...
2. Hand out the Information Sheet (page 19) and ask students to try to discern the deeper meanings hidden in the artworks. Were their guesses close?
3. Have each group show their image to the class and explain the meanings.
4. Tell students that the Dutch public at this time would have clearly understood what the meanings were, and figured out many of the messages behind the painting. The artists consciously inserted many symbols to interpret or symbolize the person, place or thing.
5. Ask students to find four objects at home that represent different aspects of themselves, put them in a paper bag and bring them to school. The objects might include a hat, a book or a necklace.

Part 2
1. Collect the paper bags and open them up one at a time, revealing the objects inside. Ask students to guess who is represented by these objects. Discuss which clues helped them figure it out (discuss as a whole class or in small groups).
2. Tell students they are going to use some/all of their objects to create a pencil-crayon drawing that represents aspects of themselves. They could choose to do it as:

- a still life piece focusing on the objects, or
- a self-portrait containing the objects as background, adornments or ornaments.
  Ask the students to fill the entire sheet of paper, and think about light and shade as well as placement of the objects and overall composition.
3. Display and discuss.

Conclusion:
Discuss the different images and the objects represented.
How do the objects represent or symbolize the artist?

Information Sheet: Symbols, Representation & Meaning

Objects and gestures in Dutch art from this time might be interpreted in various ways, but the following meanings are generally taken to be true:

dog	faithfulness or loyalty of the people in the portrait
flowers: white iris rose buttercup sunflower poppy tulip	purity love—often religious love unmarried love, religious or earthly power or sleep wealth or nobility
snail	sin; the soul needs to be freed after death
butterfly	transformation or resurrection—the soul freed after death
ant	hard work
burnt-out candle, rotting fruit, skull, hourglass, pocket watch	all of these objects stand for the passing of time, the idea that our time on earth is temporary. The moral or religious message is that riches or objects are temporary and meaningless; godliness is important
background painting of ship at sea	ship = lover the sea = love
letter	nearly always understood to be a love letter
apple	in a still life: temptation, as in the Garden of Eden in a portrait: the passing of knowledge from parent to child
an overturned glass	life passing
a comb; combing hair	cleanliness or moral purity
keys	responsibility
pearls	vanity or purity
slippers lying around	hurrying, untidiness, suggesting something not quite moral
scales	qualities of wisdom, justice or thriftiness
man's hand on heart	love
woman's hand on man's shoulder	warmth in marriage as well as dependence on her husband
tidy house, happy children	hardworking woman, pointing to order and morality in the household
musical instruments	love, passion
books	knowledge
couple holding hands	faithfulness; a marriage based on love and trust
red cheeks	drunkenness
grapes	in a portrait: faithfulness in marriage in a still life: religious significance, standing for the blood of Christ
cherubs in the clouds	in a portrait: children who died in childbirth
men dressed in black	suited for public functions; men's clothing was usually a little untidy as this was thought to be more manly
women in light colours	suited for domestic or private life
Bible in hands	mature and religious person

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Low landscapes
(Primary and intermediate students)

Objective:
Students look at some low-horizon land and seascapes and create a mixed-media land or seascape using collage, crayon and watercolour paint.

Discussion:
In much of the Dutch art of the Golden Age, <u>landscapes</u> and seascapes were dominated by big skies. The horizon line was dropped low, allowing the artist some two-thirds of the canvas to show off their expertise in creating cloudy, atmospheric, dramatic skies pierced by rays of light, which set the mood for the action below.

Materials:
❑ copies of a seascape by Ludolf Bakhuysen and a landscape by Jacob van Ruisdael with low horizons. A good website for images is:
http://www.wga.hu/tours/lowcount/index.html (The Web Gallery of Art). Click on 17th century, and then scroll down to "Holland," click on the artist's name then on "images" (on the top left).
❑ large sheets of white paper
❑ magazines, scissors, glue
❑ crayons or oil pastels
❑ watercolour paint (blues and greys) brushes, water

Process:
1. Have students look at a landscape (van Ruisdael) and a seascape (Bakhuysen):
   - Look at the sky and the land/sea: what's the relationship between them?
   - Look at the sky: details, light/dark, source of light.
   - Look at the sea/land: action, light/dark.
   - Point out the foreground, midground and background; discuss the size/scale of the ships/trees/buildings/people.
2. Give each student a large sheet of paper; draw a low horizon line. Have each student decide whether to create a sea or landscape.
3. Have students look through magazines and cut out objects—ships, buildings, trees, etc. Have them take scale into account in placing the objects in their scene; i.e., whether they will be part of the foreground, midground, background, and on or below the horizon line. Have them glue the cut-outs onto the paper.
4. Have the students add details with crayons or oil pastels, filling in the gaps between the cut-out pieces so that they relate to each other. For example, they might be adding grass and trees, or sea and waves.
5. Have the students draw in sky/cloud detail with crayon/pastel.
6. Have them use watercolour paint as a wash over the crayon/pastel to complete the sky.
7. Display the students' work.

Conclusion:
Discuss the works in terms of:
Overall mood and atmosphere, relationship between sky and land/sea and scale.
Would the images be very different if the sky only took up one-third of the paper? How?

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES: Quick Fixes
(Intermediate and secondary students)

Objective:
To provide teachers with some ideas for short activities and discussions that address various topics focused on in this exhibition.

Five-minute sketches:
Every day have a different group of students set up and light a small still life scene. Then give them five minutes to sketch.
- You could alternate materials, such as pencil, black sharpie, pencil crayons, charcoal.
- On different days you could ask students to pay particular attention to light and dark, foreground/midgound/background, shading, etc.

Imported goods:
During the Dutch Golden Age, world trade exploded and suddenly sugar, porcelain, coffee and other goods were available for the first time. Have students:
- Do quick research on the Internet and see what foods were available in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century before and after trade began. Imagine what they would have eaten, given this limited availability of foods.
- Look in their food cupboards at home and write down where all the goods have come from. What would be left in the pantry if it contained only local goods?
- Find out about the 100-mile diet. Is this a return to old times or something new? What are the positives and negatives about such a food philosophy?
- Discuss the similarities, differences and effects of global trade then and now.

New products:
- Have the students do research to find out which products were introduced for the first time—in quantity—during the Dutch Golden Age (e.g., sugar, spices, coffee).
- Have them create a commercial to introduce the public to the product for the first time, encouraging them to purchase the product. Who would the product be targeted at— housewife or merchant, nobility or middle class?
- The commercial can be made for radio, TV or newspaper.
- Have them present their commercials to the class.

Playing with light and dark:
Have the students look through magazines, find a large portrait-type image and examine the lighting. Can they figure out where the light source is? Is it flat commercial type lighting?
- Using light and dark markers or crayons, have students create or add light and shade to their portrait.
- For example, one side could be completely dark except for highlighting the eye, or they might exaggerate shadows around the nose and other features, or put in gentle shadows.

Girl with the Pearl Earring:
Have the older students read the novel *Girl with the Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier, based on Vermeer's life. Refer to:
http://www.teachervision.fen.com/novels/printable/32802.html
Printable teacher's guide containing suggestions for classroom discussions and activities.

Class picture:

Make a copy of a Rembrandt portrait and divide it into squares by drawing horizontal and vertical lines on it in a grid, making as many squares as there are students in the class.

- Number the squares and make a copy, retaining the original.
- Cut out the copy and give each student a square.
- Decide whether to use crayons, pastels or pencil crayons, and have each student replicate their square onto a much larger square of white paper.
- Reassemble the image, using the original numbered sheet to guide you.
- Discuss the similarities and differences, and the ease or difficulty of the process.

VOCABULARY

chiaroscuro: Italian term meaning light-dark, used to describe extreme contrasts of light and dark. Artists use chiaroscuro to create the illusion of volume as well as for dramatic effect.

etching: a method of printmaking in which an image is created on a printing plate through the use of acid to create grooves in the surface of the printing plate. The resulting grooves hold ink during the printing process, and this ink is then transferred to paper.

genre painting: artworks that show scenes from daily life (*genre* is a French word meaning "kind" or "sort"). Genre paintings were often small works that contained hidden meanings and had strong moral messages.

guilds: professional organizations to which seventeenth-century Dutch painters had to belong in order to practise as artists. Each city had its own guild, which local artists joined in order to produce and sell work locally.

landscape: a work of art in which the subject is a view of the exterior physical world. Traditionally, landscapes have been paintings or drawings depicting natural scenes and are often concerned with light, space and setting.

portrait: a work of art in which the artist's principal goal is to capture the physical likeness and personality of an individual or group of people.

still life: a work of art in which the subject consists of inanimate objects. A still life can include not only natural items like cut flowers and fruit, but also manufactured objects like glasses, wine and candles. A still life can be a celebration of material pleasures such as food and wine, or a warning against such excesses (a vanitas painting).

symbol: something that stands for or suggests something else. For example, in Dutch art a skull was a symbol for the passing of time or transience of life.

texture: the surface quality of an artwork. Texture can be real or simulated. Real texture can be both seen and touched. Simulated texture cannot be interpreted by touching; it must be seen. Some examples of words to use to describe texture are shiny, smooth, rough, coarse, gritty and granular.

vanitas: a still life painting that warns against material pleasures and of the brevity—or transience—of human life. Symbols like dead flowers or rotting fruit are often found in vanitas pieces, measuring the passing of time.

RESOURCES

Print:
Brook, Timothy. *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World.* London: Bloomsbury Press, 2008.

Chevalier, Tracy. *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. New York: Penguin Group, 2001.

De Bie, Ceciel, and Martijn Leenen. *Rebrandt: See and Do Children's Book*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2001.

Haak, Bob. *The Golden Age: Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century*. New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1996.

Hochstrasser, Julie Berger. *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age.* New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2007.

Schama, Simon. *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Venezia, Mike. *Rembrandt: Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists.* Chicago: Children's Press, 1988.

Game:
Dutch Golden Age Board Game, Phalanx Games, 2008.
Historical game involving shipping companies, adventures, trade, artists and more.
(Available at Drexoll Games and other game stores.)

Online:
www.artcyclopedia.com
Online art encyclopedia, listing international artists, and museums and galleries with collections of their work.

http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/dutchmasters/resources/DM_ed_resource.pdf
Educational resource from the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia, for the exhibition *Dutch Masters from the Rijksmuseum.* Excellent historical and background material.

http://www.noma.org/educationguides/Dutch17.pdf
Teachers' Guide to Dutch Masters of the seventeenth centur—excellent historical background.

www.wikipedia.com
Online dictionary and encyclopedia, created collaboratively by laypeople.

http://www.wga.hu
The Web Gallery of Art, a virtual museum and searchable database of European painting and sculpture from the twelfth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. Contains artists' biographies and large images of artworks. Very helpful resource.