

Rembrandt
(Pronounced: REM brant)
1606-1669

Harmenszoon van Rijn Rembrandt was a Dutch painter. Many famous artists do not use their entire name, so many use their last name. For the presentation I will refer to our artist simply as Rembrandt. When I say Dutch - does anyone have an idea of what country I am from? (Holland) He is famous for his portraits and for his skill at depicting light and shadow in paintings. In Rembrandt's portraits, we often see the subject's face half shaded. The other side of the subject's face is often clearly shown in full, bright light, and this may be a view of the person as he or she would like to be seen.

In Rembrandt's day there were no cameras or photographers, so many people paid money to artists to paint their likeness on canvas. Rembrandt was one of the most popular artists of his time, and many people, who could afford to have their portraits painted, chose Rembrandt to portray them.

Rembrandt was born on July 15, 1606, in Leiden, Holland, the eighth of nine children. Rembrandt began studying painting when he was fifteen years old, and by the time he was twenty-three, he was already regarded as a master painter. Rembrandt painted many landscape paintings (from the top of the sky to the bottom of the land) and paintings showing scenes from the Bible. He painted over four hundred portraits, many of his family, friends, and of himself. Rembrandt was very skilled at suggesting action in a still picture.

Rembrandt became very wealthy, and he enjoyed spending his money on fine clothes, jewelry, art objects, and beautiful furniture for his fine house. He liked to use many of these precious jewels and art ornaments in his paintings, and he liked dressing his subjects, (and himself), in costly furs and fabrics. He was able to reproduce in minute detail every facet of a jewel, or every plush fold of a cape.

Rembrandt's spending habits got him into trouble, and he eventually had to declare bankruptcy. After this, Hendrickje (his wife) and his son, Titus, managed his financial affairs. They also helped support the family by opening a shop for the sale of Rembrandt's paintings and prints. Rembrandt created over six hundred paintings, over a thousand drawings, and almost three hundred etchings. (This may seem like a big number but just realize how many pictures that you have drawn or colored just this year) He worked very carefully and slowly, though, and his sittings for each portrait were often done over a two or three month period.

Rembrandt died at the age of sixty-three, on October 4, 1669. After his death, his popularity as a painter continued to rise. Rembrandt is now considered a giant in the history of art, and his portraits are considered masterpieces of light and shadow, communicating to us the quiet wisdom and inner strength of his subjects.

Possible Discussion Questions/Thinking about Rembrandt

- Talk about sources of light, such as the sun, moon, lamps, and candles. Reference the artwork and talk about the shadows and shades you can see. Discuss what creates a shadow or shade.
A shadow in front means the light is coming from behind.
A shadow on one side means the light is on the opposite side.
A shadow above means the light is on the opposite side.
A shadow that is almost invisible means the light is coming from directly above.
You can use a flashlight pointed at someone face to show this. And then you can talk about the fact that they did not have flashlight or lights. They had to use a lot of candlelight.
- Explain to the students that portrait painters often include special signs or clues that help identify their

subjects. Using their imagination, who do the children think the man in the golden helmet could be?

- Talk about how Rembrandt's portraits. How do they make the students feel? Are they intriguing? Do they make them feel happy or sad?
- Ask the students how they would dress, and how they would want Rembrandt to portray them if he was going to paint their portrait.