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Rembrandt

1606 - 1669



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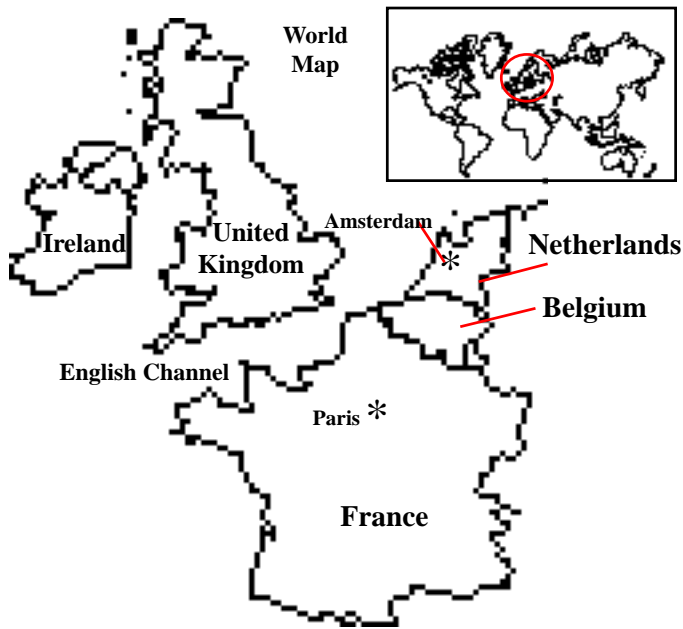
Rembrandt van Rijn (rem-brant van ryne) was born in Leiden, Holland in 1606. He was the eighth of nine children. His father was a miller who produced malt, the main ingredient of beer. His mother was a baker's daughter. The family owned a large, busy, windmill on the Rhine river for over four generations.

Rembrandt was not expected to follow in his father's footsteps and learn a common trade. Hoping that he would enter a profession or find work in local government, his parents sent him to grammar school. In 1620, at age 14, he briefly attended the University of Leiden but the programs there did not interest him.

Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669)
Self Portrait at Old Age, 1669. Oil on canvas. National Gallery, London, Great Britain © Erich Lessing/ Art Resource, NY

Where In Time ?

1600 - 1620	1620 - 1630	1630 - 1640	1640 - 1650	1650 - 1670
Rembrandt born 1606 Jamestown, VA 1607. Galileo telescope 1609. Dutch exploration Baroque Period 1600s	Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock 1620. 1626 New Amsterdam/New York City founded by Dutch.	East India Trading Co. trades with the Far East. Taj Mahal built 1635. Geometry used 1637.	Isaac Newton born 1642. Barometer 1643. Sun King, Louis XIV rules France 1643-1715.	Anglo-Dutch Wars 1652-1674. Europe's Great Plague 1665. Great Fire in London 1666. Rembrandt dies 1669



At age 15, Rembrandt's gift for drawing was so obvious that he and his father agreed he should give up academic studies and study art. He became an apprentice to a local painter who taught him current techniques and a style known as history painting, whose subjects were political, mythological and religious. Rembrandt studied in this workshop from 1621 to 1624 and mastered everything. When he was considered mature enough to move on, he spent six months in a workshop in Amsterdam studying with a master painter. Rembrandt and another young artist set up a studio in his father's house when he returned to Leiden. He began work as an engraver and sold many prints of his etchings. He thought the best way to become well known was to sell

many copies of one print. His etching, *The Mill*, shows the Dutch countryside where he lived.

Anna and Tobit, which he painted in 1626 at age 20, is considered Rembrandt's first masterpiece. This painting shows he had mastered the technique of painting light and shadow. At age 22, Rembrandt had begun to make a name for himself as a painter.

The kings and queens who ruled European countries at this time were the major patrons of the arts, along with the Catholic Church. A Protestant, democratic Holland saw the rise of merchants and businessmen who wanted to be portrayed as hard-working, worthy citizens and members of charitable organizations. They were rich, open to ideas, and became the new patrons of the arts. The many individual and group portraits they commissioned provided work for many painters in Holland.

It became very fashionable for the wealthy middle class to have their portraits painted by Rembrandt, who was the leading **portrait** painter of his time. When painting these portraits he was careful to adapt his style to reflect the status of the person who had commissioned the painting.

Rembrandt also painted more **self portraits** than any other famous painter. You can see the changes in the way he painted as he grew older.



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) *Rembrandt (self-portrait) and Saskia in the parable of the Prodigal Son*. 1635-39. Oil on canvas, 131 x 161 cm. Gemaeldegalerie, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, © Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY



Rembrandt van Rijn (1609-1669). *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*. Oil on canvas, 170x217 cm. 1632. © Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY Mauritshuis, The Hague, The Netherlands

Rembrandt felt if he painted himself he would not have to account to anyone for what he painted.

Rembrandt decided to leave Leiden and enter a wider market. In 1631 he went to live with an art dealer in Amsterdam. Rembrandt got to know the art dealer's niece, Saskia, the daughter of a wealthy magistrate. He married her three years later. They continued to live in the art dealer's house where Rembrandt and other pupils

had already set up a workshop. Saskia modeled for many of Rembrandt's paintings and drawings.

Earlier artists started the custom of setting **group portraits** in an anatomy theater, which is a room where medical students watched corpses being dissected. Rembrandt hoped *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Tulp*, painted in 1632, would enhance his reputation as an artist. In it, celebrated surgeon and local magistrate Dr. Tulp is giving a lecture to local government officials who are attending as if they were at a theater performance.

The Night Watch, painted in 1638, is a group portrait of a militia company and has become one of the most famous paintings in the world. People in group portraits at this time were usually shown standing or sitting around a table. Using lighting, color and depth, Rembrandt created a natural, animated setting, with physical action and entertainment. At first, the painting was thought to be a night scene but when the dark varnish that coated it was cleaned off, it showed the scene was set in the daytime.

Rembrandt found an old warehouse which was remodeled to meet the needs of his growing business. Meanwhile, he was enjoying a lavish lifestyle. Weapons, sculptures, engravings and antiques which he collected were used as objects in paintings. When he or family members posed, jewels and rich fabrics were worn as costume. When Saskia's family accused him of wasting her inheritance, he said these things were needed for his flourishing business.

Saskia gave birth to their son Titus in 1641. She died the following year. From then on, until his own death in 1669, Rembrandt's portraits and other paintings had a deeper, quieter style. His art turned psychological, with solitary figures and themes of loneliness. Reds and browns dominated his paintings. **Chiaroscuro** shades of light and dark conveyed mood and emotion in his paintings.

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WHY do you think portraits and group portraits were painted?

COMPARE the younger self portrait of Rembrandt to the older version. What are some words that describe Rembrandt in each painting? What can YOU tell about his personality?

HOW does Rembrandt emphasize areas in his paintings he thinks are important? What happens to less important areas?

Landscapes were greatly prized by middle-class Dutch families. *The Mill*, a painting created in 1650, is Rembrandt's largest and most successful landscape. It was inspired by long walks in the country during his time of sadness after the death of Saskia.

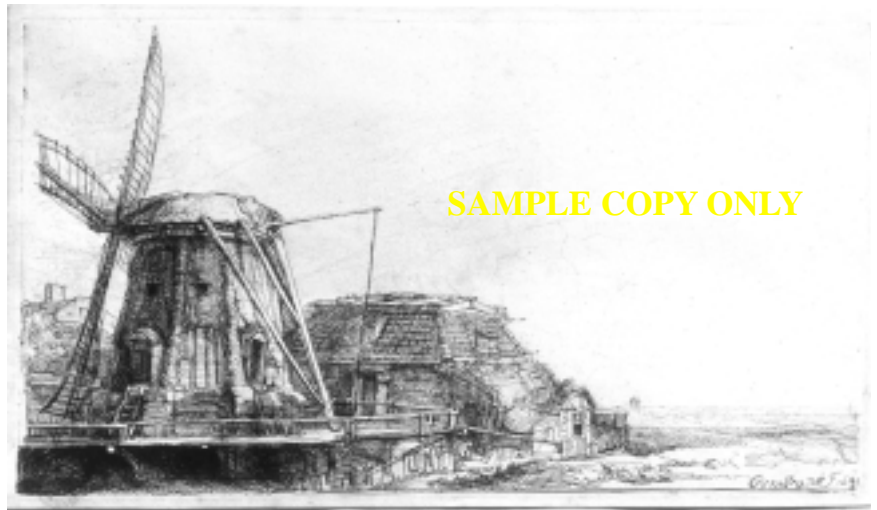
After a few years Rembrandt formed a relationship with Hendrickje Stoffels, who had been hired to take care of Titus. He often painted her pleasant features as simple and tranquil expressions. They indulged in extravagant tastes and ran up large debts. Daughter Cornelia was born to them in 1654. He did not marry her because his inheritance from Saskia's will would stop.

Rembrandt was not selling many paintings and his debts were growing. His financial situation was aggravated by the Anglo-Dutch war.

The Syndics of the Clothmakers' Guild, painted in 1662, is thought to be his greatest portrait. Guilds were made up of professional people and owners of craft workshops and trading companies. These portraits acted as records of members and were displayed in the guilds' chambers.

In 1665, Rembrandt was asked to paint *The Jewish Bride*. He did not paint it in his usual style of photo-like detail with a highly polished finish. Instead, he painted textures of soft velvet, shiny satin, delicate laces, and feathers. He used very few brush strokes to show texture because he wanted only to suggest reality in this sketchy, almost impressionistic painting. Paintings near the end of his life were loaded with thick slabs and blobs of paint worked over the surface with a palette knife. Some customers refused commissions done in this manner and only a few of his peers admired them.

In 1669 Rembrandt died alone. Respectable society of the times had never completely accepted some of his attitudes. His paintings no longer agreed with public taste. After his death he was even forgotten by the critics. Now, Rembrandt is Holland's most celebrated artist and is referred to as the greatest Dutch painter of his era.



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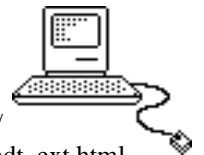
Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) *The Mill*, 1641 © Giraudon/ Art Resource, NY Musee du Petit Palais, Paris, France

BOOKS ABOUT REMBRANDT

- Claudio Pescio. **Rembrandt & 17th Century Holland** (The Masters of Art) Peter Bedrick Books. New York 1995.
 Mike Venezia. **Rembrandt** (Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists) Children's Press. New York 1988.
Rembrandt Merchant of Amsterdam (Great Painters for Children) Ediciones B.S.A. Publishers. Barcelona, Spain 1992.
 Alexander Sturgis. **Introducing Rembrandt** Little, Brown & Co. London 1994.
 Pascal Bonafoux. **A Weekend With Rembrandt** Rizzoli International Pub. Inc. NY 1994.
 Ceciel De Bie. **Rembrandt** (See & Do Children's Book) J Paul Getty Museum Publishers. Los Angeles, Ca 2001.
 David Spence. **Rembrandt: Life of a Portrait Painter** (Great Artist Series) Barron's Educational Series Inc. New York 1997.

REMBRANDT WEBSITES

- www.netherlands.html
www.sunsite.dk/cgfa/rembrand/
www.encarta.msn.com/find
www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/rembrandt/
www.artchive.com/artchive/ftptoc/rembrandt_ext.html
www.rnw.nl/doubledutch/en/rembrandt/
www.aa.psu.edu/courses/ART122W/REMBRANDT.HTML
www.edgate.com/summergames/inactive/parade_of_nations/



MUSEUMS



Where YOU can find Rembrandt's art:

- Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City
- Fine Arts Museum of Boston
- National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
- Toledo Museum of Art
- Los Angeles County Museum of Art
- Art Institute of Chicago
- J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles
- Houston Museum of Fine Arts
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