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Opening extract from **Book of Famous Artists**

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Jan van Eyck

1395-1441

an Eyck was one of the first artists in northern Europe to achieve great success painting with oils. His paintings combine lifelike portraits with glowing light, convincing textures and realistic, detailed landscapes.



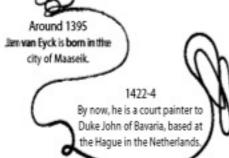
PORTRAIT OF A MAN (thought to be a self portrait)

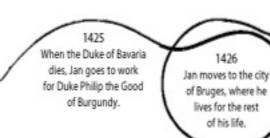
Jan van Eyck was born in the city of Maaseik (in what is now Belgium) in 1395. Little is known about his early life, but by his 20s, he was already a hugely successful painter. At this time, oil paints were fairly new, and van Eyck was so good with them that some later experts thought he had invented them. This wasn't true, but he was one of the first to demonstrate the amazing effects that oil painting could achieve. Because of van Eyck's talent, he was in demand by rich and

powerful clients. At the age of 31, he went to work for the Duke

This is a photograph of the city of Bruges, where van Eyck lived and worked for many years.

of Burgundy in the city of Bruges. But van Eyck also found time to paint for other well-to-do art-lovers, from rich merchants who wanted portraits of themselves, to powerful churchmen who paid for huge religious paintings.





1426

of his life.

Eye for detail

Van Eyck loved detail, and his paintings often feature beautiful patterns, intricate carvings and elaborate architecture.

Although many of his paintings depict Biblical stories, he based the settings closely on the cities and landscapes of the area of the Netherlands where he lived.



Some experts think Jan had a brother, Hubert, and a sister, Margaret, who were artists too.

426-1432

During this period, Jan works enahugereligiouspaintingfor

a church in the city of Ghent,

in what is now Belgium

Jan van Eyck dies.



VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH CHANCELLOR ROUN

Thispainting was paid for by a rich church mannamed Rolin, shown on the left.Opposite are baby Jesus and his mother, the Virgin Mary. Although it looks as if Rolin is in the same room, the other figures are supposed to be in a heavenly scene in his imagination, as he prays to them.

The man in the red hat

Although many paintings by van Eyck survive, not much is known about him as a person. He only left behind one portrait (opposite) that most experts believe to be a picture of himself, but it's possible he painted himself into other pictures. In the painting above, the tiny figure in the middle wearing a red hat may represent van Eyck.



PORTRAIT OF MICHELANGELO

DAVID

This is Michelangelo's most famous work, a nude statue of the Bible character David.



near Florence, in what is now Italy. He started as an apprentice painter at 13 years old, but soon switched to sculpture. By the age of 200 he had carved a statue in an ancient Roman style that looked so convincing it was sold as a genuine antique.

Michelangelo was born in a small village

Michelangelo

MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

1475-1564

ichelangelo was an astonishingly talented man.

time, he was also an amazingly gifted painter, architect,

and poet. But even his friends complained that he was

grumpy, smelly, and hated being around other people.

As well as being one of the greatest sculptors of all

Wood offlisstatentand energy soorspread, apoelsol pae el soenei filo officials afficial biasked banveca state a fstatue vastpawasta adkyshapiliy shadedfortanolat. That blais the fististic of Bavide, Davisbygaacedudrabefoity.tof Eltyenfoldandopted itchsptteziritnassticeir mascot.

Michelangelomadethissketchwhenhewa statue. David holds a sling in his raised ha David used this to kill a giant named Goli.

as an apprentice painter.

March 6, 1475 Michelangeloisborninthevillage of Caprese, near Florence. 1488

1490-92 Hestudiessculptureat anacademyfoundedby animportantpolitician, Lorenzo de Medici. in Florence. He starts working

1494-5 He carves a Romanstyle sculpture so convincing.it'ssold as an antique.



In demand

1504

He finishes

carving David

of marble.

By now, Michelangelo had lots of wealthy art-lovers in Florence and Rome willing to pay for his work, so he divided his time between these two great Italian cities, and between sculpture and painting. By 1503, Michelangelo's talent had been noted by the Pope, and he was called to Rome to work for him, perhaps the most prestigious position for an artist then.

1530 He paints The Last Judgement on the end wall of the Sistine Chapel. 1508-1512 from a vast block 1546 He paints the ceiling of the He is appointed as Sistine Chapel in Rome. architect for St. Peter's

Basilica in Rome.

THE HOLY FAMILY Thispaintingshowsthebaby Jesus with his mother Mary and his father Joseph.

MichelangeloaddedJesus's cousin, St. John, further back, and a row of nude malefiguresbehindtheholy family. These were inspired by ancient Roman statues.



Michelangelowasfascinated by how the human body worked, and drew from live models, even though people strongly disapproved.

> February 18, 1564 He dies in Rome at the age of 88.



Jan Vermeer

JOANNIS RELINIERSZ VERMEER 1632-1675

ermeer is now one of the most famous artists in the world. But he was not a great success in his own lifetime. His detailed, delicate paintings of domestic life didn't come to fame until 200 years after his death.

Vermeer was born in the city of Delft in the Netherlands,

and lived there all his life. At the age of 20, he took over his

father's business as an art dealer, and became an artist at around

the same time. His studio was in a room at the front of his house,

on the second floor. He shut himself up there to paint, setting up

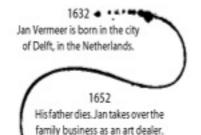
lots of props and assistants in costume to create detailed scenes,

and then copying them very carefully.

This figure from one of Vermeer'spaintingsmaybe meant as a self portrait. If so, it's the only portrait of Vermeer that survives.

VEW OF DELFT

Vermeer only painted a very few outdoor scenes. This one shows his homecitywhichbyVermeer'stimehad becomefamousformakingandexporting decorative blue and white china.



1653

HebecomesamemberoftheGuild of St. Luke, which means he is now a professional painter.



Troubled times

A gunpowder store in

Delftexplodes, destroying

much of the city

Vermeer never made much from his art, or from his art dealing business. He seems to have been reluctant to part with his paintings, but he also lived at a difficult time for artists. Religious disputes, wars, plagues and other disasters - including an explosion that destroyed much of Delft - all made it hard for painters to find people with spare money to spend on art. When Vermeer died, at the age of just 43, it may have been money worries that brought on his final illness.

Werneerbecomesthehead of the Guildon Stilluke

a sign that local painters respect his work.

THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

In this painting Vermeer may be hinting at how he worked. He shows an artist at an easel, painting a costumed figure surrounded by props. But this scene may be misleading.



SomeexpertsthinkVermeerusedanearly typeofcamera, called a camera obscura, whensketchinghisscenes.Hewouldhave sat in a darkened cubicle at the end of his studio. Light from the scene passed through a small hole onto the canvas, where it cast an upside-down image.

