



European Tour: History and Tradition

The focus of this lesson plan is the primary scenes of the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

Subject

Geography

Grade level

9-12

Duration

Three class periods

Objectives

Students will

- review important facts about the Vatican, its art and architecture, the Pope, and the selection of saints;
- learn about the Sistine Chapel and take an online tour;
- explore one of nine main scenes and present it to the class.

Materials

- Computer with Internet access
- Print and online resources for the Sistine Chapel ceiling
- Color printer
- Paper, pencils, markers

Procedures

1. Before you begin this lesson, visit the Web site below to review the nine paintings and decide on their appropriateness for your students. To print color images of the nine main panels of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, click on the name of each scene, then select the small image for a larger version to print. You may want to label each scene on the back for future reference.

Sistine Chapel Frescoes: Scenes from Genesis

<http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/tours/sistina/index3.html>

2. After watching the video, review some of the facts presented in the program about the Vatican, the role of the Pope, and the declaration of saints. Ask students these questions: What is the Vatican? (*the religious and administrative center of the Roman Catholic Church, where the pope lives*) Where is the Vatican? (*in Vatican City, in Rome*) Is it part of the city of Rome? (*No, it is its own city-state, with its own laws, stamps, currency, and*

security.) Who is the leader of the Roman Catholic Church? Who holds this position today? (*The pope; as of 2003 it's John Paul II.*) How long has the institution of the Vatican been in existence? (*2,000 years*) One important role of the pope is the declaration of saints. Who are saints? (*Someone who has led a holy life, performed a miracle, or sacrificed life for religious beliefs.*) In the program, who was being considered for sainthood? (*Mother Theresa*)

3. Ask students to talk about the architecture and interior details of the Vatican they noticed in the program. (*Answers will vary, including that the main dome of St. Peter's Basilica is grand and ornate; the interior details are lavish and detailed.*) Next, ask them to describe the Vatican artwork. What do all the pieces have in common? (*Based on religious themes, they are created by many famous artists.*) Ask students to name one artist whose work is found at the Vatican. (*Artists mentioned include Raphael, Michelangelo, and Van Gogh.*) In what chapel were the frescoes recently restored? (*Sistine Chapel*)
4. Tell students that this lesson will focus on the paintings of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Provide students with the background information below.

The Sistine Chapel is one of several chapels at the Vatican. It was completed in 1483. In 1508, Pope Julius II commissioned a young artist named Michelangelo to repaint the ceiling. Michelangelo initially resisted because he thought of himself more as a sculptor than a painter, but he finally agreed. Michelangelo's first challenge was to build enormous scaffolding to reach the long, curved ceiling 60 feet high. Over the next four years, he painted the ceiling while lying on his back.

Another challenge was the great size of the ceiling. At 40 feet wide and 130 feet long, it covered more than 5,000 square feet. Michelangelo's work included more than 300 figures, but nine main scenes dominate, depicting stories about the creation, fall, and rebirth of mankind. These stories are from the Book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible.

5. Now show students the following Virtual Tours of the Sistine Chapel:
http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/x-Pano/CSN/Visit_CSN_Main.html
6. Tell students they will break into teams to learn about one of the nine main paintings, present their research, and create their own version of the Sistine Chapel ceiling on a bulletin board. Divide the class into nine teams and assign each team one of the following images:
 - Separation of Light from Darkness
 - Creation of the Sun, Moon, and Plants
 - Separation of the Earth from the Waters
 - Creation of Adam
 - Creation of Eve
 - The Fall and Expulsion from Garden of Eden
 - Sacrifice of Noah
 - The Deluge
 - Drunkenness of Noah
7. Give the color printout of the appropriate paintings to the teams. Ask them to discuss the painting as a group and write their initial impressions:
 - Who do you think this painting shows?

- What are the most striking images?
 - What emotions are shown in this painting?
 - What symbols are used? What do you think the symbols represent?
 - How would you describe the colors, style, and techniques?
 - How does this painting make you feel?
8. Next, have students use online and print resources to research the paintings. They should answer the following questions:
- What event is shown in this painting?
 - Describe the events in this painting. Who are the different people or figures?
 - What symbols are used and what do they represent?
 - Why do you think this painting is important? What message does this send?
 - Describe the images or techniques Michelangelo used to express the meaning of the painting.

The best place for teams to start is the first Web site below. After reading the overview, they will find links to detailed images and additional comments by clicking the "Previous Page" icon. Additional information is available at the other sites below.

- Sistine Chapel Frescoes: Scenes from Genesis
<http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/tours/sistina/index3.html>
 - Sistine Chapel Ceiling: Central Stories (not all scenes discussed)
http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/CSN/CSN_Volta_StCentr.html
 - Sistine Chapel Ceiling: General Information
http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/CSN/CSN_Storia.html
9. Give students at least one full class period to research and gather information about their painting. Each team should write a brief summary, including their initial impressions and findings from their research.
10. Beginning with the team for Separation of Light from Darkness, have teams present their painting to the class by answering the questions from their research. The presentation should also include the team members' impressions and personal thoughts about the painting. After each team presents, pin their painting on the bulletin board. Each painting should be placed in the same order as on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. (For a large, clear image of the ceiling in its entirety, see this Web site:
http://www.kfki.hu/~arthp/art/m/michelan/3sistina/2ceil_ve.jpg.)
11. As a class, discuss how the ceiling tells an epic story of mankind. Ask students why the Sistine Chapel ceiling, created almost 500 years ago, is still an important work of art. How does it tell the story of mankind in a way that differs from a narrative? What are the advantages of using images instead of words to tell this story?

Extensions

For the “Rome’s Great Empire” segment: Have students work with a partner to research and describe at least ten improvements the Romans brought to the regions they conquered. Examples include theaters, aqueducts, roads, police, and public arenas. Partners should then use their research to create a crossword puzzle, memory game, letter jumble (Example: QACTEDUU is a pipe or channel for moving water. Answer: AQUEDUCT), or other game.

For the “Emperor Napoleon” segment: Create a timeline illustrating Napoleon Bonaparte’s rise to power as emperor, key victories, exile in Elba, return to power, defeat at Waterloo, and final banishment on St. Helena.

For the “Land of Forests” segment: Have students write a personal essay about the benefits of living in Sweden. Have them explain whether they would want to live there. What important lessons we can learn from Sweden about preserving our natural resources?

Evaluation:

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students’ work during this lesson.

3 points: Students recalled several key details about the Vatican, the Pope, and Vatican art and architecture; participated actively in class discussions; showed thorough research about their assigned painting; and presented a comprehensive report with several details.

2 points: Students recalled some key details about the Vatican, the Pope, and Vatican art and architecture; participated somewhat in class discussions; showed satisfactory research about their assigned painting; and presented a satisfactory report with some details.

1 point: Students recalled few or no key details about the Vatican, the Pope, and Vatican art and architecture; did not participate in class discussions; showed little research about their assigned painting; and presented a satisfactory report with few or no details.

Vocabulary

fresco

Definition: A painting on plaster wall or ceiling created with watercolors

Context: Many of the historic frescoes at the Vatican are being restored to their original beauty.

Pope

Definition: The leader of the Roman Catholic Church

Context: Of all the popes in history, Pope John Paul II has traveled the most.

Vatican

Definition: The palace within the Vatican City, the independent city-state in Rome

Context: The pope lives in the Vatican, which is a treasure of artwork.

Academic Standards

The National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) provides 18 national geography standards that the geographically informed person knows and understands. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.ncge.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following NCGE standards:

- Human Systems: The process, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of the NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Credit

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