

Rembrandt Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Dutch artist Rembrandt van Rijn was born on July 15, 1606, in Leiden. At age 14, he enrolled at the University of Leiden; when the curriculum failed to stir his interest, he left the university to study art. Rembrandt studied with renowned history painter Pieter Lastman in 1624, and then began painting and teaching others in his hometown. In 1631, Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam—Lastman’s hometown—and married Saskia van Uylenburgh, the cousin of a prominent art dealer in the area. Van Uylenburgh’s connections to wealthy patrons allowed Rembrandt access to the rich elite, and he painted many commissioned portraits. His paintings at the time were frequently grounded in mythology and religion—often Biblical or Christian themes. Rembrandt produced at least 65 paintings in the 1630s alone.

Rembrandt’s paintings were centered on individuals, objects, and the world around him. He was deeply connected to his Christian faith, and his devotion inspired many historical and Biblical paintings and landscapes. His paintings are revered for their ability to capture snapshots of human existence in a natural yet unique manner, using light and texture to enhance the emotional depth of his subjects. Rembrandt was able to balance the extent of human feeling with an element of realism that appealed to Dutch audiences. Rembrandt’s work was extremely popular during the Dutch Golden Age, a key period of achievement in Holland, and he is considered the greatest artist of that time period.

Unfortunately, when the Dutch taste in art began to shift, Rembrandt’s paintings lost favor. Flemish artist Anthony van Dyck ushered in a new era of grace and elegance, and Rembrandt refused to compromise his own art style to adjust to the popularity of a new method. In 1656, Rembrandt declared bankruptcy and had to sell many of his possessions—several of them items he had collected from travels around the world. He died in 1669 and was buried in an unknown, unmarked grave in a church, identified as a poor man. While the end of Rembrandt’s life was not reflective of his talents as an artist, his vision was revived several years later by future artists who followed his example. German and Venetian painters adopted Rembrandt’s art style in the 18th century and a large-scale Rembrandt revival was brought on in the 19th century by European and American painters. His commitment to his craft and art style remained relevant even in the years following the Golden Age.

1. Which of the following statements about Rembrandt is true?

- a. His art received praise for the entire duration of his life.
- b. His paintings very rarely featured human subjects.
- c. His paintings became popular again after his death.
- d. He was very disconnected from religious life.

2. Which of the following is not a component of Rembrandt’s artwork?

- a. Biblical scenes
- b. Emotional complexity
- c. Landscapes
- d. Unnatural coloring

- 3. Which did not influence Rembrandt's life in a positive manner?**
- Pieter Lastman
 - Religion
 - Anthony van Dyck
 - Saskia van Uylenburgh
- 4. Which statement best describes Rembrandt's life?**
- He refused to conform to the norm, even when it came at a cost.
 - His willingness to compromise made him an easy painter to work with.
 - His talents in art were entirely self-developed.
 - He only became richer as his life progressed.
- 5. Describe the subjects captured in Rembrandt's artwork.**
- Complex human emotion, but in a relatable fashion
 - Everyday individuals, but enhanced to extravagance
 - Landscapes, but devoid of feeling or depth
 - Portraits, but in a graceful and formal manner
- 6. Put these events from Rembrandt's life in order.**
- Rembrandt marries Saskia van Uylenburgh
 - Rembrandt has to sell many of his possessions
 - Rembrandt produces at least 65 paintings in a single decade
 - Rembrandt attends the University of Leiden
- IV, III, I, II
 - IV, I, III, II
 - II, IV, I, III
 - I, II, III, IV
- 7. A student wants to examine more of Rembrandt's paintings to understand the brush strokes he used. Which of the following is the best resource for this student?**
- A biography of Rembrandt's life
 - A gallery with some of his paintings on display
 - A museum exhibit containing some of Rembrandt's paintbrushes
 - A love letter written by Rembrandt to Saskia van Uylenburgh