



**BY HER HAND | Artemisia Gentileschi and Women Artists in Italy, 1500–1800**  
GRADES 9-12 EDUCATOR RESOURCE



Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith and a Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes*, ca.1623-1625, oil on canvas. Detroit Institute of Arts, Gift of Mr. Leslie H. Green, 52.253

This lesson supports the special exhibition *By Her Hand: Artemisia Gentileschi and Women Artists in Italy, 1500-1800*.

### LEARNING TARGET

Art by Italian women artists between 1500-1800 prompts investigation of the intersection of artistic skill, gender, and power in the creation and viewing of these artworks.

### STUDENT OUTCOMES | STUDENTS WILL

- Use close looking techniques to construct meaning around a variety of artworks
- Reconsider assumptions about the art world in Italy from 1500-1800
- Wonder how the artists' lived experiences informed their work and subject matter
- Develop a heightened awareness of the ways gender and power intersect in the telling of history and thus determine whose artworks get privileged in art history
- Discover the complex reality of women artists' experiences in this period and leave with tools to consider related issues today.

## **CCSS Alignment**

### Global Citizenship (C3) Framework for Social Studies Standards

D1.5 a Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions taking into consideration multiple points of view represented by the sources, the types of sources available and the potential use of the sources.

History D2.His.16c Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

### Literacy

CCSS.Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.7 Analyze the representation of a subject in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g. Auden’s *Musee des Beaux Arts*’ and Breughel’s *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3.b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and /or characters.

## **21ST CENTURY LEARNING SKILLS ALIGNMENT**

Communication

Creativity

Critical Thinking

## **PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES**

Introduce students to the topic of Italian women artists between 1500-1800, the difficulty of this achievement due to gender bias, and the significance of admiring their work today when it was often attributed to male artists in the past. Use one or both of the pre-visit activities to cultivate curiosity and a practice of careful observation around the artworks of a few women artists who are featured in the exhibition they will see at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

### Attachments

- See, Think, Wonder (Appendix A)
- Portrait Compare and Contrast (Appendix B)
- By Her Hand Image Slides

## **DURING VISIT ACTIVITY**

Self-Guide: Before students walk through the exhibit, have them choose one activity to do in pairs or small groups. Remind students that they can bring a clipboard or notebook as a hard surface to write on and only pencils as their writing utensil.

### Attachments

Exhibit Activity 1: Expressing our Learning Through Observation (Appendix C)

Artist: Sofonisba Anguissola

Exhibit Activity 2: See, Think, Wonder (Appendix D)

Artists: Fede Galizia and Orsola Maddalena Caccia

Exhibit Activity 3: Compare and Contrast (Appendix E)

Artists: Elisabetta Sirani and Artemisia Gentileschi

Exhibit Activity 4: Perceive, Know About, Care About (Appendix F)

Artist: Anna Bacherini Piattoli

**WARNING |** Two objects in the show (a painting and a video) contain stories of sexual assault. The painting does not include any explicit imagery and the video is in a separate room. Both moments are easily avoidable and signaled by signage in the galleries.

## **POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES**

### **ACTIVITY 1 | I Used to Think...Now I Think...**

Using the sentence starters, “I used to think...Now I think...” encourage students to reflect on how their thinking has changed throughout these lessons about women artists, 1500-1800.

*I used to think...*

What assumptions did you have about the opportunities for women artists in the past?  
What other thoughts did you have about women artists prior to your visit to the DIA?

*Now I think...*

How has your thinking changed since you experienced the exhibit? What new information did you find interesting or intriguing? What are some themes or topics that resonated with you?

In small groups, have students share out their “I used to think...Now I think...” reflections, using their information from their pre-visit and during visit handouts.

### **ACTIVITY 2 | Making Connections**

In this summative activity, students create an original artwork using any medium (such as pencil, paint, clay, found objects, collage, etc.) that responds to one of the prompts below. Support student connections between what they’re learning in the classroom, the society we live in, and the exhibit by asking them to write a one-page reflection about their original work.

How might an artists’ lived experiences around gender and power inform their work and subject matter? Use at least two specific examples to support your response.

In what ways did women artists have and show their power as artists between 1500 and 1800? How does that compare and/or contrast to women artists of a different time period, in a different region? Use at least two specific examples to support your response.

What is the legacy of the artists featured in the exhibit *By Her Hand: Artemisia Gentileschi and Women Artists in Italy, 1500–1800*? What major takeaways do you have from this exhibit?

This educational resource was developed by the DIA Education Programs team in collaboration with art teacher Damariscotta Rouelle.



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**PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY | Self-Portrait Compare and Contrast (Appendix B)**

**Step 1: Observation**

- *Self-Portrait at the Easel*, Sofonisba Anguissola
- *Self-Portrait as a Lute Player*, Artemisia Gentileschi

Look closely at each image listed above and complete the table below.

<b>Compare</b> <i>What similarities do you notice between the two images?</i>	<b>Contrast</b> <i>What differences do you notice between the two images?</i>

**Step 2: Questions**

1. How are these artists choosing to depict themselves? What do you see that makes you say that?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What power do self-portraits have? Not have?

**EXHIBITION ACTIVITY 1:** Expressing our Learning Through Observation (Appendix C)

Artist: Sofonisba Anguissola

**Learn**

Many of the artists in this exhibition were trained by their fathers, their husbands, or self-taught. Social norms dictated that it was not appropriate for young women to travel outside the home unaccompanied, thus limiting their opportunities and experiences in the world in which they lived.

**Look**

Look closely at all of Sofonisba Anguissola’s work in the exhibition. Choose one character within one of her works and complete the **Perceive, Know About, Care About** table from that character’s perspective. Write or draw your responses.

<b>Perceive</b> <i>What can the person perceive? What do you see that makes you say that?</i>	<b>Know About</b> <i>What might the person know about or believe? What do you see that makes you say that?</i>	<b>Care About</b> <i>What might the person care about? What do you see that makes you say that?</i>

*This thinking routine was adapted from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.*

**Discuss with a partner**

1. What do you notice about the images by Sofonisba Anguissola?
2. What emotions are captured in Anguissola’s work? What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What wonderings or puzzles do you have about Anguissola and the time period during which she lived?

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GRADES 9-12 EDUCATOR RESOURCE

**EXHIBITION ACTIVITY 2: See, Think, Wonder (Appendix D)**

Artists: Fede Galizia and Orsola Maddalena Caccia

**Learn**

Women artists of this period could not go to art classes and were not allowed to attend figure drawing classes that were attended by men. There was a social stigma (shameful was a word used at the time) attached to women who accompanied men outside their home unless it was with their father or their husband.

**Look**

- *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* by Fede Galizia
- *Mary Magdalene* by Orsola Maddalena Caccia

Look closely at both paintings list above. Complete the **See, Think, Wonder** table below. Write or draw your response.

<b>See</b> What do you <i>see</i> ?	<b>Think</b> What do you <i>think</i> about that?	<b>Wonder</b> What does it make you <i>wonder</i> ?

*This thinking routine was adapted from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.*

**Discuss with a partner**

- What do you notice regarding the subject matter of these paintings?
- What factors might have impacted the subject matter women artists depicted between 1500-1800? Why?
- What factors might impact the subject matter of women artists today? Explain.

**EXHIBITION ACTIVITY 3:** Compare and Contrast Exercise (Appendix E)

Artists: Elisabetta Sirani and Artemisia Gentileschi

**Learn**

Elisabetta Sirani painted many subjects including religion and family, and her paintings of strong women show us her self-confidence. Artemisia Gentileschi painted many self-portraits as well as subjects of strong women. The story of Portia, and the story of Judith are about courage, strength, and confidence.

**Look**

- *Portia Wounding Her Thigh* by Elisabetta Sirani
- *Judith and a Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes* by Artemisia Gentileschi

Look closely at two paintings listed above and then complete the table below. Write or draw your responses.

<b>Compare</b> <i>What similarities do you notice between the two images?</i>	<b>Contrast</b> <i>What differences do you notice between the two images?</i>

**Discuss with a partner**

1. What emotions do these paintings evoke for you?
2. In what ways might these paintings show courage?
3. Read more about women artists while in the exhibit. What choices do you see these women artists making in terms of how they've depicted these subjects?

**EXHIBITION ACTIVITY 4:** Perceive, Know About, Care About (Appendix F)

Artist: Anna Bacherini Piattoli

**Learn**

Anna Bacherini Piattoli painted a self-portrait when she was 56 years old in 1776.

**Look**

Look closely at *Self-Portrait at the of Age of Fifty-Six* by Anna Bacherini Piattoli. Use details from the image to complete the table below. Write or draw your responses.

<b>Perceive</b> <i>What can the person perceive? What do you see that makes you say that?</i>	<b>Know About</b> <i>What might the person know about or believe? What do you see that makes you say that?</i>	<b>Care About</b> <i>What might the person care about? What do you see that makes you say that?</i>

*This thinking routine was adapted from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education.*

**Discuss with a partner**

1. What does this self-portrait tell us about Anna Bacherini Piattoli? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. Observe other self-portraits in this exhibit. What might be the significance of Anna Bacherini Piattoli portraying herself at age 56?
3. What wonderings or puzzles do you have about Piattoli and the time period during which she lived?