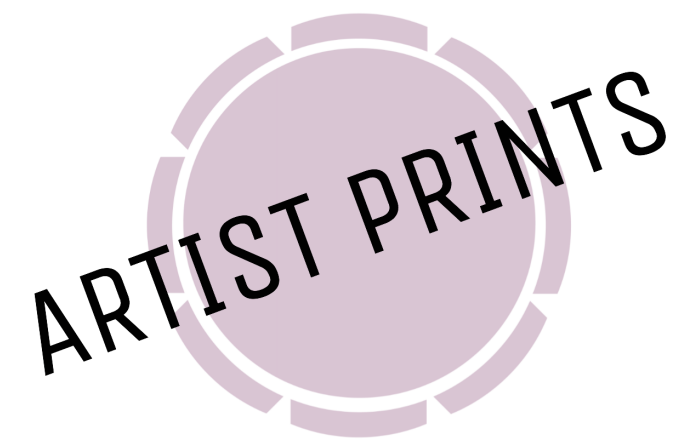


A CHARLOTTE MASON PLENARY

# Picture Study

JOHANNES VERMEER



Ruk Martin & Rachel Lebowitz

A CHARLOTTE MASON PLENARY PRESENTS

PICTURE STUDY  
JOHANNES VERMEER

*Ruk Martin & Rachel Lebowitz*

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## What Charlotte Mason said about Picture Study from Volume 1 of the Home Education Series:

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"When children have begun regular lessons (that is, as soon as they are six), this sort of study of pictures should not be left to chance, but they should take one artist after another, term by term, and study quietly some half-dozen reproductions of his work in the course of a term."

"Something definite remains with a child after his studies; but this is the least of the gains. We cannot measure the influence that one or another artist has upon the child's sense of beauty, upon his power of seeing, as in a picture, the common sights of life; he is enriched more than we know in having really looked at even a single picture."

### Charlotte tells us HOW to teach the subject using an example from one of her classes:

Picture-talk

1. To continue the series of [Edwin] Landseer's pictures the children are taking in school.
2. To increase their interest in Landseer's works.
3. To show the importance of his acquaintance with animals.
4. To help them to read a picture truly.
5. To increase their powers of attention and observation.

**STEP I** Ask the children if they remember what their last picture-talk was about, and what artist was famous for animal-painting. Tell them Landseer was acquainted with animals when he was quite young: he had dogs for pets, and because he loved them he studied them and their habits - so was able to paint them.

**STEP II** Give them the picture *Alexander and Diogenes* to look at, and ask them to find out all they can about it themselves, and to think what idea the artist had in his mind, and what idea or ideas he meant his picture to convey to us.

**STEP III** After three or four minutes, take the picture away and see what the children have noticed. Then ask them what the different dogs suggest to them: the strength of the mastiff representing Alexander; the dignity and stateliness of the bloodhounds in his rear; the look of the wise counsellor on the face of the setter; the rather contemptuous look of the rough-haired terrier in the tub. Ask the children if they have noticed anything in the picture which shows the time of day: for example, the tools thrown down by the side of the workman's basket suggesting the midday meal; and the bright sunshine on the dogs who cast a shadow on the tub shows it must be somewhere about noon.

**STEP IV** Let them read the title, and tell any facts they know about Alexander and Diogenes; then tell them Alexander was a great conqueror who lived B.C. 356-323, famous for the battles he won against Persia, India, and along the coast of the Mediterranean. He was very proud, strong, and boastful. Diogenes was a cynic philosopher. Explain cynic, illustrating by the legend of Alexander and Diogenes; and from it find out which dog represents Alexander and which Diogenes.

**STEP V** Let the children draw the chief lines of the picture, in five minutes, with pencil and paper.

## Johannes Vermeer

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### **Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window**

c. 1657-1659

Oil on Canvas, 83 x 64.5 cm; 32.5 x 25.4 inches

Gemaldegalerie Alte Meister Museum, Dresden, Germany

*Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* was originally credited to two other artists, Rembrandt, and then later, Peter de Hooch. It wasn't until 1880 that it was properly attributed to Vermeer.

Plenary Discussion Questions:

- 1) What kind of letter do you think the girl is reading?
- 2) X-rays of the canvas showed that Vermeer had originally painted a cupid in the in the upper right corner of the canvas, but, for whatever reason, he later painted the draperies over it. Does this information change the way you view the painting?
- 3) Why do you think Vermeer removed the cupid figure?

Space for your own Discussion Questions and Notes:





GIRL READING A LETTER AT AN OPEN WINDOW

JOHANNES VERMEER