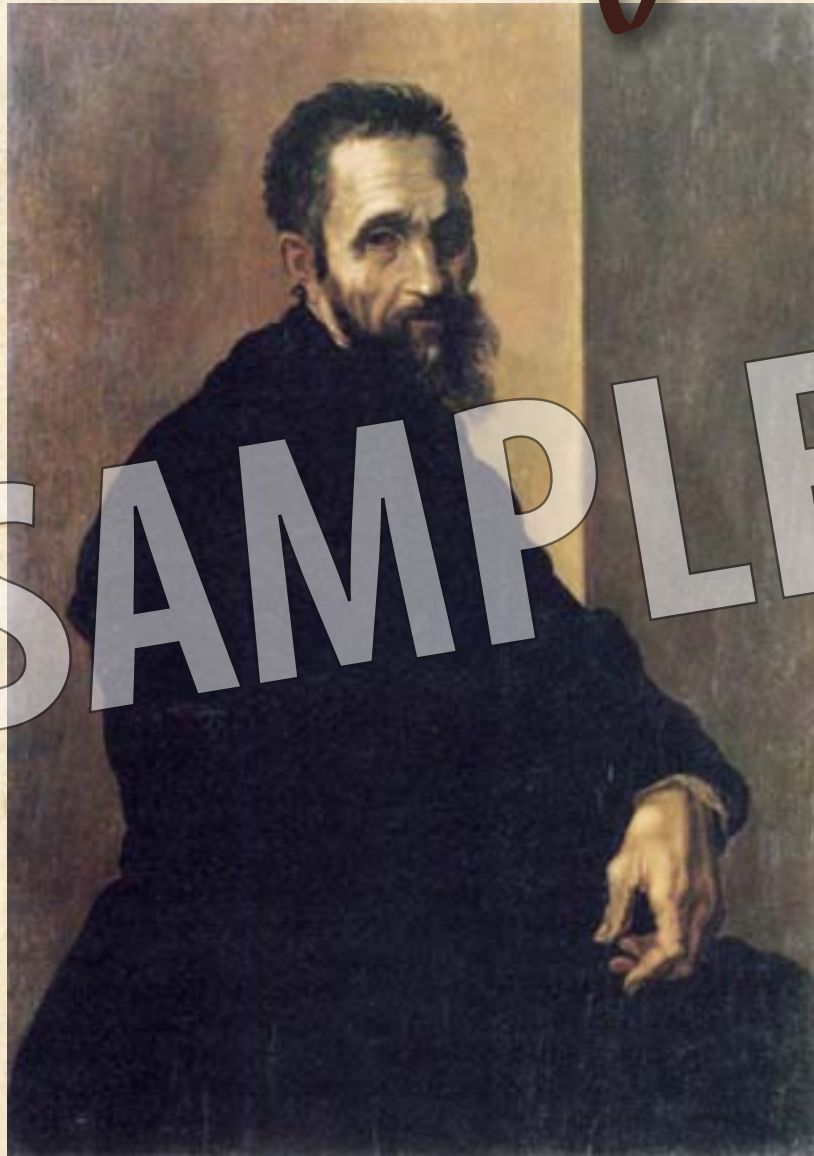


Simply Charlotte Mason presents

Michelangelo



Picture Study Portfolios
by Emily Kiser

Breathe a sigh of relief—you, the teacher, don't have to know about art in order to teach picture study!

With Picture Study Portfolios you have everything you need to help your family enjoy and appreciate beautiful art. Just 15 minutes once a week and the simple guidance in this book will influence and enrich your children more than you can imagine.

In this book you will find

- A living biography to help your child form a relation with the artist
- Step-by-step instructions for doing picture study with the pictures in this portfolio
- Helpful Leading Thoughts that will add to your understanding of each picture
- Extra recommended books for learning more about the artist

"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 sight of life; he is enriched more than we know in having really looked at even a single picture."—Charlotte Mason

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Michelangelo
(1475–1564)

by Emily Kiser

To be used with the Picture Study Portfolio: Michelangelo
published by Simply Charlotte Mason

Michelangelo
© 2011 by Emily Kiser

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Picture Study

Why do we do Picture Study?

A Charlotte Mason education is full of variety. Parents spread a feast before their children, giving them endless opportunity to taste, savor, enjoy, discover, and appreciate many different kinds of intellectual food, otherwise known as ideas. Nature study, music, and art are just as important in this balanced feast as math, reading, and science. Picture study doesn't take much time, just fifteen minutes or so each week, but its benefits are far reaching: "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" (*Home Education*, p. 309).

Charlotte Mason says that it rests with parents and no others to provide an *intellectual culture* by which she means, "not so much the getting of knowledge, nor even getting the power to learn, but the cultivation of the power *to appreciate, to enjoy, whatever is just, true, and beautiful in thought and expression*" (*Formation of Character*, p. 212, emphasis mine).

Through conscientious study of the great masters of art, children take delight in the "just, true, and beautiful" expression that these artists have given us. Charlotte Mason went so far as to tell us that God "whispers in the ear" of the great artists and we owe it to Him to study their works and read their messages rightly (*Ourselves*, Part 2, p. 102). This ability to appreciate and read a painting rightly is a skill to be developed over time, one that develops naturally as we, the teachers, expose our children to great works of art. "As in a worthy book we leave the author to tell his own tale, so do we trust a picture to tell its tale through the medium the artist gave it" (*Towards A Philosophy of Education*, p. 216).

How do we do Picture Study?

“But the reader will say, ‘A young child cannot appreciate art; it is only the colour and sentiment of a picture that reach him. . . .’ But, as a matter of fact, the minds of children and of their elders alike accommodate themselves to what is put in their way; and if children appreciate the vulgar and sentimental in art, it is because that is the manner of art to which they become habituated” (*Home Education*, pp. 307, 308).

Art appreciation is an integral part of the abundant feast that parents should spread before their children. Just as we weed the “twaddle” out of our bookshelves, and replace it with high quality literature, we should be feeding our children’s intellects with high quality art, not “vulgar, sentimental” illustrations that are common in children’s books. Our children are born persons who appreciate *real* art, from a very young age.

“We recognise that the power of appreciating art and of producing to some extent an interpretation of what one sees is as universal as intelligence, imagination, nay, speech, the power of producing words. But there must be knowledge and, in the first place, *not the technical knowledge of how to produce*, but some reverent knowledge of what has been produced; that is, ***children should learn pictures, line by line, group by group, by reading, not books, but pictures themselves***” (*Towards a Philosophy of Education*, p. 214, emphasis mine).

The first step in doing picture study is supplying your children with good art. Charlotte Mason believed that art appreciation, in the form of picture study, should be included in a student’s lessons from the age of six onwards. Each term the student studies six or so works by a single artist. It is not important to study artists in chronological order, and we do not give young children teaching on art history periods; rather, they will assimilate this information as their history reading progresses, and their knowledge of art increases. Breathe a sigh of relief—you, the teacher, don’t have to know about art in order to teach picture study! “[T]he first and most important thing is to know the pictures themselves” (*Towards a Philosophy of Education*, p. 216). It can be helpful to choose artists to study who painted during, or pictured scenes from, the history period you are studying, although this is not necessary. More important, make sure that the styles of the artists studied during the year are different from one another to avoid confusion for your children.

When we begin to study a new artist Charlotte Mason suggested that we read a short story of that artist’s life. Then we let the children study one picture, silently taking

it all in, noticing every detail until they know it and see it in their mind's eye. This type of study will furnish them with a portable gallery hung in their mind that they will carry with them throughout their lives. They will have made connections with hundreds of great works of art over the course of their school studies, and will know these works intimately.

After studying the picture, the reproduction is turned over or hidden from sight, and a six- to nine-year-old then describes what he saw with all the details he took in, maybe drawing a few lines to show where various objects were located—all from memory. An older child adds to this narration a description of the lines of composition, light and shade, and the style of this artist, as he is able. (All of this knowledge comes through the simple study of pictures in this manner, week after week, short after short lesson.) High school students may render in mono-chrome (all one color), and from memory, as many details of the picture as they can remember. Don't have your children attempt to reproduce the picture exactly; Charlotte Mason said this lessens a child's reverence for the artwork (*Towards a Philosophy of Education*, p. 216).

When the narrations, oral or drawn, are complete, a discussion about the picture may occur. Teachers should keep in mind that they are not the dispensers of knowledge, but should tell the name of the piece and ask the child's response to it. Did you like this painting? What did this picture make you think of? Did it remind you of anything you've read about? These simple questions further a child's interaction with the piece, helping him connect the new painting to his previous knowledge. Many works of art have subjects from literature, mythology, the Bible; your children will recall the stories that they have read or will remember the picture when they do read about the subjects portrayed.

All of these things occur in one short lesson each week. Fifteen or twenty minutes once a week is not hard to fit in, even though your school schedule may seem full. The change in type of lesson, the enjoyment afforded by looking at great art, and the relations your students will make are just some of the rewards you will discover by including picture study in your home school.

How to use a Picture Study Portfolio

1. Read the story.

At the start of the term, read the story of the artist included in this portfolio. It may take one or two lessons to complete the reading, but keep the lessons short—fifteen to twenty minutes maximum. Make sure students narrate the reading, either orally or in written form according to their ability.

2. Select a picture.

After this introduction to the new artist for the term, select one picture to study per lesson. Charlotte Mason recommended six different pictures. This allows students to become familiar with the style of the artist, after even just six pictures they will recognize paintings they have not seen before as the work of an artist they have studied. We have included more than six pictures so that you may choose which you would like to study. There is no particular order to the pictures; it isn't necessary to study some over others. The choice is yours; select pictures that appeal to you and your children. Spread the individual works out over the term, or introduce one painting each week for six weeks and then allow the students quiet time over the remaining weeks to look over the pictures at their leisure.

3. Do a picture study.

During the picture study lesson follow these steps:

- Ask the children to tell you about the picture you looked at last time. If this is the first picture study of the term, ask them to tell you a little about the artist's life, where he was from, or something else they remember about him.

- Before they look at the picture, you may want to tell them how large the actual work is, comparing it to some object they are familiar with. Do not tell them the title yet.
- Have the children look at the picture silently for 3–5 minutes, looking closely at all the details in the painting until they can see it in their mind’s eye. Have them check to make sure they can see the whole picture with their eyes closed.
- Next, ask the student(s) to narrate the picture, telling as much as they can about the painting. If you are doing picture study with more than one child, start with one and stop him after he has narrated some of the picture, then have the next child add to his sibling’s narration. Older students may do a drawing of the piece from memory if they are able.

4. Have a Picture Talk.

Last, have a “Picture Talk.” Now tell the children the title of the work. Does this shed any light on what they thought was happening in the picture? What do they think of this picture? Do they like it? How does it make them feel? Can they tell what time of day it is? This is not a time to quiz the student(s) on what they may have missed; it is a time for them to engage and contemplate the picture further. Charlotte Mason tells us that questions about what they think never bore the students, but quizzing them does! If there is a story behind the picture, you may want to look that up and read it if there is time. But keep the lesson short!

5. Display the picture in your home.

Put the picture of the week on display somewhere in your home where everyone can see it.

That’s all there is to it. Enjoy this course of your educational feast. Your family will be blessed by having “a couple of hundred pictures by great masters hanging permanently in the halls of [your] imagination” (*Towards a Philosophy of Education*, p. 43).

The Story of Michelangelo

from *The Stories of the Painters* by Amy Steedman, edited by Emily Kiser

Sometimes in a crowd of people one sees a tall man, who stands head and shoulders higher than any one else, and who can look far over the heads of ordinary-sized mortals.

“What a giant!” we exclaim, as we gaze up and see him towering above us.

So among the crowd of painters travelling along the road to Fame we see above the rest a giant, a greater and more powerful genius than any that came before or after him. When we hear the name of Michelangelo we picture to ourselves a great rugged, powerful giant, a veritable son of thunder, who, like the Titans of old, bent every force of Nature to his will.

This Michelangelo was born at Caprese among the mountains of Casentino. His father, Lodovico Buonarroti, was podestà or mayor of Caprese, and came of a very ancient and honourable family, which had often distinguished itself in the service of Florence.

Now the day on which the baby was born happened to be not only a Sunday, but also a morning when the stars were especially favourable. So the wise men declared that some heavenly virtue was sure to belong to a child born at that particular time, and without hesitation Lodovico determined to call his little son Michael Angelo, after the archangel Michael. Surely that was a name splendid enough to adorn any great career.

It happened just then that Lodovico’s year of office ended, and so he returned with his wife and child to Florence. He had a property at Settignano, a little village just outside the city, and there he settled down.

Most of the people of the village were stonecutters, and it was to the wife of one of these labourers that little Michelangelo was sent to be nursed. So in after years the great master often said that if his mind was worth anything, he owed it to the clear pure

mountain air in which he was born, just as he owed his love of carving stone to the unconscious influence of his nurse, the stonecutter's wife.

As the boy grew up he clearly showed in what direction his interest lay. At school he was something of a dunce at his lessons, but let him but have a pencil and paper and his mind was wide awake at once. Every spare moment he spent making sketches on the walls of his father's house.

But Ludovico would not hear of the boy becoming an artist. There were many children to provide for, and the family was not rich. It would be much more fitting that Michelangelo should go into the silk and woollen business and learn to make money.

But it was all in vain to try to make the boy see the wisdom of all this. Scold as they might, he cared for nothing but his pencil, and even after he was severely beaten he would creep back to his beloved work. How he envied his friend Francesco who worked in the shop of Master Ghirlandaio! It was a joy even to sit and listen to the tales of the studio, and it was a happy day when Francesco brought some of the master's drawings to show to his eager friend.

Little by little Lodocivo began to see that there was nothing for it but to give way to the boy's wishes, and so at last, when he was fourteen years old, Michelangelo was sent to study as a pupil in the studio of Master Ghirlandaio.

It was just at the time when Ghirlandaio was painting the frescoes of the chapel in Santa Maria Novella, and Michelangelo learned many lessons as he watched the master at work, or even helped with the less important parts.

But it was like placing an eagle in a hawk's nest. The young eagle quickly learned to soar far higher than the hawk could do, and ere long began to "sweep the skies alone."

It was not pleasant for the great Florentine master, whose work all men admired, to have his drawings corrected by a young lad, and perhaps Michelangelo was not as humble as he should have been. In the strength of his great knowledge he would sometimes say sharp and scornful things, and perhaps he forgot the respect due from pupil to master.

Be that as it may, he left Ghirlandaio's studio when he was sixteen years old, and never had another master. Thenceforward he worked out his own ideas in his giant strength, and was the pupil of none.

The boy Francesco was still his friend, and together they went to study in the gardens of San Marco, where Lorenzo the Magnificent had collected many statues and works of

For Further Reading

If you are interested in reading more about Michelangelo Buonarroti, check your library for the following resources:

Michelangelo (Getting to Know the Great Artists of the World), Mike Venezia (Children's Press, 1988)

This series is well-loved by younger readers.

Michelangelo Buonarroti (Art for Children), Ernest Raboff (Trophy Press, 1988)

I love this series of art books. They not only give biographical information but also guide the reader in looking closer at individual paintings. For elementary students on up.

Michelangelo, Diane Stanley (HarperCollins, 2003)

This book is an in-print, lavishly illustrated picture book biography of Michelangelo. For middle-upper elementary readers.

The Wings of an Eagle (Credo Books), Anne Merriam Peck (Hawthorn Books, 1963)

This series is out-of-print but is from a distinctly Catholic perspective. A chapter book biography of the artist for upper-elementary readers on up.

Michelangelo, Elizabeth Ripley (Oxford University Press, 1956)

A very good series of biographies of the artists. Much recommended if you can locate these out-of-print gems! For middle school on up.

The Great Adventure of Michelangelo, Irving Stone (Doubleday, 1956)

This was abridged by Stone himself especially for young readers from his adult historical novel, *The Agony and the Ecstasy*. For middle school on up.

Michelangelo: Master of the Italian Renaissance (Masters of Art), Gabriella DiCagno (Peter Bedrick, 2000)

This is a large format book. Many illustrations and photographs accompany text that puts the artist in his contemporary context. For middle school on up.

Michelangelo Picture Study

Choose **six** of the following pictures to study with your students; select those you like best, or that your students will enjoy the most. There is **no order to the following pages**, though the first few pictures are generally the artist's best known works; the extra pictures are included to give you options when choosing pieces to study.

In each lesson, use the "Leading Thoughts" to lead your students in a Picture Talk *after* they have studied the piece and given their narrations. You may choose to talk about or ask any, all, or none of the questions and comments. These are included to provide any helpful information that you and your students may not be familiar with, and to draw your attention to significant points of the work of art. Remember not to lecture your students; ask them what *they* think of the painting. After even a short time you will be amazed at the number, and quality, of relations your students will have formed with great artists and their works!

Note: We have tried to include mostly pictures that contain no nudity. Those pictures that have nudity in background images, we have sought to downplay by cropping the picture or blurring some features. We encourage you to select those pictures that you are most comfortable sharing with your children.





Pietà

1497–1500, marble, 5' 8" x 6' 4",
St. Peter's Basilica, The Vatican

Present this picture as described on pages 9 and 10.

Leading Thoughts

This very famous sculpture, that Michelangelo completed when he was merely 23 years old, shows an unnaturally young Mary holding Jesus in her lap after He'd been taken down from the cross. When this subject is painted, (see "Lamentation" in the Giotto Picture Study Portfolio), it is called a Lamentation.

What overall shape did Michelangelo use to balance this composition? (Trace the edges of the entire sculpture with your finger to figure this out.) What parts stand out to you the most?

Can you imagine carving this large sculpture from a single block of marble? Look at the intricately carved folds of Mary's gown and the detail in the hand of Christ.