

## From Start to Finish

Lesson Plan  
Grades 6-12



Giovanni Battista Tiepolo  
*The Triumph of Valor over Time*  
ca. 1755-60  
Oil on Canvas and Completed Fresco  
Seattle Art Museum  
Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation

### Summary

Giovanni Battista Tiepolo and his workshop were responsible for a number of large ceiling and wall paintings for palaces and other grand locations. For many of these ambitious projects, Tiepolo made a sketch of the design in oil paint before completing the final painting on plaster. Learn a technique used during the Renaissance to enlarge a portion of *The Triumph of Valor over Time* to much larger scale, then consider Tiepolo's working methods as he went from idea to finished product.

## Objectives

*Students will be able to:*

- Gain an understanding of sixteenth-century artistic procedures
- Practice an enlargement technique used during the Renaissance
- Discuss working styles and identify their preferences
- Relate historical, artistic collaborations to their own projects

## Outline of Lesson

- Lecture in-class reading about the Renaissance-era procedure for commissioned artworks covering steps from sketch to design to finished product
- Powerpoint presentation featuring technical analysis of Tiepolo oil sketches
- Group squaring up activity
- Discussion

## Discussion Questions

- Giovanni Battista Tiepolo often completed his paintings with help from others, including his son Domenico. When you are given a large or a tough assignment, do you prefer to work by yourself, or with a partner or group?
- Art historians speculate that Domenico might have finished the fresco based on his father's sketch. If you choose to work with a partner, how do you prefer to divide responsibilities?
- Tiepolo chose to make small oil paintings on colored backgrounds in preparation for his finished wall frescoes, knowing that the finished product could not have similar qualities. Why might he have chosen to do this? How do you plan your large projects from beginning to end in ways that make sense to you?

## Activity

- Provide each student with a printed reproduction of a detail from *The Triumph of Valor over Time* that has been gridded off in such a way that the number of squares is equal to the number of students in the class.
- Ask the students to make a similar grid that is at least four times larger than the reproduction on a large sheet of drawing paper.
- Assign each student a square on the grid and ask the students to enlarge the area of the sketch within their respective squares.

## Materials

Printed reproductions of *The Triumph of Valor over Time*

Rulers

Pencils

Drawing paper

## Key Terms

Imprimatura – A thin, translucent layer of color applied to a ground before painting that reduces the absorbency of the prepared surface

Fresco – A wall painting technique in which dry pigments are ground with water then brushed onto wet lime plaster

Giornata – A fresco painting term derived from the Italian word for a day's work. It refers to the area of a fresco that can be painted into wet plaster in one day

Cartoon – A full-scale drawing made in preparation for a fresco painting

## Resources

[How to Enlarge a Drawing using the Grid Method](#)

[Fresco Painting Technique Demonstration](#)

A five-minute video excerpt from an episode of NOVA describes the Renaissance techniques of preparing plaster, transferring cartoons, and applying paint used by Michelangelo.

[Conservator Nicholas Dorman restoring \*The Triumph of Valor Over Time\* fresco](#)  
Seattle Art Museum

This video documents a conservator's process of in-painting losses treating the fresco provides an excellent sense of scale.

[Giovanni Battista Tiepolo – Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History](#)  
Metropolitan Museum of Art

A detailed biographical and contextual entry on the artist written by Keith Christiansen, Jayne Wrightsman Curator, Department of European Paintings with links to drawings and other oil sketches.

["Tiepolo Historical Reconstruction" on the Kress Reconstruction Website](#)