

Golden Pictures

Lesson Plan
Grades 6-8



Summary

Paintings of religious figures with shiny gold backgrounds were very popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Examples of these types of pictures are *Madonna and Child* by Giotto di Bondone (ca. 1320-30), *Saint Romuald* by Lorenzo Monaco (ca. 1420), and *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata* by Carlo Crivelli (ca. 1488-89). To create these beautiful paintings, artists used special materials to attach sheets of gold to the surface. Then they polished the gold until it appeared shiny like a mirror. Use similar materials to decorate your own golden picture in the style of the Italian Gothic painters.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognized paintings made in the Italian Gothic style
- Learn the basic process of gilding and punch work
- Create a design that simulates process of applying and tooling metal leaf

Outline of Lesson

- Lecture on the gilding process (See “Historical Materials and Techniques” section of the Kress Reconstruction website)
- Craft activity
- Presentations

Activity

- Use cut pieces of cardboard to build up a design on a flat working surface, using pencil drawing as a guide for a frame or border, figurative scene, or abstract composition. Keep in mind that the highest parts of the design will be lighter than the lower ones.
- Once satisfied with the design built of cardboard, glue pieces into place.
- Cut a piece of gold foil that is larger than the working surface. Working slowly from the center, cover the entire working surface with the foil, making sure to press firmly into the design.
- Remind students that creators of Italian Gothic-style paintings influenced the tone of their gold by painting colored layers beneath and overtop gold leaf. Have students select a paint color and cover the gold foil in a thin layer.
- Set the painted design out to dry completely.
- Using steel wool or damp paper towels, rub the high areas of the painted foil design with to make them shine.
- Allow students to decorate their designs further with stamps or punches simulate traditional punch work or additional painted details.
- Invite students to share their work with the class, describing their design and their use of relief to emphasize certain features.

Materials

Hard, flat surface, such as heavy cardboard or thin plywood

Pencils

Cardboard

Gold foil

Glue

Scissors

Tempera paint (yellow, yellow-orange, and assorted colors as needed)

Paint brushes

Steel wool

Paper towels

Stamps

Punches

Key Terms

Gilding – A thin layer of gold or other metal used for decoration

Gold leaf – Thin sheets of gold used for gilding

Relief – A molded, carved, or stamped design that stands out three-dimensionally from a background surface

Punch – A metal tool with a raised, blunt design on one end that is hammered into a gilded surface to make shallow imprints and designs

Pastiglia – A raised and sculpted under layer that is gilded to make certain features stand out from a painting

Internet Resources:

["Gilding" on the Kress Reconstruction Website](#)