



American MASTERS

Benjamin West: The Father of American Painting

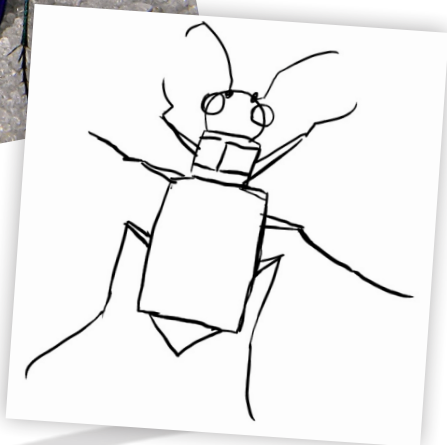


What We Learned:

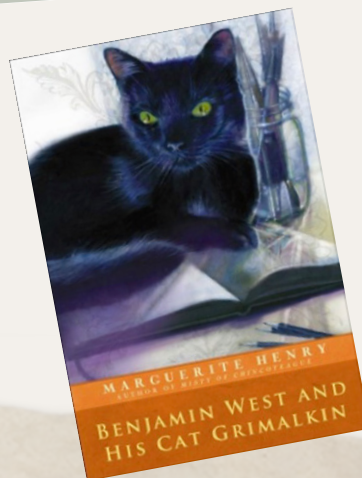
- Benjamin West started drawing at age 6 and was painting portraits at age 17.
- Some things to consider with portraiture is pose, expression, and costume.
- West studied art abroad, first in Italy then settled in London, England.
- The nickname "Father of American Painting" was given to Benjamin West.

Art Activity: Learning to Draw with Basic Shapes

Benjamin West started drawing everything he saw from the age of six. He carried a notebook and pen with him all the time. To encourage a basic understanding and a delight in drawing, students learned that they could draw anything using basic shapes.



Book Nook



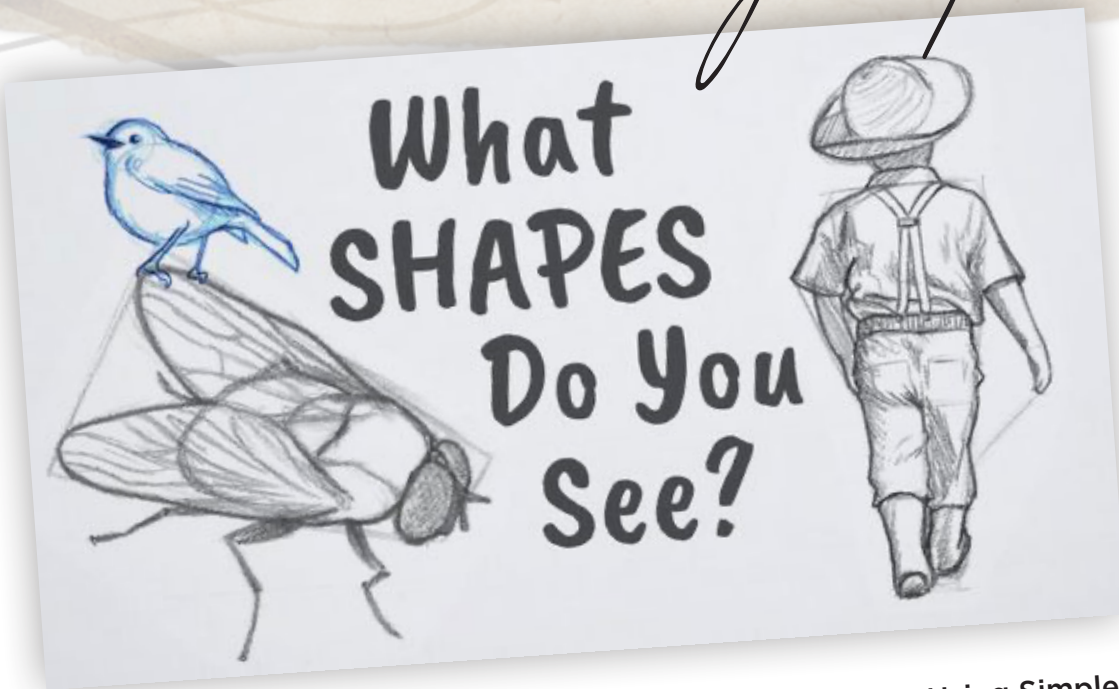
*Benjamin West and His
Cat Grimalkin*
By Marguerite Henry

Natural Pigments (Paint)



Benjamin West 's first drawings were made with a quill pen. However, the Lenape Indians showed him how to make pigment or paint colors to add to his drawings. For more information about how Native Americans made paint colors from nature see: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/ethnobotany/dyes.shtml>

How to Draw Anything... Using Shapes



Follow this tutorial: [How to Draw ANYTHING Using Simple Shapes - YouTube](#)

For Parents:

Our lesson on Benjamin West began with his early childhood. He was the tenth child born to a Quaker family in Springfield, Pennsylvania in 1738. Although the Quaker beliefs forbid the creation of images, his parents recognized his gift and love for drawing when he was only six. A few years later they allowed him to go to Philadelphia to study under an artist. Because portraits brought in money, Benjamin focused on these in his teen years. At age twenty-two he went to study art abroad, first in Italy and then London, England. History paintings became his focus. King George III made West his royal painter. He also taught many American artists, such as Gilbert Stuart and Samuel Morse. Benjamin never returned to America and died at age eighty-two in England. Because he was the first American artist to gain international recognition Benjamin West is called, "Father of American Painting."

Please note: As M&G's host location for *Homeschool Days*, Mack Library will feature books each month for parents to reference as resources. We hope these additional features will further support your teaching at home.

Drawing Animals

When Benjamin West was young, he enjoyed drawing everything he saw—beaver, bear, elk, cows, etc. For step-by-step instructions to draw one of the animals below, visit:

<https://how2drawanimals.com>



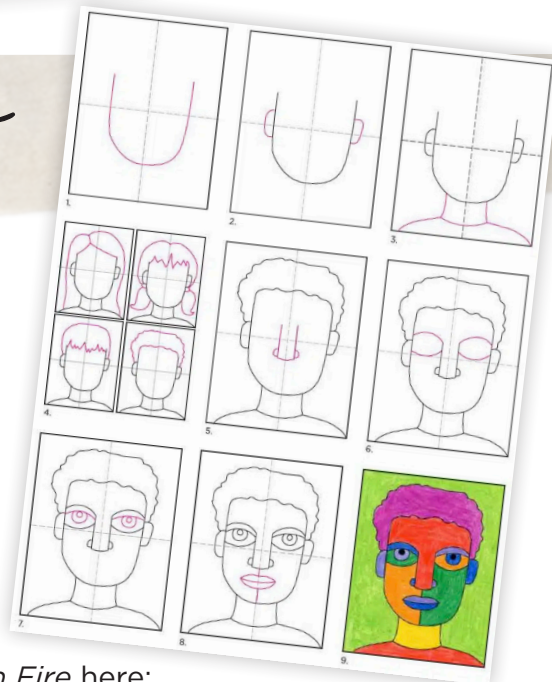
How to Draw Your Self-Portrait

For a realistic self-portrait, watch this demonstration:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97iPAmER7a4>

For an abstract self-portrait, see this fun variation:

<https://artprojectsforkids.org/how-to-an-abstract-self-portrait/>



Additional Resources

To learn more about Benjamin West, click on the links below:

- View an M&G video on West's painting, *Isaiah's Lips Anointed with Fire* here:
<https://museumandgallery.org/isaiahs-lips-anointed-with-fire-benjamin-west-p-r-a/>
- View an M&G video on West's painting, *The Ascension* here:
<https://museumandgallery.org/benjamin-west-p-r-a/>
- To learn more about M&G's collection of West's paintings read and follow the links at:
<https://museumandgallery.org/the-benjamin-west-collection/>
- West's famous history painting is discussed in this short video:
Gallery Highlights - The Death of General Wolfe by Benjamin West - YouTube
- West was a friend to Benjamin Franklin and drew him in, *Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky*: **Benjamin West, "Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky" - YouTube**

Due to the changing nature of web resources, M&G strongly urges you as the parent to preview these sites before your child accesses them. The fact that these sites are available on this handout does not imply that M&G endorses their content from the standpoint of morals, philosophy, theology, or scientific hypotheses.

M&G Educational Mission:

Through tours, events, and publications, the Museum & Gallery seeks to partner with educators in fulfilling all of the National Visual Arts Content Standards. By integrating art into the core curriculum, M&G's goals are to teach children to value the arts, to communicate through the arts, to become creative problem solvers through the inclusion of STEAM-related concepts and fully-developed STEAM units, to understand history and culture in light of the arts, to improve literary interest and understanding through visual storytelling, to critique the arts, and to develop an aesthetic awareness of the arts. Through fulfilling the mission, M&G is able to help develop citizens who have the ability to think, feel, and understand the world in which they live.

