

PAINTING: DESCRIBING WHAT YOU SEE

TASK 1: Read this description of a painting and complete the gaps with the verbs in brackets in the Present Simple or Past Simple. Then decide to which of the paintings below it makes reference.

Around 1469, a wealthy money changer _____ (COMMISSION) a young painter named Sandro Botticelli to paint an altar piece. The scene this young artist _____ (SET OUT) to paint was well-known: the Three Wise Men, or Magi, arriving at the birth place of Jesus Christ.

Many earlier paintings _____ (ILLUSTRATE) the Magi arriving at a stable, stately manger, fitting for the son of God. The young Botticelli, however, _____ (CHOOSE) to place the scene in the dilapidated Roman ruin.

At the center of this structure, he _____ (PLACE) a sturdy rock for Mary and Jesus to sit high above their visitors. With this decision, Botticelli seemed to say Christianity will be built on sturdier stuff than Rome. Botticelli then _____ (POPULATE) the space with important men from his city.

On the right side, he _____ (PAINT) the man who paid for this work, Gaspare del Lama, looking out at the viewer and confidently pointing at himself so that there is no question who is responsible for this masterpiece.

The Three Wise Men _____ (APPEAR) at the center of this painting, kneeling to Mary and Jesus. As models for these important figures, Botticelli _____ (USE) members of the important Medici family. Del Lama's career as a money changer would not have been possible without the help of the powerful Medici family, in particular Cosimo de Medici, who _____ (APPEAR) prominently at Mary's feet. The other wise men can be identified as Piero and Giovanni de Medici, Cosimo's two sons. And the young heir to Medici power, Lorenzo, could not be omitted from this painting's composition. He _____ (APPEAR) to the left of the manger. This painting seems to say the Medici legacy, with its many healthy heirs, will be built on sturdier stuff than Rome.

Botticelli then _____ (FILL) the rest of the space with other friends and powerful figures from Florence. And, among the Florentine elite, the young, confident artist _____ (PAINT) himself looking directly at the viewer.

Paintings like “The Adoration of the Magi” _____ (REVEAL) much more than a simple retelling of a biblical story. They can tell the story of, among other things, a modestly-born money changer attempting to spend his money virtuously by making a local chapel more beautiful, or the story of an ambitious younger painter, elevating the reputation of his craft to stand among the wealthy elite of his city.

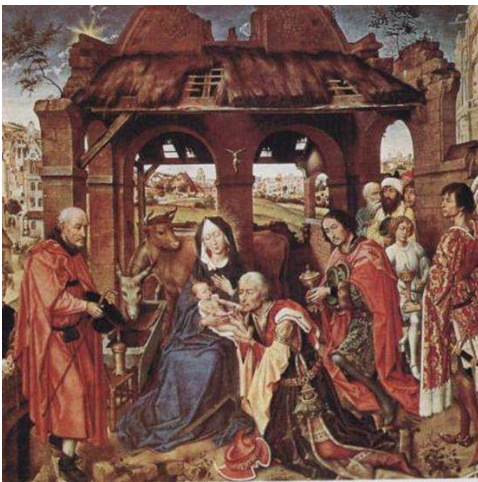
Painting 1¹



Painting 3



Painting 2



Painting 4



TASK 2: Listen to the description of the painting and correct your answers.

<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/dissecting-botticelli-s-adoration-of-the-magi-james-earle#watch>

¹ N.B. All the images in this page have been taken from their corresponding Wikipedia entries.

TASK 3: Complete the following paragraph with the appropriate preposition

Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second before Waking Up (Salvador Dalí, 1944)

<http://www.museothyssen.org>

Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second before Waking Up was one of the few pictures Dalí painted _____ the United States. _____ this “hand-painted dream photograph” — as Dalí generally called his paintings — we find a seascape of distant horizons and calm waters, perhaps Port Lligat, amidst which Gala, once again, is the subject of the scene. _____ to the naked body of the sleeping woman, which levitates _____ a flat rock that floats _____ the sea, Dalí depicts two suspended droplets of water and a pomegranate, a Christian symbol of fertility and resurrection. _____ her flies a bee, an insect that traditionally symbolises the Virgin. In Gala’s mind the buzzing of the bee is translated into a dream in which a huge fish bursts out of the pomegranate in the _____ part, and in turn spews out two menacing tigers and a bayonet; a second later the bayonet will sting Gala in the arm. _____ them an elephant with long flamingo legs, found in other compositions of the period, carries _____ its back an obelisk — like Bernini’s elephant _____ the Piazza Santa Maria sopra Minerva _____ Rome — which symbolises the power of the Pope.

WRITING FOLDER 2: Look at these two paintings. Identify them; then choose **ONE** of them and write a description of what you see (location, action, people, etc.) Remember to use the appropriate tenses and the corresponding prepositions. Write 100-120 words. Upload your finished writing to **OCW platform**.



N.B. All the images in this page have been taken from their corresponding Wikipedia entries.