



# The Story of Paintings A History of Art for Children

Books Reviewed:

[The Story of Paintings A History of Art for Children](#) [1]

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Reviewer:

[Diana Barnes](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

The award-winning partnership that is Mick Manning and Brita Granstrom produces books that are well known and respected in children's non-fiction, and this is another outstanding book. Taking the story of art from cave painting in Lascaux, with a caveman explaining in speech bubbles that the paintings make the cave a scared space, that they paint the animals they hunt for food, and what they use for the pictures, the story begins with a brief introduction to the art of ancient civilisations with the emphasis on gods and heroes in their tombs, then classical civilisations displaying wealth and power in their houses, then early Christian art like icons, before moving on to what the authors admit was the difficult choice of their favourite 39 paintings. Both are illustrators as well as authors, so this must indeed have involved a great deal of discussion. Each work is portrayed in a double-page spread, with the painting reproduced, then a short piece of information and a cartoon of the artist, with a comment in a speech bubble. Children may especially enjoy the beady eyed young Giotto, as an apprentice, painting a fly so lifelike on his master Cimabue's canvas that Cimabue tried several times to brush it off! Words like 'lamenting' are explained in a natural way. Some spreads give items to look for, like the dog in the Arnolfini portrait, or particular groupings in L.S Lowry's 'Fun Fair at Daisy Nook', (which is a bit like a 'Where's Wally?' picture.) The artists covered include less well-known artists like Shen Zhou, Mir Kalan Khan and Anders Zorn as well as Leonardo da Vinci (Mona Lisa), Monet and van Gogh. Female artists are definitely included - Dame Laura Knight, Tamara de Lempicka, Frida Kahlo and Georgia O'Keefe are all there, and a rare female artist of the 17th century, Rachel Ruysch, new to this reviewer. Roy Lichtenstein's comic-book style and Jean-Michel Basquiat's work inspired by graffiti bring us almost up to date, and we come full circle with Picasso admiring the Lascaux paintings.

Some children may know the mask of 'The Scream', and here is the picture. They may also have fun thinking about the way Jackson Pollock painted (the authors explain that throwing paint around with style is not as easy as one might think) and may want to copy Arcimboldo and his vegetable paintings that look like faces. There is a comprehensive Glossary as well as a complete index of paintings, artists and terms used. This is a really fun way of finding out about paintings, education without realising it, and a masterly book to treasure.

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-story-of-paintings-a-history-of-art-for-children>

[2] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/228>

[3] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/diana-barnes>