

THE ARTS SOCIETY

Artvent

ANSWERS 2021

1. Giorgio Vasari in his Lives of the Artists.

Van Eyck was not alone in his use of oil as a paint medium in the 15th century. Several artists in the Low Countries – most notably Van Eyck and Robert Campin – developed its use. Van Eyck, however, was undoubtedly the most skilled at exploiting the use of oil paint, manipulating and building layers of transparent glazes to great effect.

2. Ultramarine

Ultramarine is the deep blue pigment obtained when lapis lazuli is finely ground. As the stone was only mined in Afghanistan in the Renaissance period, it was extremely rare and expensive to buy. Often the amount to be used was stipulated in the contract between artist and patron and an advance given to enable its purchase.

3. Contrasts of light and shade

In this painting Caravaggio uses the chiaroscuro to heighten the drama. A strong light falls from the left on to the faces of Christ and the disciple on the right, casting a shadow on the wall behind Christ. It also illuminates the hand which the disciple thrusts towards the viewer, the pose evoking an image of the crucified Christ.

4. Thomas Gainsborough

Of his portrait of Queen Charlotte, painted in the early 1780s, it is recorded that 'The drapery was done in one night by Gainsborough and his nephew [Gainsborough-Dupont]; they sat up all night, and painted it by candle-light ...'. The portrait of the Hon. Mrs. Graham was bequeathed by her family to the National Gallery of Scotland in 1859, with one binding condition that the painting must never leave Scotland. It has never done so!

5. About 36

Surprisingly little is known about Vermeer himself and the known extent of his oeuvre is extremely small. Nevertheless, he is one of the most famous Dutch painters of the 17th century and certainly the most celebrated artist of his native Delft. It is hard to find an equal in his ability to capture the effects of light on different surfaces and the stillness ever present in his canvases.

6. The sun is setting

Turner's painting shows the final journey of the *Temeraire*, the veteran warship that had played an important role in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. By 1838 she was over 40 years old and no longer formed part of the naval fleet. Here she is being towed from Sheerness westward along the river Thames to Rotherhithe in south-east London, where she was scrapped.

7. Sir Joshua Reynolds

Reynolds was notorious in his day for his experimentation with his paints and varnishes and Walpole was not alone in commenting on it. As a result many of his surviving works are shadows of their former selves.

8. Commercially produced oil paint in metal tubes

Painting en plein air in oil only became practically possible when the metal tube in which the paint was stored had been invented. Paint in metal tubes first became commercially available in the 1830s. Jean Renoir quotes his father as saying: 'Without paints in tubes, there would have been no Cézanne, no Monet, no Sisley or Pissarro, nothing of what the journalists were later to call Impressionism.'

9. The Lunar Society was so-called because it met at the time of the full moon. This enabled discussion and experiments to be carried out with the maximum of light and the participants to journey home afterwards by the light of the moon. Wright of Derby's painting shows the moon shining brightly through the window on the right of the picture.

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10. Liverpool

Another Place by Sir Antony Gormley is located at Crosby Beach near Liverpool. It consists of 100 cast iron figures, modelled on the artist's own naked body, facing towards the sea. They are spread over a 2-mile stretch of beach and as the tide ebbs and flows, the figures are revealed and submerged by the sea, subjected to corrosion by seawater and colonisation by marine animals.

11. Pentecost

The poplar panel showing the seven images of the life and Passion of Christ is thought to have been a dossal – an altarpiece that was placed in front of, rather than above, an altar. The Adoration of the Magi is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York, whilst the other scenes are held by museums in Europe, including Pentecost which is in London.

12. St. Paul's Cathedral London

Thomas Coombe, a loyal patron of the Pre-Raphaelites, bought the original version of The Light of the World from Hunt in 1853. His widow presented the work to Keble College Oxford in 1874, by which time it had been retouched twice. Hunt's dissatisfaction with Keble's treatment of his canvas led him to create a larger replica in 1899 which was presented to St. Paul's by Charles Booth in 1908. A small version was worked on concurrently with the Keble picture and is now in Manchester City Art Gallery.

13. The spruce/fir tree is an evergreen and thus symbolises the everlasting life that Christ brings.

14. Sir Henry Cole had the idea of Christmas Cards in 1843. His artist friend John Horsley designed this first card and it was sold for 1 shilling each.

15. Although the service of "Nine Lessons and Carols" had been created in the late 19th century, the first Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, as we know it today, was first held in 1918. The then Dean of Kings College, Eric Milner-White, felt that the service could be a means of attracting people back to Christian worship after the horrors of the Great War. Eric Milner-White went on to become Dean of York Minster from 1941 until his death in 1963. He bequeathed his substantial collection of Studio Pottery to York Art Gallery.

16. The earliest printed version of the traditional carol 'I saw three ships come sailing in' dates from the 17th century. The modern lyrics are from an 1833 version by the English lawyer and antiquarian William Sandys.

17. The term 'Boxing Day' dates from the Middle Ages when churches opened their 'alms boxe' and distributed its contents to the poor on St. Stephen's Day, December 26th.

18. The French name for these tarts is galettes des rois. They are baked by the local boulangeries on January 6th, the Feast of the Epiphany. Traditionally, when the tart is sliced open, whichever child finds the charm becomes 'king' for the day.

19. On the sixth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me 'Six geese a-laying'.

20. a) salted dry cod-fish with boiled potatoes - Portugal
(b) casserole containing macaroni, carrot, potato and turkey – Finland
(c) oysters on ice - France
(d) herring and broad beans - Sweden
(e) Christmas pudding – Great Britain