

# COMMON CORE CONNECTION: WHO'S THAT GIRL?

**Work of Art:** *Portrait of Maria Salviati with Giulia de' Medici*, Pontormo, 1537

**COMMON CORE CONNECTION:** Reading English Language Arts and Literacy

Key Ideas and Details: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from text.

## OVERVIEW

Students will look at two versions of the same painting to determine their similarities and differences. Using inference and analysis skills they will hypothesize why and how the two images are different and learn more about the "mystery" behind the painting.

## ACTIVITY

❶ Print copies of worksheet and image #1 for half of your class; Print copies of worksheet and image #2 for the other half of the class. Laminate images for reuse.

❷ Have students examine their image and then fill out their worksheets independently. Pair students from group 1 with students from group 2.

❸ Have students compare their answers. Students should work together to decide which image they find more interesting.

❹ Using the image they find more interesting, students should work together to develop a story that tells the narrative behind this painting.

❺ Have groups share their stories.

❻ Discuss the real story behind the painting.

When the Walters family purchased this painting in 1902 it looked very different than it does today. It even had a different title: *Portrait of Vittoria Colonna*. There was no child in the painting; it was only a portrait of a woman. In 1937, conservators (people who clean and repair art) x-rayed the painting and discovered the image of the child hiding under a layer of paint. The conservators cleaned the painting and the little girl became visible.

❼ Discuss why you think the child was painted out.

In the 1800's an art dealer wanted to sell this painting. However, portraits of older women such as this one were not very popular, unless there was a good story attached to them. Therefore, the dealer painted over the child and sold the painting as a portrait of a famous childless poet, Vittoria Colonna. Colonna was certainly the most renowned and successful female writer of the Italian Renaissance and was even an extremely close friend of the famous artist Michelangelo! Michelangelo made drawings for her and spent long hours in her company. Colonna, as the subject of a painting, was sure to attract attention and increase the probability of its purchase. When the child was later revealed, experts conducted research and realized this woman was not Colonna, but instead Maria Salviati, an important person from the Italian Renaissance. People naturally assumed the child was Maria's son Cosimo, but the child's hair style and clothing matched that of a little girl and not a boy. After much debate among art scholars, it was determined that the young person was probably Giulia de'Medici, Maria's niece. Giulia's grandmother was a Moor, a person from North African ancestry, and her father was Alessandro de' Medici, a famous Italian citizen. This means Giulia may be the first child of African descent to be depicted in European art.

## CONCLUSION

**Now knowing the story behind the painting, let's think about the following questions:**

*If you were the owner of this painting would you have painted over the little girl? Why or why not?*

*How does the inclusion of Giulia change your ideas about what this painting is about?*

*How would you feel if you bought this painting and discovered there was a mystery hiding under the paint?*

*Would you restore the painting back to its original form or would you keep it as is? Why?*



**IMAGE 1**



**IMAGE 2**

# WORKSHEET 1

Look at image one and describe what you see. Use the questions below to guide your description. Fill in the “visual clues” section to support your answers with evidence.

Who do you think this person might be?

*Visual Clues / Evidence (What makes you say that?)*

How do you think she is feeling?

*Visual Clues / Evidence (What makes you say that?)*

If you could change this painting in any way, what would you change and why?

*Visual Clues / Evidence (What makes you say that?)*

# WORKSHEET 2

Look at image two and describe what you see. Use the questions below to guide your description. When needed, fill in the “visual clues” section to support your answers with evidence.

Who do you think these people might be?

*Visual Clues / Evidence (What makes you say that?)*

How do you think these people are feeling?

*Visual Clues / Evidence (What makes you say that?)*

What is their relationship?

*Visual Clues / Evidence (What makes you say that?)*