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THE AGE OF KINGS

VOLUME THREE

A Timeline of History for the Age of Kings: 1610-1775

ROBINSON CRUSOE,

OF THE ISLAND OF CRUSOE,

OR THE HISTORY OF THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF THE SAVAGE CRUSOE,

IN THE ISLAND OF CRUSOE,

IN THE ISLAND OF CRUSOE,

IN THE ISLAND OF CRUSOE,

IN THE ISLAND OF CRUSOE,

IN THE ISLAND OF CRUSOE,

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HISTORY STORIES

SPECIAL

Peter Paul Rubens

Nanci Bell

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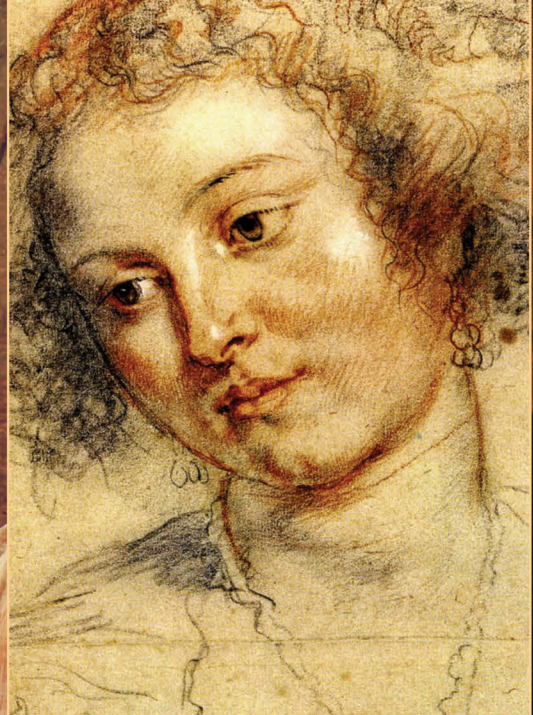
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Detail from *Mars and Rhea Silvia*, c. 1620 (above); a study of a woman's head (top center); a self-portrait, shortly before Rubens' death, c. 1638-40 (bottom center); detail from *The Education of Marie de Medicis*, 1621-25 (far right)

Peter Paul Rubens

1577-1640

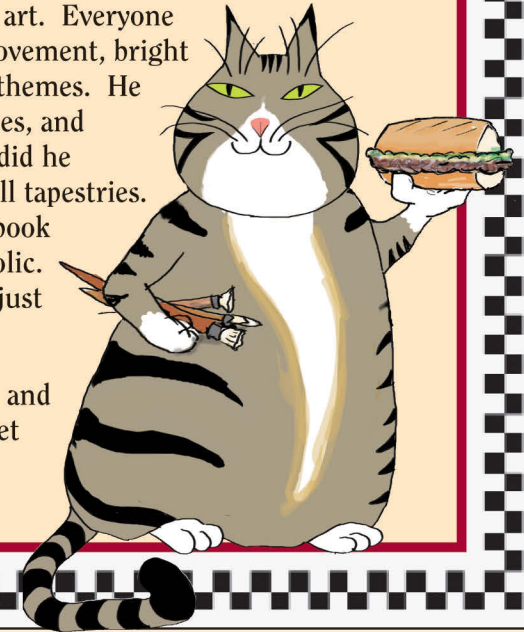


This next artist was a huge Baroque success story in his day. The rich loved the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens but he was just as popular with regular folks, too.

What country does a Flemish person come from, you ask? Why, from Flanders, of course. That's a region in Northern Europe that today is divided into Belgium, France, and the Netherlands.

Rubens' paintings became the classic examples of Baroque art. Everyone wanted to paint like him. His works displayed emotion, movement, bright colors, light and shadow, and (of course) a lot of religious themes. He also painted mythological scenes, landscapes, hunting scenes, and many portraits of himself, his wife, and his kids. Not only did he paint, he also sketched, made altar pieces, and designed wall tapestries. This handsome, kind man was also an architect, sculptor, book illustrator, family man, diplomat, and devout Roman Catholic. My goodness, this man was busy. I'm going to need a nap just from talking about him.

I'll go eat some Flemish cheesecake, called Plattekaastarte, and find a spot of sun to lie in, while you go to Flanders, to meet Peter Paul Rubens.



1

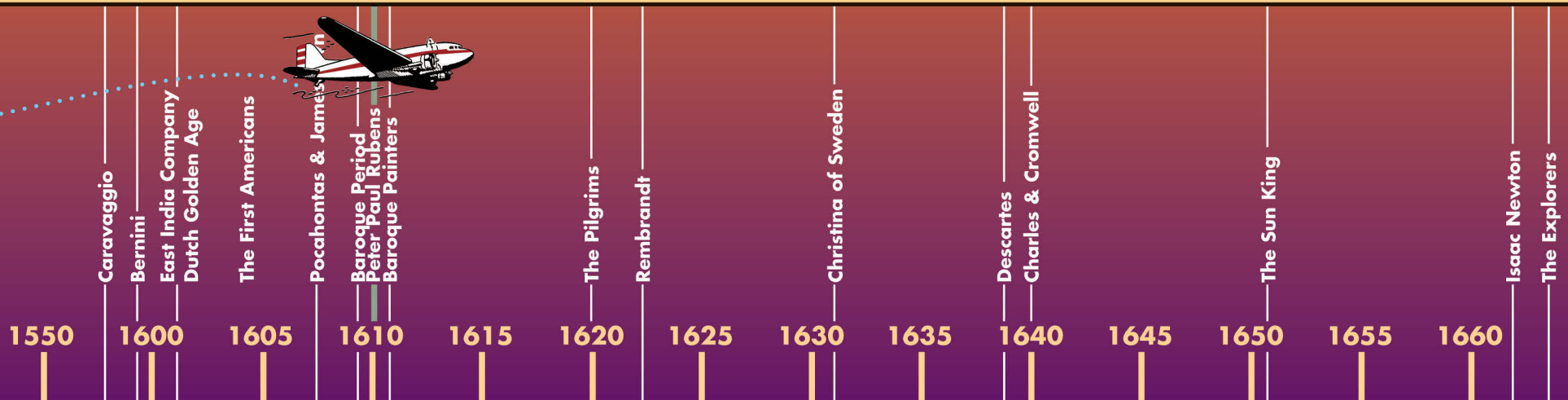
Peter Paul Rubens went from poverty to great riches as one of the finest artists of his time. He was born in Germany, in 1577, but his father died when he was 10. His mother then moved the family to her home city of Antwerp, in Flanders. She enrolled Peter in a Latin school where he studied classic writings. They could not afford school for long and Peter went to work as a court page (assistant) for a countess. He loved to read and sketch in his spare time, showing so much artistic promise that he began to study art with several local painters. He earned the title of master painter by the time he was only 21. By then, Rubens felt the need to go to Italy, where all the great painters of the Renaissance had lived.

1. How old was Peter when his father died?
2. Do you think Peter's mother intended for him to be an artist? Explain.
3. Why do you think it was important that Rubens became a student of local painters?
4. How do you think Rubens became a master painter at such a young age?
5. Why do you think Rubens wanted to go to Italy?

2

Arriving in Italy in 1600, Rubens was inspired by the art that decorated the city. He was offered a job as a court painter by the Duke of Mantua to travel all over Italy and paint copies of famous works for the Duke's own collection. After eight years of working for the Duke, Rubens went back home to bury his mother. There, Rubens met and married rich, lovely Isabella Brant, and they had four children. His fame in Rome had put him in great demand among kings and queens, and he went to Italy, Spain, and France. In 1611, he painted *The Descent from the Cross* (p. 46) for a church in Antwerp. Like most of his works, it was full of energy, emotion, and glowing color. The friendly, chubby man was hailed as the best painter alive.

1. In what year did Rubens go to Italy?
2. Do you think Rubens' job in Italy helped him develop his painting skills? Explain.
3. Why do you think the Duke had Rubens copy other paintings?
4. Why do you think kings and queens wanted Rubens?
5. Why do you think people hailed Rubens as the best painter alive?



3

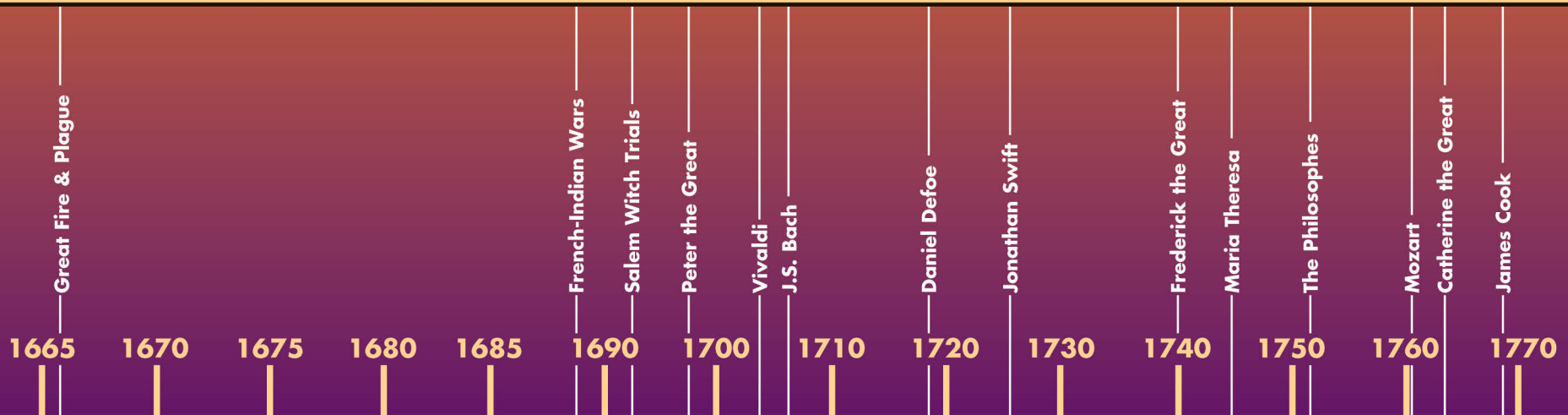
Rubens was in demand all over Europe so he bought a big house that he made into a workshop. Unlike most artists, he hired students to help him with the many projects he took on. Rubens would often just draw the first sketches and then put the final touches on paintings, while his skilled students did the main work. Rubens accepted any job, no matter what. He painted 21 huge pieces for Marie de Medicis, the widow of the King of France, that show her life story. He also made 39 paintings to line the ceiling of a new church in Antwerp. Rubens and his team worked nonstop and produced more than 2,000 works in about 20 years, allowing him to support his family and his studio. He built a huge collection of ancient coins and cameos (pieces of carved bone or ivory).

1. How many pieces did Rubens paint for Marie de Medicis?
2. Do you think Rubens made a lot of money? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think Rubens only did the first sketches and final touches on the paintings?
4. Why do you think Rubens needed so many students in his workshop?
5. Why do you think Rubens did so many paintings for Marie de Medicis?

4

Rubens spoke five languages fluently, loved politics, and got involved in keeping peace between the queen of Flanders (Isabella of Spain) and the rulers of other countries. After the death of his wife, he busied himself working on peace talks between his country and England. Rubens sailed back and forth between the two countries often as they wrote up a peace treaty. Rubens gave England's King Charles a ceiling painting inspired by this called *The Allegories on Peace and War* (p. 46). The work's tender women and children reflect the importance of peace and family. King Charles loved Rubens' art and his wise counsel. The painter's kindness impressed the king so much that he knighted his good friend Rubens.

1. How many languages did Rubens speak fluently?
2. Why might knowing five languages help Rubens in keeping peace between Isabella and other rulers?
3. Why do you think Rubens visited Spain and England so often?
4. Why do you think Rubens gave King Charles the gift of the painting?
5. Why do you think King Charles knighted Rubens?





A portrait of Rubens and his first wife Isabella Brant, c. 1609/10 (left); *Allegory on the Blessings of Peace*, part of the *Allegories on Peace and War*, 1629-30 (right)

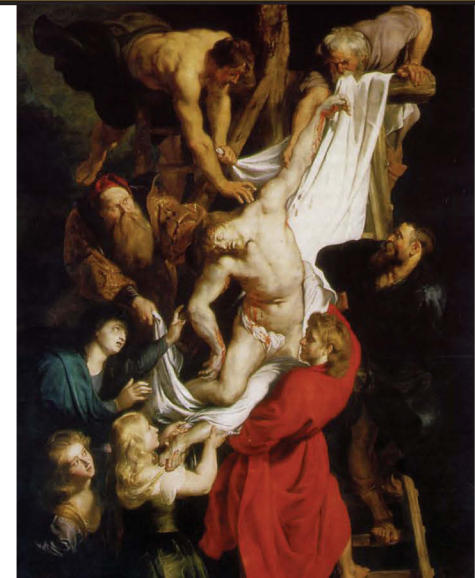


In 1630, Rubens again found love and married 16-year-old Helene Fourment. His second bride was rich, so he stopped traveling and resumed art full time, painting his lovely wife again and again. Rubens, Helene and their five children settled on a quiet country estate near Brussels. A devoted father, he painted many portraits of his children. His painting of his house, *The Chateau de Steen*, captures his love for the landscape of his home. It shows green plains where workers clear the ground to farm. Sunlight shines through the clouds and his house sits off to one side. Though Rubens suffered from painful arthritis in his last years, he still painted until his death in 1640.

1. What was depicted in Rubens's painting *The Chateau de Steen*?
2. Why do you think Rubens stopped traveling?
3. Why do you think Rubens painted his wife and children often?
4. Do you think Rubens liked living in the country? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think Rubens continued to paint even with his painful arthritis?



Rubens with Helene and one of his children, c. 1639 (left); *The Chateau de Steen* (bottom); detail from *The Descent from the Cross* c. 1611-14 (right)



Ivan says—

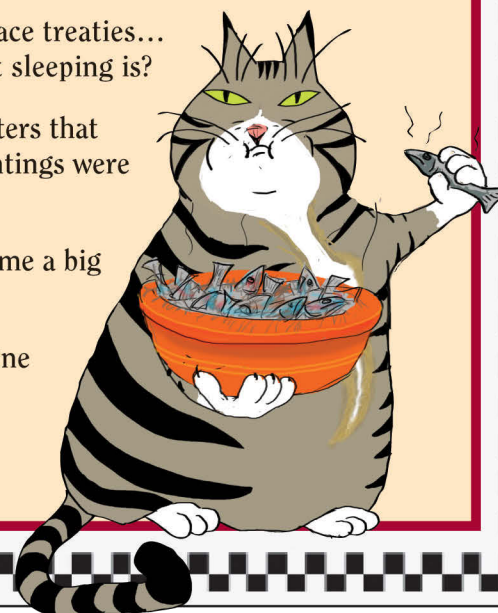
It seems that Rubens was a bundle of productive energy. He took on so much work, he practically had an assembly line of artists in his studio. In 1621, he said, “My talents are such that I have never lacked courage to undertake any design, however vast in size or diversified in subject.” Let’s just say Rubens was not afraid of a challenge, and not afraid to sing his own praises, either.

He drew, he etched, he painted, he designed, he made peace treaties... did this guy ever sleep? Didn’t he know how important sleeping is?

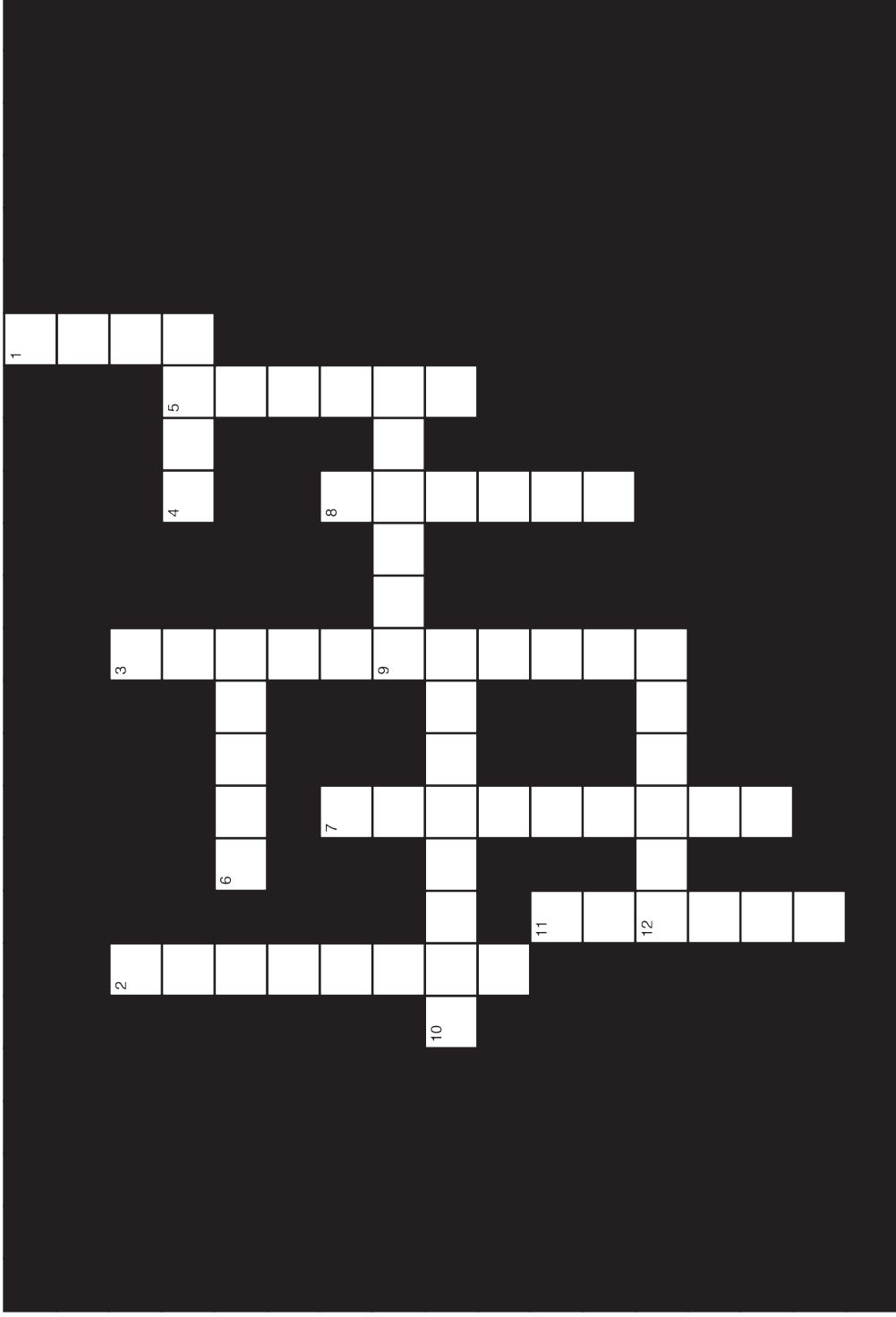
Now we’re going to learn more about some of those painters that we read about. People say that some of the Baroque paintings were so good that they looked like modern-day photographs.

You know, if I hired a Baroque artist, I’d have him paint me a big fish pie. Mmmm...that would look sooo good!

You turn the page and read on. I’m going to grab a sardine snack from my best friend—the fridge.



Peter Paul Rubens Crossword



Across

4. A nobleman with a very high rank
6. A language once spoken by the Romans
9. A drawing, often quickly done and lacking detail
10. A woman holding the title of a count (nobleman); the wife of a count
12. A large house and the surrounding land

Down

1. A boy who was an assistant in a royal court
2. A place where an artist or craftsman works
3. The time period of the 14th through 16th century in Europe; the art, architecture, literature, and learning of this time
5. A soldier often wearing armor and riding a horse; a type of gentleman soldier famed for rules of conduct and honor
7. A disease that makes joints painful and stiff; often affects the joints in the hands
8. A place where an artist does his or her work
11. A written agreement that countries will keep the peace, or end a war

Peter Paul Rubens Crossword



Latin
knight

sketch
treaty

Renaissance
estate

classic
arthritis

page
studio

duke
Flanders

workshop