

## Answers to the Paintings with hidden meanings

### **Q1 Christ in the Workshop of his father**

The characters in the painting from left to right are; a workshop assistant, St Anne (the Virgin's mother) the Virgin, Christ, Joseph, St John the Baptist.

The probable meanings of the objects, reading from the left, are as follows,

The unfinished basket – the flagellation of Christ

The sheep at the door, looking for guidance

The Red carnation- reference to the Crucifixion

The set square – the Holy Trinity,

The ladder – Jacob's ladder

The dove on the ladder – the Holy Spirit

The Pincers and Nails – the Crucifixion

Blood on the Christ child's foot- the Crucifixion

Robin in the half-moon window—gaining sustenance

### **Q2 Michelino Dante holding a copy of the Divine Comedy.**

From the Divine Comedy, The mountain in the centre refers to the time in purgatory with a level for each of the deadly sins (sloth, gluttony, lust etc.). Heaven has "layers" of attainment.

### **3. Picasso La Suze (Verre et bouteille de Suze)**

Picasso used to meet his fellow artists in a bar and discuss various issues including politics and war. The collage shows the wall paper of the bar in the bottom corners. The blue area represents the table top. In Cubist fashion, the wine glass and the bottle top are shown to be circular, which they are if viewed directly from above.

The news in the cuttings seem to be the topic of discussion among the artists and writers in the bar. These newspaper extracts from Le Journal (Nov. 1912) relate to the Balkan war. The ones pasted upside down report on the war and an outbreak of cholera that killed thousands of Turkish soldiers. A cutting pasted the right way up relates to an anti-war demonstration.

The bottle of Suze is an aperitif made from gentian herbs. The herb was named after Gentius, a king of ancient Illyria, Illyria was on the coast of the Adriatic Sea where the Balkan League HQ, who were fighting the Balkan war against the Turks,

### **Q4 The Shadow of Death – Holman Hunt**

Christ is stretching and his shadow acts as premonition of the Crucifixion. The kneeling figure on the left is the Virgin Mary examining the gifts brought by the three Wise Men stored in the chest. The window behind Christ forms a halo around his head. Also, the star shape in the window is a reminder of the star that brought the Wise Men to his Nativity. The red bandana on the floor, bottom right, may represent the Crucifixion or the crown of thorns.

### **Q5 Allegory of Love with Venus and Cupid**

Around the figures of Venus and Cupid are personifications of vices attendant on unchaste love. The relationship between mother and son also suggest incest. Venus is holding the golden apple, awarded to her by Paris as "the Most Beautiful Woman".

On the right a little boy prepares to shower the embracing couple with the roses of Venus, laughing, despite the thorn in his right foot (a personification of Folly or Foolish pleasure).

Behind him Deceit has the face of a pretty girl but the body of a monster. In one hand she offers honeycomb while in the other she conceals the deadly sting of a scorpion's tail.

On the far left, half way down, there is a figure that used to be identified as Envy but it seems more likely to be syphilis whose symptoms were severe headaches, discoloured skin, thinning hair and swollen joints.

At the top, on the right, there is Father Time. Opposite him at the top on the left, is Oblivion(?). She has eyes to see before her but no brain for memories or regrets. She is trying to stop Father Time displaying the scene.

The masks at the bottom right probably the joy and pain of love. The dove at the bottom left seems to be exiting the scene as though to detach himself from the subject.

### **Q6 Titian's Ariadne and Bacchus**

On the island of Naxos, Ariadne is waving goodbye to Theseus, in the ship on the left, whom she has been helping. Bacchus arrives in his chariot drawn by two cheetahs. (in the story told by Ovid in his "Metamorphoses" they are tigers). Bacchus leaps from his chariot to protect Ariadne from these wild beasts. He is leading a procession of his followers. Under the tree is Silenus, Bacchus's drunken, overweight, older friend who is often depicted riding a donkey,

The painting shows her initial fear of Bacchus, but he raised her to heaven and turned her into a constellation, represented by the stars above her head. There are two possible variations of the story both going back to Ovid. In his Metamorphoses, Ovid has Bacchus throw the crown of Ariadne into the sky where it becomes the constellation Northern Crown. In *Ars Amatoria*, Bacchus promises the entire sky to Ariadne where she then would become the constellation Northern Crown.

### **.Q7 Holbein The Ambassadors**

The date of the painting is the spring of 1533 when Europe was in the throes of the upheaval caused by the Lutheran theology. The two Ambassadors are both Catholic and the objects between them relate to the schism between the Catholic and Protestant churches.

Scholars have suggested the painting contains overtones of the religious strife. The conflicts between secular and religious authorities are here represented by Jean de Dinteville, a landowner, and Georges de Selve, the Bishop of Lavaur. The commonly accepted symbol of discord, a lute with a broken string, is included next to a hymnbook in Martin Luther's translation, suggesting strife between scholars and the clergy. For others, if the lute's broken string suggests the interruption of religious harmony, the Lutheran hymnal, open on facing pages reproducing a song on the Commandments (Law) and one on the Holy Spirit (Grace), may suggest their being in "harmony" with each other. The part of the painting that has long captured the imagination of most historians, however, is the astonishing range of cutting-edge scientific instruments, contemporary

mathematical treatises, and musical scores from the period splayed out between the two figures. There is a precise logic to this melange of fascinating clues, which show intellectual rather than monetary wealth.

The objects on the upper shelf—a celestial globe, a sundial, and various other instruments used in astronomy and for measuring time—relate to the heavenly realm. The terrestrial globe, compass, lute, case of flutes, and open hymn book on the bottom shelf indicate earthly pursuits.

Each of the instruments on the upper shelf are misaligned for use in a northern latitude. It's an unlikely oversight; the artist was nothing if not meticulous, and had scientist friends he certainly would have called on for help. Instead, their misalignment is an emblem of chaos: the heavens out of whack.

On the bottom shelf, the terrestrial globe mirrors the celestial one above it, and the words "Baris" and "Pritannia" (Holbein's own phonetic spellings of Paris and Brittany) can be made out. Peter Apian's *New and Reliable Instruction Book of Calculation for Merchants* provides subtext beneath it. A ruler opens the textbook to a page of equations, starting with the word *dividirt*, meaning "let division be made," a clear reference to the religious schism tearing Europe apart. In another literal move, the lute's broken string symbolizes ecclesiastical discord. The book next to this one, a Lutheran hymnal, proffers *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, a hymn to the Holy Spirit, traditionally invoked as a force for church unification.

The likeliest explanation of the anamorphic skull is that the painting was meant to hang in a stairwell, so that persons walking up the stairs and passing the painting on their left would be startled by the appearance of the skull.

The French Ambassadors were in England on a mission, probably to persuade Henry VIII to marry a French princess. However, he had secretly married Ann Boleyn in January 1533. She was crowned Queen of England in June 1533 and Elizabeth I was born in Sept 1533. Also, they were to try and heal the rift between Henry VIII and the Pope.

### **Q8 Recognising saints**

St Catherine - a Catherine wheel a broken cart wheel, or similar

Saint Jerome - a red Cardinal's outfit with a book relating to his translation of the bible or a lion (similar story to Androcles and Daniel)

Saint Francis – brown monk's habit (he gave away of his worldly possessions), may be accompanied by wildlife

John the Baptist -shown in furs and an elongated Crucifix

St Peter – often with a grey beard, either holding keys or a book

Saint Cecilia- a musical instrument or a musical score

Saint Sebastian – being pierced by a number of arrows

Saint Paul – letters or books or a blinding light

Doubting Thomas- something relating to him putting his hand into Christ's wounds from the cross

Judas - with the bag of silver paid for betraying Christ, may be kissing Christ on the cheek, a black halo or reaching for bread at the same time as Christ