



13 Painters Children Should Know

1445 Johannes Gutenberg invents moveable type for printing books

1453 Constantinople falls to the Ottomans, ending the Greek Byzantine Empire

1430

1435

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1445

1450

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1460

1465

1470

1475

1480

1485

**Born:**

ca. 1450 as Jeronimus van Aken in 's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands

Died:

August 1516 (buried on August 9) in the town of his birth

Lived in:

Bosch lived his entire life in his native town.

Period:

Renaissance*

Hieronymus Bosch

Hieronymus Bosch is surely one of the most imaginative painters of all time. There are more strange figures in his pictures than in the work of any other artist.

No one knows where Hieronymus got his outlandish ideas. Unfortunately, we know very little in general about this painter, for almost no records about him have survived. His grandfather and his father, Jan and Antonius van Aken, were also painters. We don't even know why Hieronymus named himself after his hometown of 's-Hertogenbosch. But we do know that he was a successful painter and a respected citizen of his town, and that he taught many painting students in his workshop.

Hieronymus's paintings often took human frailties as their theme. In his picture *The Conjuror*, he shows a magician performing amazing tricks for the public. The magician has an owl in his basket, and it looks like he is about to conjure a toad from the mouth of a curious spectator. A crowd is watching, fascinated by what is going on between the conjuror and his victim, but no one notices that the man to the left is about to steal the spectator's purse.

Bosch's masterpiece was a great altarpiece known as *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. It is filled with a vast jumble of people and fantastical figures: birds with the heads of frogs, giant strawberries, a kind of tree-person with a body that looks like an egg, birds that are larger than people, two-legged dogs with enormous ears, glass pipes, and strange buildings that look like houses from another galaxy.



1492 Christopher Columbus discovers America

1506 Construction of St. Peter's Basilica begins in Rome

1490

1495

1500

1505

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1545



The Conjurer, ca. 1480
Musée Municipal, Saint-Germain-en-Laye

If you rotate the picture counterclockwise, you can see a face on the table: the two little cups form the eyes, the large cup is the nose, and a stick forms the mouth.

Today it's no longer easy to say what all these images were supposed to mean. But even during the period in which Bosch painted the altarpiece, most people did not know what to make of it. No one had ever seen such pictures before. Yet for this very reason, many people wanted to have a picture painted by Bosch. Rulers sent their messengers to buy his pictures. The Spanish king was Bosch's biggest patron. He bought a total of thirty-three works by the artist!

Try painting or drawing like Hieronymus Bosch. Conjure up some animals that you know never really existed ... maybe a rabbit with an elephant's trunk or a dog with the ears of a donkey.

The Garden of Earthly Delights, ca. 1510
Prado, Madrid

On the wing of the altar-piece to the left you can see Paradise with Adam and Eve, the original people in the Bible. On the wing to the right is hell, where houses are burning, volcanoes are erupting, and people are crying out in fear of everything that's going to happen to them. The large central panel is filled with people doing all sorts of strange things in a beautiful landscape. They're riding pigs, carrying giant fruits around, hiding in large eggshells and flower blossoms, and playing with enormous fish and birds.



