

# Journey Through Art History



## I. Silk Road

The Silk Road consists of a PowerPoint presentation, tracing the stations of the ancient Silk Road from Xian, China, to Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey). Through images, music, accounts of travelers such as Marco Polo, and artifacts students are invited on this epic journey and learn about the trade, the history, and the art that could be found along the 5,000-mile-long route. The program is designed to also include contemporary voices and images of the cultures along the Silk Road, and can help to provide a bridge or link between the ancient and present history of the Middle East, including the countries of Iraq, Iran (Persia), China, and Afghanistan. The presentation shows the wealth of the ancient cultures in contrast to the present conflicts so frequently heard about in the media.

## II. Art and Print in the Renaissance

For the first time in human history, art and knowledge could be reproduced and made available to a larger audience during the Renaissance age. It was the beginning of books and prints. Albrecht Dürer's woodblock prints and Johann Gutenberg's Bible printed with movable letters reached thousands of ordinary people. The rising middle class in 15<sup>th</sup> century Europe had a great desire for affordable woodblock prints like Dürer's *Melancholia*, and their purchase made Dürer the first art star. In book printing Gutenberg's Bible enabled people to read the sacred text themselves without having to rely on the interpretations of the clergy, which diminished the great power of the church and emancipated the people. Early illustrated prints of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and other Greek mythologies made the rise of the Renaissance art and science with its reliance on the Classical sources possible. The program illustrated this development and includes music of the era, as well as a printmaking activity.



## II. Comprehending Conceptual Art

The program traces the history of modern art from the invention of photography in 1839 to Impressionism and the major art movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to Conceptual art. The students are invited to follow the successive art movements and their increasing tendency towards abstraction and finally the abandonment of the physical art object in favor of Conceptual art. Artists such as Claude Monet, Edvard Munch, Wassily Kandinsky, Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol, and finally Ed Ruscha, Joseph Kosuth, John Baldessari, Olafur Eliasson, and Bruce Nauman are introduced. The program ties in with the Athenaeum's important artists' book collection of Conceptual artists, which includes many of the artists. Students create Conceptual artworks and are encouraged to visit the Athenaeum following the presentation to see these artists' books personally. A small selection of books can also be brought to the classroom.

