

TEACHER'S GUIDE



The BIBLE'S INFLUENCE

on Western Civilization



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The Bible's Influence on Western Civilization: Teacher's Guide

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Written by Timothy Dalrymple, PhD and Jerry Pattengale, PhD, with David Charles, Nicholas DeNeff, and Amy Van Dyke.

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Introduction

What Is the Bible? How Have Its Stories Influenced History and Culture?



You've heard it in the music of U2, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, as well as Stravinsky and Handel. You've seen it in movies like *The Matrix* and *Evan Almighty*, in literary classics like *The Divine Comedy*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and *Moby-Dick*, and in *The Lord of the Rings*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, and the *Harry Potter* series. You've encountered it in countless paintings, sculptures, and buildings. You've heard it in the names of friends like Adam, Joshua, Ruth, David, Esther, Mary, John, Peter, and Paul. You've even heard it in speeches by presidents and other famous figures, and in common phrases like "the writing on the wall," "like a lamb led to the slaughter," and "eat, drink, and be merry."

What you have seen and heard in all these cases, whether you realized it or not, is the remarkable impact

of the Bible on culture throughout the ages. No matter where you were born, where you live, what kind of movies you watch, what books you read, or what music you listen to, the cultural impact of the Bible is an inescapable part of life. In fact, many of the greatest accomplishments of Western civilization—including paintings and sculptures, dances and musicals, films and television shows, cathedrals and monuments, social movements and political declarations, books and poems, even entire languages and countries—would look very different without the influence of the Bible.

We can only truly understand the world we inhabit, and the cultural treasures that represent some of the highest peaks of human achievement, if we are familiar with the Bible.

Introduction 1

Goals:

To provide an introduction to the Bible's influence on Western culture.

To convey how deeply the Bible has influenced every aspect of cultural life.

To examine the terms "culture" and "Bible."

Essential Questions:

In what ways has the Bible impacted film, painting, music, sculpture, and literature?

What is culture, and in what ways does it affect our lives?

How does the perception of the Bible differ from one person to another?

Introduction

5 min

The Bible has played a crucial role in the development of Western culture, serving as inspiration for artists, writers, politicians, and many others. In this lesson, we will discuss several examples of the Bible's impact on various aspects of Western culture. The meaning of culture and how it affects our lives will then be examined, while noting the differences in the ways people perceive the Bible. The 37 lessons in this textbook demonstrate how profoundly the Bible has shaped modern life.

The Bible in Popular Media

5 min

Brainstorm

The Bible continues to influence culture, even in the 21st century. Have each student write down the name of a film, song, or episode of a television show they think might refer to a biblical story. Collect all the notes and arrange them on the board according to category, and then invite some of the students to explain their choice.

Introduction

Popular Phrases



Class Discussion

Ask the students if they can think of additional phrases that come from the Bible.

The Gutenberg Bible



Class Discussion

If time allows, share a clip with the students of Gutenberg's printing process. Remind them that the Gutenberg Bible was the first major book printed in the West with movable type. The "printing revolution" allowed books to be made faster and at a lower cost, which had a revolutionary effect on Western societies. Ask the students why Gutenberg chose the Bible and how the printing press made books more widespread.

Possible Answers:

The Bible was the most popular book and thus many copies could be sold. Printed books were less expensive than handwritten ones and therefore more people could buy them.



The Bible's Influence

What This Textbook Is About

This textbook invites you on a journey of investigation. On this journey, you will learn about prominent creative expressions from Western culture—works of art, films, sculptures, musical compositions, dances, and so on. Those items have one thing in common: they were all inspired or influenced by the Bible in one way or another. You will visit libraries, museums, and theaters. You will meet famous artists, musicians, filmmakers, poets, and sculptors. And you will see how the Bible inspired and shaped their work.

Each chapter begins with a striking example of the cultural influence of a certain biblical story or set of stories. Those stories are then summarized, to help you understand further examples of the Bible's impact on Western (and sometimes non-Western) culture. The emphasis throughout is not on the details of the biblical narrative or its interpretation. The emphasis is on the Bible's impact, and how a greater familiarity with the Bible leads to a deeper understanding of the cultures we inhabit.

Every chapter maintains a strictly neutral tone in matters of religious faith or theological interpretation. Biblical passages are not cited or examined as the source of values or moral lessons. Nor is the Bible used to endorse or critique any particular idea, cause, individual, or group. Finally, the textbook does not address questions of historical accuracy or the Bible's authenticity. The biblical stories are treated as stories worth knowing and understanding because they have been so broadly influential.

Popular Phrases

The Bible's influence is found not only in art we can look at, music we can listen to, and places we can visit; it is also in the very language we speak. The following ten popular phrases are among the hundreds of expressions that entered English from the Bible:

- To fall by the wayside
- A city on a hill
- The land of milk and honey
- A leopard cannot change its spots
- Like a lamb led to the slaughter
- To move mountains
- At the eleventh hour
- The blind leading the blind
- By the skin of your teeth
- Feet of clay



Research Assignment

1. Use the internet to find the biblical source of each of the ten phrases.
2. What does each phrase mean? Use each one in a sentence.

A Few Facts

Cultural impact cannot be fully captured in numbers or statistics. But the following facts indicate the Bible's historical prominence and continuing influence:

- Over five *billion* copies of the Bible have been printed and sold.
- The Bible is the most-read book in history.
- It has been translated in its entirety into more than 750 languages; portions of the Bible have been (or are currently being) translated into more than 3,000 additional languages.¹

2 Introduction

Copies of the Bible



Online Search

Have the students read the section "A Few Facts" on this page. Today, there are 49 known copies of the Gutenberg Bible around the world. Have the students name three libraries in which one of the original copies can be found.

Possible Answers: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Germany, US Library of Congress, Bibliothèque Nationale in France, the British Library, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in the Vatican, Keio University Library in Japan, Biblioteca Nacional in Portugal, Moscow Lomonosov University, and Russian State Library in Moscow.



Introduction

Examples of the Bible's Influence

Later, when we read the assigned biblical stories, we will see that a familiarity with those stories helps us understand more about history and culture. For now, we will look at five types of cultural media in which the Bible's influence is found: film, painting, music, sculpture, and literature.



Film

In the early 1950s, legendary Hollywood director Cecil B. DeMille made it clear that his next movie would be his biggest ever. He had already made one film about the biblical story of Moses—*The Ten Commandments*, released in 1923. The new film would bear the same title. By the time it was finished, it had also become the most expensive film made to date. One scene—the parting of the Red Sea—cost over a million dollars and took over a year to create and shoot. The scene required a 32-foot-tall water tank that could produce a flood of 360,000 gallons of water in two minutes flat.

DeMille and his crew relied on extensive research. In an attempt to represent the biblical story and setting as accurately as possible, the filmmakers consulted 950 books, 984 periodicals, 1,286 clippings, 2,964 photographs, and 30 libraries and museums. The movie was a huge success. More recent film adaptations of biblical stories include Darren Aronofsky's *Noah* (2014) and Ridley Scott's *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014).



Painting

In early November 1966, the city of Florence, Italy, experienced its worst flooding in over 600 years. Days of rain swelled the Arno River. Water flowed into the city streets and many buildings, damaging or destroying thousands of treasures in the art-filled city where the Renaissance began.

Among the affected masterpieces was a large painting by Giorgio Vasari. Created in 1546, its five panels depict one of the best-known scenes from the Bible: the Last

Supper. In the 1966 flooding, the painting, hanging in a cathedral museum, was completely immersed in a mix of water, oil, and sewage for over twelve hours. A young museum apprentice named Marco Grassi rushed back from Switzerland when he heard the news. He and others immediately got to work attaching paper to the priceless painting to keep the paint from separating from the wet wood. It took 50 years for conservation experts to repair the damage. Vasari's painting is but one of thousands that reflect biblical stories, figures, or themes.



Music

Among the genres of music that have played a key role in American history is the African American spiritual. Some of the best-known examples include "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." Such music originated with enslaved people in the American South.

Spirituals first emerged amid informal gatherings of slaves in the 17th century. Compositions borrowed from African culture, biblical stories, and the harsh experience of slavery. The genre flourished in the 19th century and became a means of expressing the faith, hopes, and despair of the slave community. The name of this kind of music comes from a verse in the Bible: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19, KJV).

The genre also reflects the Bible's influence in other ways: many spirituals retell stories about biblical figures like Daniel and Moses, and they often focus on themes reflecting the slaves' own situation: work, captivity, oppression, and the desire and struggle for freedom. The prominent 19th-century writer and former slave Frederick Douglass described what singing these songs meant to him and others: "A keen observer might have detected in our repeated singing of 'O Canaan, sweet Canaan, I am bound for the land of Canaan,' something more than a hope of reaching heaven. We meant to reach the North—and the North was our Canaan."²

The Ten Commandments



10 min

Class Discussion

Have the students read the "Film" section and discuss the following questions: Why was it necessary for DeMille to consult so many different sources for his film on the biblical story of Moses? Wouldn't it have been enough just to read the Bible?

Points to Consider:

The biblical text has been translated many times into many languages so that many different versions exist today. Also, modern scholarship has illuminated many aspects of the biblical world.

Introduction 3

The Price of Restoring Art



10 min

Critical Thinking

The Florence flood of 1966 took a devastating toll on the city's works of art, many of which were damaged beyond repair. Have the students research and read an article online about restoring Vasari's *The Last Supper*, and then have them write a paragraph stating their opinion on the costs and benefits of restoring this piece of art.



Chariots in Rugby



10 min

Class Compilation

The Bible's influence can be found in unexpected places. The African American spiritual song of salvation "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" became so popular that it was adopted by British rugby fans. Choose a performance of this song online and have the students write down the things, people, and places that appear within it.

Answers: A chariot, the Jordan River, angels, home, friends.



Introduction

Sculpture Review

5 min

Have the students search online for a 3-D model of *David* by Bernini and review it.



Biblical References

15 min

Online Activity

By using a biblical name in a story, the author taps into the reader's existing knowledge to create emotions or expectations. In order to use this technique, the author needs to be confident that the reader is familiar with the biblical figure.

Have the students fill in the handout at the end of this chapter about works of literature that refer to the Bible.



David, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, 1623–1624. Galleria Borghese, Rome, Italy.



Sculpture

No other artwork is "equal to it in any respect, with such just proportion, beauty and excellence."³ That was Giorgio Vasari's estimation of a sculpture created around 1500. The Renaissance artist Michelangelo may be better known as the painter of the Vatican's grand Sistine Chapel ceiling, but he viewed himself first and foremost as a sculptor. His sculpture of the biblical figure David—an imposing, exquisitely detailed creation from marble that stands almost 17 feet tall—is the object Vasari so greatly admired. Other artists had depicted a triumphant David after his victory over the enormous Philistine warrior known as Goliath. Michelangelo

chose to capture a different moment in the story: David stands, relaxed but focused, with his sling in hand, ready to take on his opponent.

Bernini was another Italian artist who created a sculpture inspired by the biblical character David. Although this sculpture is also a freestanding marble carving, it is very different from Michelangelo's. Bernini depicts David *during* the battle, rather than before. This life-size David is anything but calm. He is twisted in action as he pulls back his sling with both hands. His muscles are tense and his face grimaces in concentration. Unlike Michelangelo's *David*, this figure interacts with his surroundings. He seems more realistic. As these examples show, the same biblical figure can be the basis of very different artistic results.



Literature

The influence of the Bible is evident across a wide spectrum of classic English works from different authors, regions, and time periods: from *Beowulf* to the novels of William Faulkner, and from Shakespeare to the poetry of Robert Frost. Some works of literature contain brief allusions to biblical figures or elements in the narrative. Other literary creations—like John Milton's classic *Paradise Lost* (1667)—are vast retellings of a biblical story that elaborate and expand on the source material. As you will discover in the coming chapters, many of the themes, plots, and characters of Western literature are based on the Bible.

The examples presented thus far only scratch the surface. As we will see in the journey we are about to begin, the Bible has also shaped language, the calendar, politics, civil rights and human rights movements, business, philanthropy, and medicine, and the fundamental ways we think about ourselves, our world, and the passage of time.

Vocabulary

- > **Estimation** [noun], a judgment of the value or quality of something or someone
- > **Philanthropy** [noun], the promotion of others' welfare, especially through donating money

4 Introduction

The Borghese Gallery

10 min

Research Assignment

The Borghese Collection, housed in the Borghese Gallery and home to Bernini's *David*, was established in the 17th century by the Borghese family. After the family moved from Siena to Rome, Camilo Borghese eventually became pope, changing his name to Paul V. He and his nephew, Cardinal Scipione Borghese, collected many biblical works of art. Have the students search online for three works of art in the Borghese Gallery that were inspired by the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament.

Possible Answers: David with the Head of Goliath by Caravaggio, *Madonna and Child with St. Anne* by Caravaggio, *Deposition* by Raphael.



Introduction

The Bible and Culture

What Is Culture?

The most commonly used words are often the hardest to define. In the mid-20th-century, two American anthropologists surveyed how the term "culture" had been used and found 164 separate definitions.⁴ The meaning and usefulness of the concept is still debated.

Nonetheless, the general concept of culture can be distilled as follows: Culture refers to the attitudes, values, and behaviors that are shared by a group of people. As people live together, they develop certain ways of thinking and doing things. The language you speak, the clothes you wear, and the movies you watch are all part of your culture. As you travel from one place to another, you will find that culture changes.

Two basic categories of culture are material culture and nonmaterial culture. Material culture consists of physical objects, like a tool, a book, or a building. Nonmaterial culture includes shared ideas, rules, or assumptions.

We will discover that the Bible's impact on culture has been expressed in a wide variety of ways, in material and nonmaterial culture alike.

What Is the Bible?

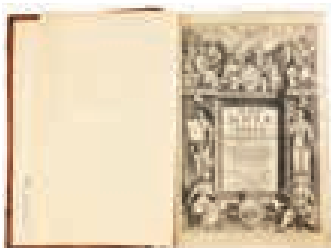
The Bible is a collection of dozens of writings that emerged over the course of centuries in the Eastern Mediterranean region, in the vicinity of present-day Israel. Those writings were written, collected, and edited by multiple people. "The Bible" means different things to different groups. For Jews, "the Bible" refers to the Tanakh, or what Christians call the Old Testament. The books of the Tanakh were written in Hebrew (with some portions in Aramaic), so it is sometimes called the Hebrew Bible. For Christians, "the Bible" refers to the books of the Hebrew Bible (the "Old Testament") as well as a set of Greek writings called the New Testament.

We will examine the Hebrew Bible as well as the New Testament, since both have produced such a profound impact on history and culture. But it's important to note that the New Testament is not part of "the Bible" for most Jewish readers, and that some groups of Christians include certain books and stories in their Bible that other groups do not.



Did You Know ...

- Jews and Christians count the "books" of the Hebrew Bible differently. Jews count 24 books in their Bible, in part because the writings of the "12 Minor Prophets" are considered a single book. Christians count 39 books in the Old Testament, because the minor prophets are counted separately, and Christians count some books as two (such as Ezra and Nehemiah, or 1 and 2 Samuel) that Jews count as one.
- It is not only the Bible itself but also translations of the Bible that have exercised a great influence over culture. Jerome became a major figure in Western art for his translation and standardization of the Bible into Latin. Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German shaped the German language. The King James Version, an English translation published in 1611, contributed to the English language even more new idioms than Shakespeare!



The King James Version, 1611.

Introduction 5

King James Bible

10 min

Timeline

Have the students read the "Did You Know" section. In 1604, a group of clergymen requested that King James publish a revised translation of the Bible. He quickly hired more than 40 scholars and made the plan his own.

Have the students write a timeline of this influential figure, starting a few years earlier with the reinstatement of English Protestantism.



It's All Greek to Me

10 min

Class Discussion

The first translated version of the Hebrew Bible was in Greek, and Greek is the original language of the New Testament. During antiquity, Greek was one of the most commonly spoken languages in the Western world.

Have the students discuss the phrase "It's Greek to me," and then have them do research to answer the question: If Greek was so widely spoken, then how did this saying come about?



Introduction

Summary



In this introductory lesson, we have seen how the Bible has influenced many aspects of Western culture. Throughout the ages, the Hebrew Bible (Christian Old Testament) and New Testament have undergone various changes. Yet the stories found in them have spread far and wide and continue to fascinate artists, writers, politicians, musicians, and many others. In this book, we will explore many works of Western culture that have been inspired by these biblical stories.

Features You'll Find in Each Chapter

Impact on Culture:

The opening section of each chapter offers an in-depth look at a biblical story or set of stories.

Reading:

In order to understand the impact of a biblical story, you must know the story itself. Brief excerpts are assigned and summarized. Readings focus only on those portions of the biblical narrative that illuminate the examples of cultural impact in that chapter.

Investigation:

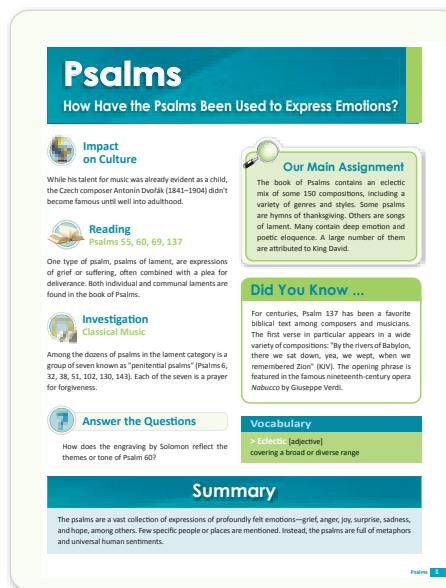
In each investigation, you will visit different times and places to examine one or more examples of the Bible's cultural impact.

Answer the Questions:

Each chapter contains questions that will help you deepen your understanding of the material.

Title:

Each chapter begins with a title that introduces its content and themes.



Note: Sample page for illustrative purposes only.
Not an actual textbook page.

Our Main Assignment:

Here you will find what to look out for as you learn about the cultural influence of one or more biblical narratives.

Did You Know ...

Brief cultural references are found in these sections.

Vocabulary:

Definitions are provided for words that may be unfamiliar.

Summary:

Each chapter concludes with a brief summary of the key points conveyed.

Summary

As a collection of stories, extended narratives, poetry, wisdom literature, prophecies, dreams, and visions, the Bible has for centuries provided a source of inspiration for Western culture. Its figures, themes, and narratives have been expressed in every imaginable art form, including painting, film, sculpture, music, and literature. The purpose of this course is to examine the Bible's cultural impact—an impact that shows, even in the 21st century, no signs of abating.

Biblical Scholarship



Did You Know ...

Research Assignment

Have the students make a list of three influential biblical scholars and their contributions to their fields of study. *Possible Answers:* Julius Wellhausen analyzed the structure and dating of the first five books of the Bible; Charles B. Copher was one of the first to address race and ethnicity in biblical texts; Gerhard von Rad developed the "tradition history" approach to the Bible; William F. Albright helped to authenticate the Dead Sea Scrolls; and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza pioneered the study of women and the Bible.



Abraham Lincoln and the Bible

Abraham Lincoln once said that as a child he studied in "a log schoolhouse in Indiana where we had no reading books or grammars, and all our reading was done from the Bible." It is no wonder Lincoln often referred to the Bible in his speeches.

Introduction

Name _____

Biblical References in Literature

Search the internet to find biblical references in the following literary works. You can add a literary source of your own.

Work of Literature	Passage with Biblical Reference
<i>Richard II</i> by William Shakespeare	
<i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> by William Faulkner	
<i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare	
<i>Paradise Lost</i> by John Milton	
<i>The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock</i> by T. S. Eliot	

Introduction

Biblical References in Literature

Search the internet to find references to biblical stories in the following literary works. You can add a literary source of your own.

Work of Literature	Passage with Biblical Reference
<i>Richard II</i> by William Shakespeare	Cain killing Abel "And consequently, like a traitor coward, Sluiced out his innocent soul through streams of blood: Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries, Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth [. . .]"
<i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> by William Faulkner	The wayward son Absalom rebelling against his father, David The book's title
<i>Hamlet</i> by William Shakespeare	Murder of Abel by Cain—the first murder in the Bible "That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder!"
<i>Paradise Lost</i> by John Milton	Confusion of tongues at Tower of Babel "Forthwith a hideous gabble rises loud Among the Builders; each to other calls Not understood, till hoarse, and all in rage [. . .]"
<i>The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock</i> by T. S. Eliot	Lazarus of Bethany restored to life by Jesus Would it have been worth while, To have bitten off the matter with a smile, To have squeezed the universe into a ball To roll it toward some overwhelming question, To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead [. . .]"

The Creation

How Did an Ancient Creation Narrative Inspire Michelangelo, Haydn, and Many Others?



The Creation of the Sun, Moon, and Plants, ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo, 1508–1512, Vatican City.



Impact on Culture

There's a small building in Vatican City that attracts up to seven million visitors a year. In the summer, we might find some 25,000 people waiting to see what's inside. The line to enter sometimes stretches for nearly a mile. We join it. Even the longest lines at Disney World rarely reach such lengths. This popular building, called the Sistine Chapel, has been standing here since the 15th century. What could be inside that keeps people waiting like this, even in the stifling heat?

Finally entering the chapel, we look up. On the ceiling high above are luminous scenes from a story told long ago.



Our Main Assignment

The opening sentence of the book of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1, NIV), is one of the most famous phrases in world literature. As the first verse in the Bible, it sets the stage for the story of creation and all that follows. Let's tour art, music, and literature to investigate the influence of the story of creation.

The Creation 7

Goals:

To explore the impact of the creation story on Michelangelo's work, on classical music, and on other forms of art.

To examine why Michelangelo's painting on the Sistine Chapel ceiling is considered culturally significant.

To investigate how the creation story has shaped the public debate over equality.

Essential Questions:

How did the Creation narrative inspire artists in Western culture?

How has the creation story influenced the discussion of human rights and equality?

Introduction



5 min

In this lesson, we will explore how the creation story influenced Michelangelo's painting on the Sistine Chapel ceiling and discuss why it remains culturally significant today. We will also evaluate the impact of the Genesis creation story on other artists, on music, and even on our calendar, as well as on the issue of human rights.

In the Beginning



10 min

Creative Writing

Artists and composers have been motivated by the desire to find something new in the creation story.

Have the students read Genesis 1 in the translation of their choice and then write a diary entry from the perspective of an artist or composer who is about to create a piece of work based on the creation story. Have the students use descriptive language to convey the emotions and concerns that the artist/composer may have at the beginning of the project.

The Creation

Vatican City



Research Activity

The Vatican is the smallest independent country in the world. Many works of art inspired by the biblical narrative can be found there.

To find out more about this unique place, have the students complete the profile handout on the Vatican.

The profile should include the Vatican's population, official languages, official religion, life expectancy, and one paragraph that gives examples of biblically influenced art located there.



The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo, 1508–1512, Vatican City.

To learn about this masterpiece, let's travel back to the start of the 16th century, when Rome was the world's artistic center. In this era, in the middle of what historians call the Renaissance, legendary artists such as Botticelli, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci delight the masses with sculptures and paintings of exceptional passion, precision, and drama. But the artist that many consider the greatest of all, Michelangelo, is about to compose possibly his greatest masterpiece, right on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Pope Julius II, seeking to decorate the chapel ceiling, turns to Michelangelo Buonarroti, a Florentine artist. The task is monumental. Michelangelo must paint a two-thousand-square-foot "canvas" across the sloping surfaces of a barrel-vaulted ceiling. He works in fresco, an ancient technique that requires spreading plaster across the wall and moving quickly to apply the colors before the plaster dries, when the colors will set permanently into the plaster. Michelangelo must do all this on an upside-down surface, standing on a platform more than 60 feet in the air!

8 The Creation

Take a Tour



Internet Task

Have students research the Sistine Chapel online and familiarize themselves with its layout. Also have them view some of the biblically inspired paintings in detail.

Ask the students to choose one feature of the Sistine Chapel that they find most impressive and have them explain their choice.



The Creation

Michelangelo will apply his tremendous intelligence and ingenuity to the technical challenges—but what should he paint? The pope has asked him to paint Jesus's 12 apostles. Michelangelo, however, wins permission to pursue another subject, focusing on stories from Genesis. He begins his work in 1508, standing atop the elaborate scaffolding and craning his neck to paint. He will continue his great work, with interruptions, until 1512.

Viewing the works of Michelangelo and other Florentine masters in the chapel you can see many of the biblical stories. Yet the ceiling is Michelangelo's alone. It represents nine scenes from the book of Genesis. Three well-known ones are taken from Genesis, chapter 1.

As it happens, many of Michelangelo's most renowned works—such as his sculptures *David*, *Moses*, and the *Pietà*—also reference Bible stories. Yet the Sistine Chapel's impact has been surpassing. Not too long ago, artists painstakingly restored the chapel frescoes to make the images brighter and sharper. Upon seeing the refurbished chapel for the first time, German author and filmmaker Werner Herzog (b. 1942) wrote: "I was overwhelmed with the feeling that before Michelangelo no one had ever articulated human pathos as he did in those paintings. Since then all of us have understood ourselves just that little bit more deeply."¹

Vocabulary

> **Ingenuity** [noun]

cleverness or creativity

> **Scaffolding** [noun]

a temporary structure, often made with wooden planks and metal poles, to support workers cleaning, fixing, building, or decorating a building

> **Pathos** [noun]

the quality of something in life or art that stirs up feelings of sympathy and sorrow



Moses, Michelangelo, 1513–1515. San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome, Italy.



David, Michelangelo, 1501–1504. Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, Italy.

The World's Artistic Center

10 min

Discussion

During the Renaissance, Rome was one of the creative centers of the Western world.

Ask the students what places they consider to be the creative centers of the modern world. What does it mean to be a creative center? What is created there? How does it influence lives?

Possible Answers: Silicon Valley as a world center for high tech. New York and Paris as centers for culture. Los Angeles as the main center for the entertainment industry. Paris as a world center for fashion.

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Human Pathos

10 min

Class Activity

Werner Herzog described how Michelangelo's paintings provide unique insight into what it means to be human.

Have the students choose a book, movie, or song that affected them in a similar way. Create a class mosaic of these items and display it in the class.

Did You Know ...

5 min

Moses's Horns

Ask students why they think there are horns on the statue of Moses by Michelangelo.

Explain that when Moses descended from Mount Sinai his face is described as radiating light (Hebrew word: *keren*). This was mistranslated many years later as "horn" (which is also *keren* in Hebrew). Michelangelo incorporated this mistranslation in his depiction of Moses.

The Creation

A Review

15 min

Group Activity

Have the students read the section "Reaction from Michelangelo's Contemporaries." Divide them into small groups and have each group write a short article from the perspective of a journalist who has been allowed into the Sistine Chapel to view Michelangelo's work.

Did You Know ...

When starting to work on a new project, Michelangelo would make preliminary sketches. Since he was afraid others would copy his work, he kept the sketches in a safe place, usually with his family. Today more than 900 of them still exist.

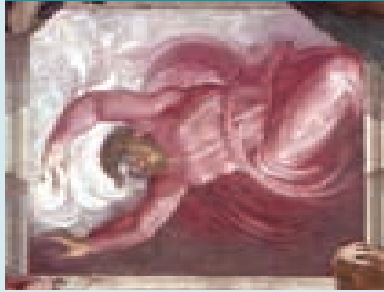
Reaction from Michelangelo's Contemporaries

Like a 16th-century rock star, Michelangelo sparked curiosity and excitement while painting the Sistine ceiling. In 1510, the pope, impatient to see it, forced Michelangelo to remove the scaffolding temporarily to show the parts he had completed. The accompanying crowd was stunned by the

breathtaking masterpiece and began to spread the word. Michelangelo's style and techniques, his use of color, the precision of his anatomical work, the sense of mass and weight he conveyed in the people he painted, and their straining postures and dynamic movements shaped the history of Western art.

Scenes from the Story of Creation, Sistine Chapel

The Separation of Light from Darkness



Answer the Questions

- 1 Who is the central figure depicted by Michelangelo in this scene?
- 2 Why do you think there seems to be a bright side and a dark side in this picture?

The Separation of Land and Water



Answer the Questions

- 1 Where does this scene appear in Genesis?
- 2 How does Michelangelo create a sense of motion?

Vocabulary

> **Anatomical** [adjective], relating to the human body or the study of it



Research Assignment

We found out there's a connection between the very first story of the Bible and one of the greatest artistic masterpieces of all time. What other examples can we find of how this story from Genesis has shaped the culture we inhabit?

Take a look at Genesis 1:1–2:3. What is the story, what does it have to do with the Sistine Chapel, and why have so many musicians, artists, and authors found it compelling?

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Scenes from the Story of Creation

5 min

Possible Answers

The Separation of Light from Darkness

1. The central figure in the scene is God.
2. The bright and dark sides could represent the separation of day and night.

The Separation of Land and Water

1. This scene appears in Genesis 1:9–10.
2. Through his depiction of the ripples in the fabric worn by God.

Research Assignment

5 min

Possible Answers

Students can refer to examples found later in this chapter, such as the structure/order of the creation story. Genesis 1:1–2:3 tells the story of the creation of the world and humankind, which is depicted on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Musicians, artists, and authors have found inspiration in the story's majestic description of the beginning of the biblical narrative.

The Creation

1 The Creation



Oxford Philharmonic and New College Choir, recording Joseph Haydn's *The Creation*.



Reading Genesis 1:1-13

When we read Genesis 1, one of the first things we'll notice is the sense of order and symmetry, even rhythm. The narrative is divided into "days," and each of the first six days begins with "God said" and ends with an "evening" and "morning." In the story, God declares on each day (apart from the second day) that what he has created is "good." On the first three days, the basic materials of the world are called into being and separated, making space for the creation of life and humankind. God separates light from darkness, the "waters below" from the "waters above" (KJV), and the land from the sea. On the third day, he begins to populate the land with plants. This movement from chaos to order, from the "void" to diversity and harmony, has inspired creative talents for thousands of years. Next, let's seek evidence for the influence of the creation story in music.

Joseph Haydn, Thomas Hardy, 1791.
Royal College of Music Museum,
London, England.



Investigation Classical Music

The great Austrian composer Joseph Haydn (1732–1809), after hearing a production of *Messiah* composed by his colleague George Frideric Handel, was inspired to draft his own musical work centered on a biblical theme. A friend passed along a short libretto (a text written for use in an opera or other musical work) based upon the Genesis narrative. From 1796 to 1798, Haydn expanded it into a multi-part oratorio called *The Creation*.



Answer the Questions

Listen to the opening overture, titled "The Representation of Chaos," in Haydn's *The Creation*.

- 1 Close your eyes and listen. What imagery comes to mind?
- 2 How does Haydn communicate the concept of chaos?
- 3 How does Haydn represent the transition in the narrative from chaos to God beginning his creative work?

The Creation 11

Did You Know ...

Austrian composer Franz Joseph Haydn composed 106 symphonies throughout his life.

Oratorio

10 min

Reading Comprehension

Handel's oratorio, *Messiah*, was first performed in America in 1818. It was promoted by the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston.

Have students read the opening paragraph of the "Oratorio" entry in the online *Encyclopædia Britannica* and research online the key characteristics of oratorios. Ask them to write a paragraph explaining why oratorios became a successful method of biblical storytelling.

Influence

5 min

Creative Writing

Haydn, Michelangelo, and many others were influenced by the Bible and worked hard to incorporate it in their works.

Have the students write a short essay describing something or someone that influenced them, and how this was manifested in their lives. Allow the students to share their experiences with the class.

The Creation

10 min

Possible Answers

1. The slow music expresses a sense of emptiness.
2. Notes are not played to their conclusion, leaving the listener with a sense of unresolved tension, confusion, and even chaos.
3. The opening overture concludes with the calm sounds of the flute, hinting at the beginning of order in the universe.

The Creation

Art Review 5 min

Have students go online to search for hidden objects in the *The Creation of the Animals* by Tintoretto.



Creation of Animals

10 min

Possible Answers

1. The active nature and richness of creation.
2. The picture implies that God is at the center of creation (as the creator) and that all things originate from that center.
3. This style may have been chosen in order to illustrate the wise and fatherly characteristics of God as portrayed in the Bible.

2 The Creation of the Animals and Humans



The Creation of the Animals, Jacopo Tintoretto, ca. 1550. Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.



Reading Genesis 1:14–2:1

On the fourth day, the story continues, God creates the sun, moon, and stars. He uses them to separate the days, the seasons, and the years, and to separate the light of day from the darkness of night. On the fifth day, God creates the animals of the sea and sky, and tells them to "be fruitful, and multiply" (KJV).

On the sixth day, God forms the creatures on land, including people. While God, according to the story, creates each animal "according to their kinds" (NIV), he creates humankind "in the image of God." God charges the people to "be fruitful" but also commands them to "subdue" the earth and "have dominion" over other creatures.



Investigation Work of Art

A valuable addition to our collection will be *The Creation of the Animals* by Tintoretto, ca. 1550. Traveling from Rome to Venice, we'll find this famous piece in the Gallerie dell'Accademia.



Answer the Questions

Look carefully at this painting.

- 1 What is the artist attempting to depict by illustrating a sky and sea full of life?
- 2 Think about the locations of God, the birds, fish, and land animals in the artwork. What is the artist illustrating through their various placements?
- 3 Tintoretto depicts God as a grandfatherly figure with a flowing beard and robes. Many artists have chosen to depict God like this. What may have motivated this artistic decision?

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Creation as Art

15 min

Art

Split the class into groups of four and have the students create an art exhibition on the theme of creation. Each group will create a drawing depicting two of the days of creation as described in the book of Genesis, which will be added to the class exhibit. Invite the students to create either an objective or abstract representation of the story.

Points to Consider: An example of an objective artistic representation that appears in this chapter is *Separation of Light from Darkness* by Michelangelo. An example of an abstract approach is *The 6 Days of Creation* by Michal Meron which can be found through an online search. Knowledge of the creation narrative contributes to the understanding and appreciation of both styles of art.



The Creation

3 The Sabbath



Reading Genesis 2:2-3

At the culmination of the creation narrative, God looks at everything he has made, affirms its goodness, and rests from his labors. The rhythms of the earlier days fall into silence. In English this seventh day is often called the Sabbath, from the Hebrew *Shabbat* (from the verb to "rest" or "cease" from activity).

The Seven-Day Week is shaped by the Genesis creation story

Have you ever wondered why we have seven days in a week? Why not five? Or ten? As it turns out, other cultures have had "weeks" with as many as 13 days and as few as four or even three days in them.

There's no commandment in Genesis that human beings should observe the seven-day pattern of the creation story. That comes later in the Bible, in the famed Ten Commandments: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God." This is explicitly connected to the creation story: "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11, NKJV).

Arranging days into weeks was not a new concept. People needed to know when others would be working, or at the marketplace, or celebrating religious festivals. So they gave names to the days and coordinated days of work and days of rest. The ancient Hebrews were not the only people to give spiritual significance to the span of seven days. The Babylonians appear to have framed a seven-day week as a quarter of a lunar cycle, with holy days occurring every seventh day (and perhaps "rest" every fourth week, on the 28th day).

Some scholars believe the Jewish tradition of the Sabbath may have taken some inspiration from the Babylonians. But the Sabbath is also distinctive. In the Jewish tradition, all labor must cease every seventh day,

The Hebrew Bible often uses YHWH (יהוה in Hebrew, based on Exodus 3:13-15) as a sacred name for God. Since the ancient Hebrews who passed down these stories revered God's name and did not want to say it aloud, they would see the letters YHWH but pronounce the word "Adonai," or Lord. Later generations of Jews even added marks around the consonants to show how the word should be read. Most modern translations of the Old Testament use "Lord" where the underlying Hebrew word is "Adonai" and "LORD" where the underlying word is "YHWH" (יהוה).



in parallel with the pattern of labor and rest described in the creation story in Genesis 1:1-2:3.

Whatever role other ancient Near Eastern traditions may have played, it was primarily the Jewish tradition that passed down to later generations. Julius Caesar reformed the Roman calendar so that there would be seven days per week, but for centuries the seven-day week and the older eight-day week lived on together in the Roman Empire. The first Roman Emperor to promote Christianity, Constantine, made the seven-day week official and changed the day of rest for Christians from Saturday to Sunday. Through the later Roman Empire, and the spread of Christianity, the observance of the seven-day week and a weekly day of rest was transmitted to many nations across the world.

Seven-day weeks developed in different places at different times in East Asia, but increasing amounts of contact and trade with the West made a single system necessary. Today, the seven-day week is observed around the world, and most countries have one or two days for rest per week.

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The Biblical Origins of the Week



10 min

Critical Thinking

Have the students read this page.

Who made the seven-day week part of the Roman calendar?

How has the creation narrative informed your understanding of the seven-day week?

Possible Answers:

Julius Caesar made a seven-day week part of the Roman calendar, and Constantine made it official.

Students can cite the creation narrative and its description of the seven days of creation as a source for the seven-day week.

Why Is Our Calendar the Way It Is?



15 min

Quiz

The Gregorian calendar contains elements that have been influenced by various historical and mythological narratives.

Have the students research online and then discuss as a class the origins of the names of the months.



Did You Know ...

There are many calendars in use today, including the Islamic, Chinese, Persian, and Balinese Pawukon calendars. Have students research the current year in a different calendar.

The Creation

Summary



In this lesson, we described important works of art by Michelangelo and other artists, as well as musical masterpieces such as Haydn's *Creation*. Although one can appreciate the art on its own, knowledge of the creation story contributes greatly to understanding the techniques and symbolism used in each piece. Familiarity with this story also provides greater insight into how the Bible has influenced the human rights movement and many of its activists.

Did You Know...

The Genesis creation story shaped the Western discussion of human rights and equality.

John Locke is often regarded as the father of the modern concept of human rights. Locke, who inspired many of America's founding figures, based his argument for human rights on the notion that human beings are God's "workmanship" and are all "furnished with like faculties" or abilities. In other words, we are all equal. Locke argued that "being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions."²

The US Declaration of Independence echoes Genesis when it declares "All men are created equal." Abraham Lincoln, reflecting on these words decades later, said it was the "enlightened belief" of the American Founders that "nothing stamped with the Divine image and likeness was sent into the world to be trodden on, and degraded, and imbruted by its fellows."³ Abolitionists in the United States often appealed to the "image of God" to express their opposition to slavery. Frederick Douglass, for instance, condemned slavery as "wicked" insofar as it "mars and defaces the image of God by cruel and barbarous inflictions."⁴ According to William Lloyd Garrison, a prominent journalist and abolitionist, the view that God created humankind in his own image

deals "a death-blow to all claims of superiority, to all charges of inferiority, to all usurpation, to all oppressive dominion."⁵ In the words of Pulitzer prize-winning historian David Brion Davis, the abolitionists' deep faith that all human beings were created in the image of God was a major factor driving the abolitionist movement.⁶

Similar sentiments, all referring to the Genesis language of an "image of God," can be found in the writings of leading 19th-century American thinkers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. More recently, Martin Luther King Jr. explained his view to an academic conference on race and religion in Chicago in 1963 that "the image of God is universally shared in equal portions by all men"⁷ and that "every act of injustice mars and defaces the image of God in man."⁸ The belief that all people are created in the divine image was a central driver, according to King, of the movement to treat people of all races justly and equally.

Martin Luther King Jr. addresses a crowd from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, 1963.



Vocabulary

> **Abolitionist** [noun], a person who favors abolishing a practice or institution such as slavery

Summary

In the Renaissance, artists and intellectuals rediscovered a great deal of the Greco-Roman heritage. As shown in the works of Michelangelo and other Renaissance greats, however, biblical scenes and characters remained a major focus. The Roman Catholic Church continued to be a prominent patron of the arts, commissioning works that reflected the Bible, the common storybook of the age. The Sistine Chapel is just one example among many great artistic masterpieces taking inspiration from the creation narrative of Genesis. We also found reflections of the creation story in Haydn's music, in the spread of the seven-day week, and in debates over human and civil rights.

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The Bible and Human Rights



Creating a Bio

Have students complete the handout for one of the individuals mentioned on this page. The bio should include basic information, interesting facts, and the impact of the creation story on the individual's speeches or writings about human rights. Examples of such individuals include John Locke, Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King Jr.



Genesis in Famous Speeches



Research Activity

Have the students research some of the famous speeches mentioned on this page. Have them highlight an excerpt from a speech that refers to Genesis and write a paragraph expressing their opinion about the speaker's intention in making that specific reference.



The Creation

Name _____

Vatican City Profile

Population _____

Continent _____

Surrounded by _____

Average Life Expectancy _____

Languages Spoken _____

Major Religions _____

Examples of significant landmarks and biblically influenced art

Draw the Vatican's flag:

The Creation

Name _____

The Bible and Human Rights

Fill in the boxes to create a bio for one of the individuals mentioned in this chapter, such as John Locke, Abraham Lincoln, or Martin Luther King Jr.

Name:	
Early Life:	Major Accomplishments in the Field of Human Rights:
Family:	Three Interesting Facts:
How did this individual use the creation story in the struggle to achieve human rights?	