

L3-1day1

Northern Renaissance 15th Century

Art Discussed:

Van der Goes, *Portinari Altar piece*, 1476

Campone, *Merode Altarpiece*, 1425

Limbourg Brothers, *October*, 1413

VOCAB:

Book of Hours

Donor

HW:

worksheet

Campin, *Mérode Altarpiece*

- Donors at left: grave, sedate, middle class, witness a holy event
- In center: Annunciation scene
- Domestication of religious scenes, no haloes
- Water and water basin as a baptism symbol
- Candle just snuffed out: divine light puts out human light
- Candles have a phallic connotation; extinguished candle: consummation of marriage
- Lilies: Mary's purity
- Three flowers indicate the Trinity, one bud: Christ as yet unborn
- Virgin on floor: her humility
- Virgin blocks off entrance to hell, symbolically the fireplace
- At right: Joseph in his workshop
- Outside, a view of a Flemish city, with a mousetrap for sale in the window; mousetrap as symbol of Christ ensnaring the devil
- Thin figures, sinuous curves of drapery
- Microscopic sense of surface detail

Limbourg Brothers, *October*

- From a Book of Hours Top: paired signs of the zodiac: Libra & Scorpio
- Divide between peasant class in foreground and ruling nobility in castle in background
- Peasants work at farm routines
- Very detailed observation of nature: from birds eating the seed to the shadows cast by the horse
- Sumptuous colors

Van der Goes, *Portinari Altarpiece*

- Painted in Bruges, installed on altar of a Florentine church attached to the city's largest hospital
- Virgin represents alleviation of suffering
- Oddly different sizes of figures
- Solemn grandeur
- Shepherds in wonder, gazing in curiosity
- Wheat, serving as the bed for the Christ Child, is a Eucharistic symbol
- Painted for a church associated with a maternity hospital in Florence
- Mary as the great mother of childbirth
- Flowers are symbolic of suffering: scarlet lily, white and purple irises, Mary's suffering in childbirth, Christ's suffering on the Cross
- Many of the flowers were known for their healing properties, appropriate for hospital setting of work
- Background left wing: Mary's pregnant state revealed as Joseph helps her
- Christ: tiny and frail newborn
- Margaret: patron saint of childbirth on right panel with female donors
- Left panel: male donors and saints

Activity 3:1 Christus

Study the following painting in your textbook: *Petrus Christus, A Goldsmith in His Shop, Possibly Saint Eligius*, 1449, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Read the selection that describes this painting. Answer the following questions:

In this painting it seems that a young couple has come to a goldsmith to purchase a ring for their marriage.

- 1) Describe the couple.

- 2) Describe the goldsmith.

- 3) What is the symbolism of the items on the table and in the cupboard?
