

Baroque in Spain

Art Discussed:

Velazquez, *Surrender of Breda*

Velazquez, *Las Meninas*

HW:

Activity Sheet

Velazquez, *Surrender of Breda*

- Battle in 1625, Dutch forced to yield Breda to the Spanish
- Magnanimity, humanity and valor of the victors is stressed
- Dutch on left seen as youthful, disorganized
- Spanish on right are dignified, with lances indicating their military precision
- Key to the city is emphasized in the center
- Emotional tone of generosity and mutual respect
- Effect of the battle seen in the smoky background
- Topography is accurate: artist interviewed participants in the battle and consulted other renderings of the area
- Light and color are compositional devices that unify the elements

Velazquez, *Las Meninas*

- Velázquez working on a huge canvas that could not fit through the door of the room. He pauses and takes a step back to study us.
- Velázquez wears the Cross of the Order of Santiago, a symbol of nobility: painter enjoyed a court appointment and desired respect
- Princess Margarita with two maids-in-waiting is the central focus of the painting

- Dwarves on right; Philip IV had a large collection of dwarves, no abnormalities are glossed over by Velázquez
- Blurring of figures on right suggests painter's understanding of peripheral vision
- Older woman is lady of honor, wears a nun's outfit to indicate she is a widow
- Man in conversation with her is her escort
- Silhouetted man is José Nieto, aposentador of the Queen, head of the Queen's tapestry works, rests his hand on a tapestry as he goes out, but pauses
- Regular rhythm of the frames on the back wall anchors composition as opposed the irregular rhythm of the groups
- Paintings above are works that illustrate mortals who challenged the gods
- Perspective pulls you into the painting, but the mirror reflects out
- Extension laterally: canvas on easel, windows
- Alternating darks and lights reach into the painting
- King and Queen are in the mirror, but what is being reflected? The painting Velázquez is working on? The King and Queen themselves? A portrait of the King and Queen hanging on the opposite wall?
- What is Velázquez painting? This group? A painting of this painting? The King and Queen?