

'daniel catholic faith.
it was meant to

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

' Daniel in the Lion's Den' by Sir Peter Paul Rubens was created between 1614 and 1616 in Flemish, Belgian. It is now hanging in the National Art Gallery in a room that appears dwarfed by the painting's horizontal length, about 88 ¼ inches by 130 1/8 inches overall. A single bench faces this painting which enables the viewer to sit and contemplate its religious background. ' Daniel in the Lion's Den' uses oil on canvas as its medium and media.

The artist uses every inch of his canvas to fill with clues on where you are viewing the painting and of past events that lead to what was happening. The reason that Sir Peter Paul Rubens created this painting starts with his long history in the Catholic Church. He was a very devout man and was happily commissioned to depict a religious story. The church was losing followers at the time to Protestantism. This painting of Daniel was meant to tell people, mainly of the lower class because of their lack of reading ability, of the positive effects of staying with the Catholic faith. It was meant to excite people about the power that the church offers to its followers. The story of Daniel in the Lion's den started with the Persian king Darius I " The Great" threw Daniel in a pit of lions because he would not change his faith against his " one true god". The painting shows Daniel praying to his god, presumably all night as goes the story, that he not be eaten by the hungry lions.

In the Bible it states, " Then said Daniel unto the king, O King, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." (Daniel 6: 21-22). Thus, when the

non-believers lift the rock covering the lion pit reveals that Daniel wasn't eaten, god rewarded him for keeping his faith. Human bones and even a skull can be found in the foreground closest to the viewer to show what would really happen to someone if they found themselves among the nest of lions. Sir Peter chose to create this piece horizontally to create the illusion of a crowded room of lions pitted against a single man that could be more dramatically captured than if it were vertical. Sir Peter Paul Rubens' use of theatrical lighting and values sets Daniel apart from the hungry lions at his feet.

Shades of colors become lighter as you look toward the center of the painting where Daniel sits awkwardly praying. It's meant to appear as if a spotlight has opened up above Daniel's head. It was obvious that Sir Peter wanted the viewer's attention to be focused on Daniel, still alive after a full night spent in a den of lions. This lighting could also be interpreted as sudden enlightenment as the Persian king realizes that he was miraculously spared. Warm colors are used for the majority of this painting, the only cool colors being in the small skylight above. Daniel is depicted as a fair-skinned man, also standing out against the reds and oranges of the lions, wearing nothing but a stark white loin cloth about his waist.

You could go even further in your own analysis surrounding the colors of this painting. Daniel's loincloth is an untarnished white which could represent the purity of his faith. As he sits on a boulder, under him is a red cloth which a viewer could interpret as the cruelty of the Persian king or the non-believers but is above all of them. You could also see it as the complete opposite, the red could symbolize the burning passion of his faith, which he stays upon.

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The detailing of the lions and of Daniel are over embellished, which goes along with Sir Peter's pattern of dramatization. The exaggeration of expression on Daniel is very theatrical, and mostly why I love this piece so much. The man looks up in relief but you can still feel his terror.

The lion's mugs all fold in on themselves to reveal rows of pearly white, sharp teeth. The expressions of the lions vary from sneering to semi-peaceful sleep. In the description of the painting itself brought to us by the National Art Gallery explain that " Several lions, for instance, stare at us directly, suggesting that we share their space, and, like Daniel, experience the same menace.

". I don't necessarily agree with this description. Only one lion looks directly at us and his stare more stone-faced than anything and I feel that it's mild expression was meant to bring you the sense of strength and power from the lion. The power that the animals hold over this man is seen from the lion holding himself with pride beside the shaken Daniel. This interpretation of the particular lion's expression and meaning could make the general purpose of this painting mean more, how strong these lions are but in the presence of faithful believer, they are harmless. The composition of ' Daniel in the Lion's Den is balanced.

Daniel himself is to the slight right of the center of the painting and is accompanied by two lions at his feet on the same side as him. To the left of the painting to balance it out are six other lions. One of which, standing a little below Daniel's height, is on the other side of the rock on which Daniel sits. The lion yawning in the background is placed to the slight right of the

standing lion in front of it. Because Daniel is leaning to his left, away from the center of the painting, the far back lion was used to mimic his tilt by being placed perceptively closer to Daniel but further back. Sir Peter Paul Rubens' painted this piece skillfully and with good reason to his faith. The shading on Daniel and the lions give them dimension and express dramatic feelings that make the viewer have to sit down to take everything in.

The way he uses colors to represent a deeper meaning in his work reflects his feelings of the church that commissioned him. The piece was meant to bring back followers of the Catholic Church and I feel that this tactic was a good one. Instead of using fear to bring upon more followers, this painting depicts what their god could bring you if you give them undying faith.