

# Survey of art on the piece the meeting of abraham and melchizedek



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Anita Krystine Eubanks Survey of Art 100 – 04 Paper #1 Visual Exploration

The piece of art, *The Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek*, was painted by Peter Paul Rubens. Peter Paul Rubens was born on June 28, 1577 in Siegen, Westphalia, who while attending the school of Rombout Verdonck, received training in the classics. His most noteworthy teachers were Tobias Verhaect, Adam van Noort, and Otto van Veen. *The Meeting of Abraham and Medchizedek*, an oil on panel was painted in 1626, and appears in a representational style. It was originally a modello for a tapestry.

Form: The framed dimensions of the painting were 96.8 x 113.4 cm, on a square wood panel. In this painting we find both horizontal and vertical lines from which the pillar on the left of the painting which towers up to the ceilings horizontal line and also to the two diagonal lines depicted by the tapestries that are being held by the angels. Those lines draw your attention more to the center of the painting. Also from the ceiling, along the heads of the people can be seen an implied triangular shape that draws your attention at the pinnacle to the exchange of gifts between the two men.

The hue of the painting is in more subdued earth tones giving the golden tone an almost holy feeling. And the values tend to vary from dark to light where the shadows seem to recede revealing a golden light piercing through the shadows illuminating the figures. The actual texture of the painting since it was painted on wood is not very smooth it has a rougher texture that was not necessarily a concern to the painter as it was only supposed to be a modello.

The visual texture presented by the painter is wide in variety, you can almost feel the silky, smoothness of Melchizedek's cloak, the cold, hard feel of the marble floors, or the embossed appearance of the ornate pillars and molding. Movement is a definite element in the work. The excitement of victory exudes from the soldiers, a portrayal of thankfulness by Abraham beginning to kneel on the steps, the lugging of the heavy wine bottles, and the impatient pawing of the steed. All allow us to feel the emotion, and action of the piece as if we were actually part of the scene.

The painting was a representation of the story in scripture, Genesis 14: 1 – 20. Abraham is returning, after the exhaustion of battle, with his troops from a victorious war against five kings of Canaan. The King of Salem, Melchizedek, who was said to be the priest of the Most High God, came to thank the troops and offer them bread and wine in abundance. At this time also Abraham gave a tithe of the spoils to Melchizedek. The King of Salem then blessed Abraham. The painting looks as if it is shouting, action and passion. The piece spills over an excitement that is exuberant.

There seems to be three areas of life being presented here. In the upper part of this painting we see the cherubim that seem to watch over the proceedings, an interpretation of heaven possibly. Next on the right of the painting we see Abraham and his army which depict the more common people, the peasants, soldiers, farmers. The right of the painting however, shows us the glory, riches, and power that were possessed by royalty.

Overall I found this painting to be intriguing and thought worthy. The

Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek by Peter Paul Ruben