



## The Artwork

### *The Ambassadors*

Painted during Holbein's time in England, *The Ambassadors* is a portrait of two French ambassadors. Part of their job in England was to try to keep England from breaking away from the Catholic Church. Both men were in their late 20s and were wealthy, educated, and powerful. The objects between them reflect their education. The top shelf contains objects related to the study of the heavens, while the bottom shelf contains objects related to the study of things on earth. The skull painted at the bottom is done in anamorphic projection. To see the image, you must look at it from an angle. The skull represents death. It is a contrast to the youth of the two men.

## Discussion Suggestions

### Talk about the objects shown on the shelves between the two men:

- *What are the objects?*
- *How do they represent heaven and earth?*
- *What do you think the objects say about the men?*

### What is sticking out behind the curtain in the upper, left-hand corner of the painting?

- *Why do you think only half a crucifix shown?*
- *What does this say about what was happening at that time?*

### What is the big blob at the bottom of the painting?

- *Why do you think Holbein paint a skull?*
- *Why do you think the skull is painted like it is?*
- *What do you think it means for the men?*

## Activity Idea

### Draw Your Own Portrait

Pre-Activity (Things to consider **before** drawing):

- Was anything Holbein painted made up? (No. He painted very realistic things.)
- Everything in his paintings had a specific meaning.

### Activity:

- Put students into pairs of two.
- Give each pair a piece of plain white paper and allow them to use their own crayons or colored pencils.
- Instruct the students to draw a portrait with their partner similar to Holbein's *The Ambassadors*. They should include objects that tell something about themselves. For instance, if they like baseball, they could draw a baseball and a bat.

### Materials Needed:

- White Paper
- Crayons, colored pencils (optional)

### Draw an Anamorphic Picture

- Does it look easy to draw an anamorphic picture?
- Give students a piece of white paper and instruct them to try drawing an anamorphic picture by sitting on the floor and leave their paper on their desk. With their eyes level with the paper, see if anyone can draw an anamorphic picture.