

Giotto

Before you read

1 Match the following captions with the pictures on the page.

- 1 *Joachim's Dream*
- 2 *Nativity*
- 3 *The Flight into Egypt*
- 4 *Saint Francis giving his mantle to a poor man*

Reading

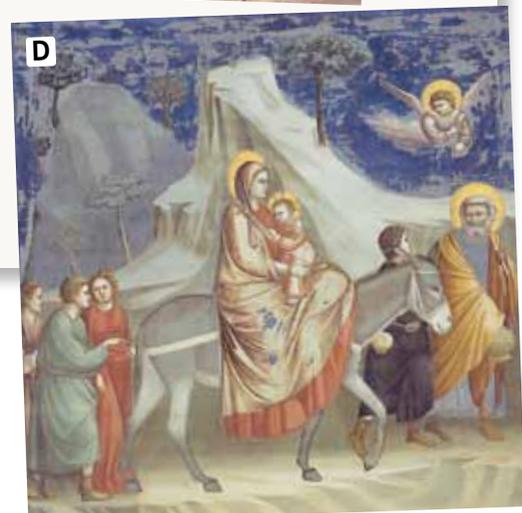
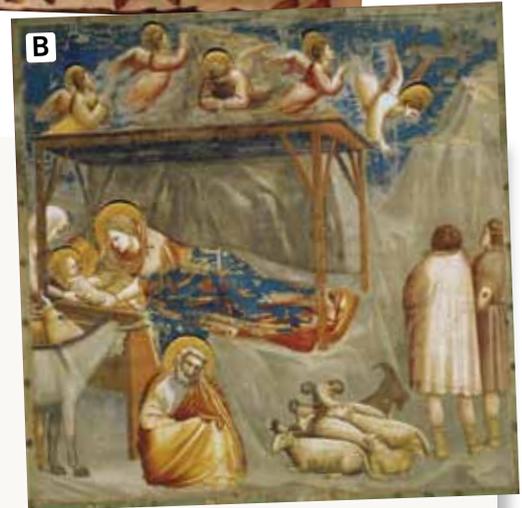
2 Read the text. Which paintings are mentioned in the text? Where can we see them?

Giotto di Bondone (1266/7-1337), who is better known simply as Giotto, was an Italian painter and architect from Florence in the late Middle Ages. He is the first in a series of great artists who contributed to the Italian Renaissance. The 16th century biographer, Giorgio Vasari, describes Giotto as the artist who began the great art of painting as we know it today; he drew accurately from life.

Giotto's life is almost a complete mystery: we know that Giotto painted the Arena Chapel and that he was chosen by the Comune of Florence in 1334 to design the new *campanile* (bell tower) of the Florence Cathedral; but we do not know very much more about him.

We are not sure of his birthdate, his birthplace, his appearance, his apprenticeship, the order in which he created his works and his burial place. For example, it is said that Giotto was born in a hilltop farmhouse, perhaps at Colle di Romagnano; since 1850 a tower house in Colle Vespignano, a small village 35 kilometres north of Florence, has claimed to be Giotto's birthplace. Recent research, however, has suggested that he was actually born in Florence, the son of a blacksmith.

In his *Lives of the Artists*, Giorgio Vasari says that Giotto was a shepherd boy, a happy and intelligent child who was loved by all who knew him. The great Florentine painter Cimabue discovered Giotto drawing pictures of his sheep on a rock. They were so lifelike that Cimabue immediately wanted the boy to be his apprentice. Giotto's masterpiece is the decoration of the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, also known as the Arena Chapel, which was completed around 1305. This fresco shows the life of Christ and the Virgin, in works such as the *Nativity* and the *Flight into Egypt*.

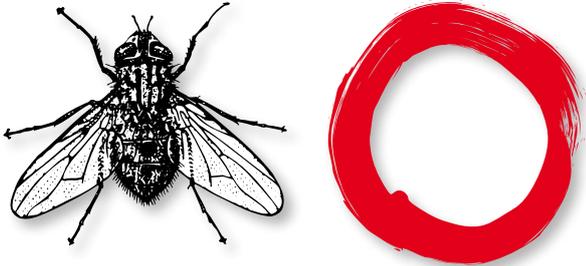


3 Read the text about Giotto again and write T (true) or F (false).

- 1 Giotto designed buildings. _____
- 2 Giotto was born in Colle di Romagnano. _____
- 3 His father was a blacksmith. _____
- 4 As a child, Giotto worked as a shepherd. _____
- 5 The *Nativity* is in Florence Cathedral. _____

Listening

- 4** You are going to hear two stories about Giotto. Before you listen, guess what the stories are going to be about by looking at these two pictures.



- 5** **6** Listen again and answer these questions.

- 1 What joke did Giotto play on his teacher?
- 2 What does the joke show?
- 3 Why was the courtier angry with Giotto?
- 4 Why was the Pope impressed by Giotto?

- 6** **6** Listen and complete the first story about Giotto.

One day, when Giotto's teacher, Cimabue, was away from the workshop, the young boy, Giotto, painted a really lifelike (1) _____ on the painting that Cimabue was working on; when Cimabue came back to the (2) _____, he looked at the painting and saw the fly. He tried several times to (3) _____ it off with his hand, but of course he couldn't do it. And he couldn't (4) _____ why the fly was stuck on the painting! The young Giotto (5) _____ and his teacher knew it was a joke. This story shows that Giotto could paint very (6) _____.

Speaking

- 7** Work in pairs. Tell your partner the second story about Giotto. Use the following questions to help you.

- What did the Pope want?
- What did the courtier do?
- What did Giotto do for the Pope?
- What did the courtier think of Giotto?
- What did the Pope think of Giotto's drawing?
- What did the Pope decide in the end?

STUDY SKILLS

Foreign words in English

The reading text uses the Italian words *campanile* and *arena*. Here are some more Italian words common in English:

*soprano crescendo spaghetti risotto
al dente broccoli cappuccino
espresso paparazzi*

But English borrows from many languages, such as German, Latin and French. We sometimes use foreign expressions in English to make our writing more colourful.

Writing

- 8** Match the foreign expressions below with the correct meanings.

- 1 *carpe diem*
- 2 *comme ci, comme ça*
- 3 *verboden*
- 4 *in vino veritas*
- 5 *savoir-faire*
- 6 *persona non grata*
- 7 *deus ex machina*
- 8 *faux pas*

- a forbidden
- b the ability to behave appropriately
- c seize the day
- d a surprise solution out of nowhere
- e a mistake
- f an unwelcome person
- g like this, like that
- h truth in wine

- 9** Surf the Internet for amusing anecdotes about famous people, such as artists or writers. Write a short story using some foreign expressions in your text to make it more colourful.

