

Whether your child still eats their finger paint or has the makings of a future Michelangelo, books about art and artists can spur imaginations and support artistic growth in young readers.

At a basic level, your choice to share books about art will **help build your child's appreciation** of art. Talk about what pieces of art you enjoy and ask open-ended questions to help your child develop their own opinions. These conversations don't have to take place in a museum—simply point out public art when you see it! Sculptures, murals and graffiti are all great examples of art in public spaces and may feel more relatable to your child than an 18th century portrait.

As you read art books together, take the opportunity to talk about the **elements of art**, such as line, shape, texture, form, space, color and value. Remember that you do not need to be an expert, you can simply talk about what you see. What are the lines, shapes and colors present? Why do you like or not like these elements?

If these conversations about art and artists are as new to you as they are to your kids, spend some time together looking at **the work of major artists** and let that guide future conversations. Some artists have cultural fame and may be more easily recognizable by young readers—Keith Haring's bright pop art, for example, or the legendary Frida Kahlo and Vincent Van Gogh.

Finally, keep in mind that the time you spent sharing books about art and artists is a terrific way to **nurture your child's creativity**. Keeping curiosity at the center of your exploration will help your child grow their own taste—and potentially skill—as an artist. Who knows, maybe someday you'll be reading a book they illustrated!

“Mayhem at the Museum: A Book in Pictures” by Luciano Lozano (2020)

A little girl's field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Met) gets way more interesting when the paintings and sculptures she sees come to life.

“Noisy Paint Box: The Colors and Sounds of Kandinsky's Abstract Art” by Barb Rosenstock and Mary GrandPré (2014)

This biography of one of the world's first abstract artists also introduces the concept of “synesthesia”—the experience of color as sound—a connection that helps us understand Kandinsky's use of color.

“Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood” by F. Isabel Campoy, Teresa Howell, and Rafeal López (2016)

Based on the impact of the Urban Art Trail in San Diego, Calif., this picture book shares the impact art can make in transforming a neighborhood. Also available in Spanish as *Quizás Algo Hermoso*.

“Milo Imagina el Mundo” de Matt de la Peña y Christian Robinson (2021)

A boy who sketches during a subway ride ends up rethinking his own assumptions about the people he’s seen and drawn. Also available in English as *Milo Imagines the World*.

“Parker Looks Up: An Extraordinary Moment” by Parker Curry, Jessica Curry, and Brittany Jackson (2019)

A fictionalized account of young Parker’s visit to Michelle Obama’s portrait at the Smithsonian details a moment captured by photographers and shared around the world.

“Dr. Seuss’s Horse Museum” illustrated by Andrew Joyner (2019)

Based on Theodor Geisel’s unfinished, unrhyming, nonfiction manuscript, whimsical illustrations meld with real works of art as a horse guides readers through a museum visit to help kids think about and appreciate art.

“Take Me to Museums: The Young Explorer’s Guide to Every Museum in the World” by Mary Richards (2020)

An interactive sketchbook filled with facts about international museums, this journal has five chapters meant to be completed during various museum visits.

Once you’ve shared some stories about art and artists, consider these activities to bring a little extra color to your reading experience:

- Keep a journal of your artistic encounters. Let your child sketch sculptures you see or collect postcards of famous museum pieces you’ve visited. Making the enjoyment of art a multisensory experience will help your child think of themselves as capable of creating masterpieces.
- Mimic the styles of various artists whose work you enjoy, from the swirly painted night skies of Van Gogh to miniature playdough sculptures like Jeff Koons. Experiment in different mediums, like watercolor and tissue paper collage.
- Keep a list of descriptive words to help your child describe the artwork they admire. Is the piece realistic? Ethereal? Abstract? Oversized? Moody? This is a terrific way to build vocabulary.