

KOREAN RENAISSANCE ART: 1400-1600CE

GRADES: 9-12

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SUBJECT: History, Art, AP World History

TIME REQUIRED: Two to three class periods

OBJECTIVES:

1. Review basic elements of European Renaissance art.
2. Introduce basic elements of Korean Renaissance art and the history surrounding its creation.
3. Compare and contrast European and Korean Renaissance movements.
4. Analyze different pieces of art and identify elements that categorize them as “Renaissance” art.
5. Write a compare and contrast essay. (This can be modified to reflect AP World History standards.)

STANDARDS:

NCSS Standards:

Standard 1: Culture

Standard 9: Global Connections

Common Core Standards:

WHST 1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content

WHST 2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events....

WHST 4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

SL 1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

SL 2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Art images and description, printed out and displayed at eye-level around the classroom (images provided below)
- Copies of handouts one and two for each student
- Computer with realplayer (or other MP3 player) installed and speakers (Internet access is required, but the file maybe downloaded in advance if you don't have classroom internet access.)
- Paper for Venn diagrams and essays (lined or blank)
- Optional materials include the AP World History Compare and Contrast rubric

BACKGROUND:

This unit is meant to follow a unit on the European Renaissance, which is usually taught at the beginning of the sophomore year. Students always get excited about field trips and seeing “real art,” but unfortunately not all schools have access to these opportunities. This lesson gives students the chance to have a virtual field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s exhibit on the Korean Renaissance.

Although the European Renaissance is commonly studied, it is routinely considered only in the context of European artistic developments and rarely global artistic trends. Korean art of the same period (1400-1600CE) was going through a similar pattern of rebirth and development. Both groups were dealing with political and social change that was reflected in the development of new and revival art styles. There are three main elements that occur in both areas, secularism, retention of religious art, and the revival of classical styles. Secularism became increasingly popular, while traditional religious works, based on Christianity and Buddhism remained present and were sponsored by royal patrons. Artistic revival differs in the topics being revived, but both cultures looked to past artists to inspire new works. The Koreans looked to Song Dynasty classics and other landscapes to inform their new works, while Italian artists looked to classical Greek subjects and style, reviving the flowing fabrics and glorification of the human form that was lost in medieval works.

In both areas this was a turning point in society, politics and art that led the way for centuries of artists to follow.

PROCEDURE:

1. Write the following questions on the board: What made Renaissance art unique? (This will be a review of your earlier lessons on Renaissance Art.)
2. Have students independently write a list answering the question and then share their list with a partner. After a few moments for partner discussion, use their answers to start a group discussion reviewing main elements of European Renaissance art. (Answers may include less religious/secular, more colorful or brighter colors, use of perspective, revival of classical styles and subjects, increased nudity, emphasizing more pleasure in life, paid for by upper-classes or nobility, began after political/social shifts, etc.)
3. Inform students that today you will be studying another Renaissance that took place during the same time (1400-1600CE) but in a different area of the world, the Korean Renaissance.
4. Introduce students to some of the history surrounding the Korean Renaissance. (Lecture notes included as Handout 1. Teachers may choose to hand this out or ask students to take notes independently.)
5. Students will now prepare for their virtual field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY. Handout the tour study guide worksheet (Handout 2). Students should fill in the chart while listening to the docent and viewing the art.

6. Students will listen to the 'docent' via museum podcast. You can play this on your computer for free. (<http://metmuseum.org/metmedia/audio/exhibitions/034-special-exhibition-art-of-the-korean-renaissance>)
7. Students should then walk around the classroom looking at the pieces and descriptions you have put up around the room while filling in their worksheet.
8. After the students have had an opportunity to see all the pieces, put the class in groups of 3 or 4 depending on class size to compare their answers on the chart.
9. In the group, students should work on a Venn diagram comparing the Korean and European Renaissance. Students can work collaboratively, but must all complete their own Venn diagram. Encourage them to use specific pieces of art to support their points. (For example, if they say that both places still had an emphasis on religious art, then they should list *The Sistine Chapel* and *Medicine Buddha Triad with Twelve Guardians* to support their idea.)
10. Students should use their Venn diagrams and some outside research to write an essay comparing and contrasting Korean and European Renaissance art movements. This can be done as a class exercise or as part of a unit test or even homework if you are running short on time, but if you want students to use outside research you will need at least a few days for them to do research outside of class. To make this AP World History compliant, use the AP rubric to score the essay.)
11. Enrichment/Extra Credit: Students may create their own Renaissance inspired artwork that reflects the themes discussed in this unit.

ASSESSMENT:

Students will be assessed on their participation in the field trip activity as shown through their completion of the field trip study guide. Their Venn diagrams maybe collected, if you feel that you do not have a good feeling for their understanding from the first activity. The students will then be assessed on their comparative essays. AP World History students should use the AP compare and contrast essay rubric. Other essays should be assessed with the writing rubric (Handout 3).

RESOURCES:

Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. *5000 Years of Korean Art*. San Francisco, CA: Samhwa Printing, 1979.

Kim, Kumja Paik. *The Art of Korea: Highlights from the Collection of San Francisco's Asian Art Museum*.

San Francisco, CA: Asian Art Museum, 2006.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art. *The Korean Renaissance: 1400-1600*.

<http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/introduction.aspx>

All images are courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art at

http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/exhibition_images.aspx

ART IMAGES AND DESCRIPTIONS

Portrait of Sin Sukju, 18th century

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk; 65 3/4 x 43 1/8 in. (167 x 109.5 cm)

Goryeong Sin Family, Yeongseong-gun Branch, Cheongju



An eminent literatus with important publications to his credit, Sin Sukju was also a key political figure of his time, rising to the position of Prime Minister.

Following the conventions of early Joseon portraiture, this painting depicts the sitter in a three-quarter pose facing his right, resplendent in an official robe and an official black silk hat. Particularly eye-catching is the garment's luminous gold-embroidered green rank badge with peacocks. The portrait exhibits a lifelike quality, capturing not only the physical features of this eminent scholar-official but also his character.

It was common practice in the Joseon to make replicas of portraits of important ancestors, particularly meritorious subjects. These portraits, believed to embody the spirit of their subjects, were worshiped in various family shrines (*yeongdang*), which might belong to different branches of a family.

(http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/setting_stage.aspx?id=41)

Jar with Lid, 15th century

Porcelain; H. 10 7/8 in. (27.7 cm), Diam. of base 4 3/4 in. (12.2 cm)

Horim Museum, Seoul



With its clean silhouette and unadorned surface accentuating the white color of porcelain, this vessel epitomizes the Joseon elite's Neo-Confucian ideal of purity. The production of unembellished white porcelains like this piece consumed the efforts of the official court kilns of Bunwon. Though originally meant to produce porcelain for the exclusive use of the royal family, Bunwon porcelains also made their way to the homes of elite *yangban* families.

Porcelain was perhaps the most important new ceramic to emerge during this period. The majority of porcelain from the early Joseon period was plain white ware without painted or enameled designs. Alongside China and the Islamic world, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Korea was a participant in an international revolution in ceramics—that is, the production and consumption of porcelain, including the cobalt-painted blue-and-white ware—which would later spread to Japan and Europe. Yet whereas porcelain from these other parts of the world was actively traded, Joseon porcelain was made essentially for the domestic market.

(http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/setting_stage.aspx?id=40)

Medicine Buddha Triad with Twelve Guardians, second half of the 16th century
Hanging scroll; color and gold on silk; 48 7/16 x 50 3/16 in. (123 x 127.5 cm)
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (19.265)



Despite the official policy of suppression of Buddhism that was instituted in the early Joseon period, Buddhist art continued to be commissioned by members of the court, primarily for private devotion. Yet some works, including paintings and printed books, were made to promote Buddhist scripture and worship beyond the court. A revival of Buddhism took place under the reign of Dowager Queen Munjeong in the second half of the sixteenth century, during which time a large number of significant Buddhist art was produced. The *Medicine Buddha Triad with Twelve Guardians* was almost certainly commissioned by Queen Munjeong. Indeed, in its exquisite details, this painting is one of the most elegant works made under the patronage of the formidable queen.

The triad is a key format for iconic Buddhist imagery, featured in both painted and sculptural formats. In painting, the triad also appears in an expanded format, with an entourage of figures including guardians, a convention that appears in Goryeo-period works and continues in Joseon Buddhist paintings. This work is a large and particularly stunning example of this expanded format dating to the sixteenth century. (http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/setting_stage.aspx?id=38)



Eight Views of the Xiao and Xiang Rivers, 16th century

Eight hanging scrolls; ink on paper; each panel 35 13/16 x 18 3/4 in. (91 x 47.7 cm)

Jinju National Museum of Korea, Gift of Kim Yongdu (Jinju 6330)

These eight scrolls present an almost panoramic view of the famous site, filtered through changing seasons. In this set, as in other extant scrolls, the vertical format enables a clear articulation of the tripartite composition of fore-, middle-, and background, standard in early Joseon paintings on this theme. Each scene conveys simultaneously compositional coherence, expansiveness, and depth. The landscapes overall are both intimate and majestic. The eight scenes, from right to left, are: *Mountain Market*, *Clear with Rising Mist*, *Evening Bell from Mist-Shrouded Temple*, *Fishing Village in Evening Glow*, *Returning Sail off Distant Shore*, *Night Rain on Xiao and Xiang*, *Autumn Moon over Lake Dongting*, *Wild Geese Descending to a Sandbar*, *River and Sky in Evening Snow*.

(http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/romancing_past.aspx?id=02)



(detail)

Gathering of Government Officials, ca. 1551

Hanging scroll; ink and light color on silk; 51 x 26 3/4 in. (129.5 x 67.9 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Acquisitions Fund, and The Vincent Astor Foundation and Hahn Kwang Ho Gifts, 2008 (2008.55)



In this work, the title and the list of participants, which would normally have framed the painting at top and bottom, have been disposed of altogether, replaced at the top by a verbal description of the event. Moreover, the landscape and figures are equally prominent, though the central placement of the rocky mountains and winding stream endows nature with the greater importance. At the same time, the scholars and their attendants, under tall pine trees in the bottom right corner, are rendered meticulously and clearly. This painting, especially its landscape elements, presents a remarkably accurate yet creative rendering of the An Gyeon style, including an indirect reference to the Northern Song painter Guo Xi. This is the work of a highly sophisticated court painter who has successfully reinvented the enduring pictorial paradigms of the past—distant and immediate, foreign and native—in a distinctive and eloquent style.

Jeong Sa-ryong, a government official and famous literatus, poet, and calligrapher, wrote the poetic inscription in 1551, identifying the event as a commemorative reunion of sixty-year-old men who entered the government around the same time. It offers a vivid description of the camaraderie of the friends and

colleagues depicted in the painting, recounting a gathering to drink and recite poetry during a break in their jobs. An English translation of the poem is as follows:

Born in the same year we stood shoulder to shoulder.
Passed the civil or military examination at more or less the same time.
Time passes, and now we are facing seventy years of age.
Dressed in elegant clothing and hats, wise men meet.
We emulate the Literary Gathering of Luoyang,
And the painting shows respect for the elders, following Xiangsan.
We pause in our busy schedules and recite poetry over wine
Then hasten back to the offices to labor day and night.
Our gathering is humble and frugal, modeled after *Jinsolhoe*.
Whoever said loftiness is easily followed?
Lacking poetry for this great event, I raise my glass.
Lacking talent, my thoughts turn blank.
Written in the latter half of the twelfth month of 1551.

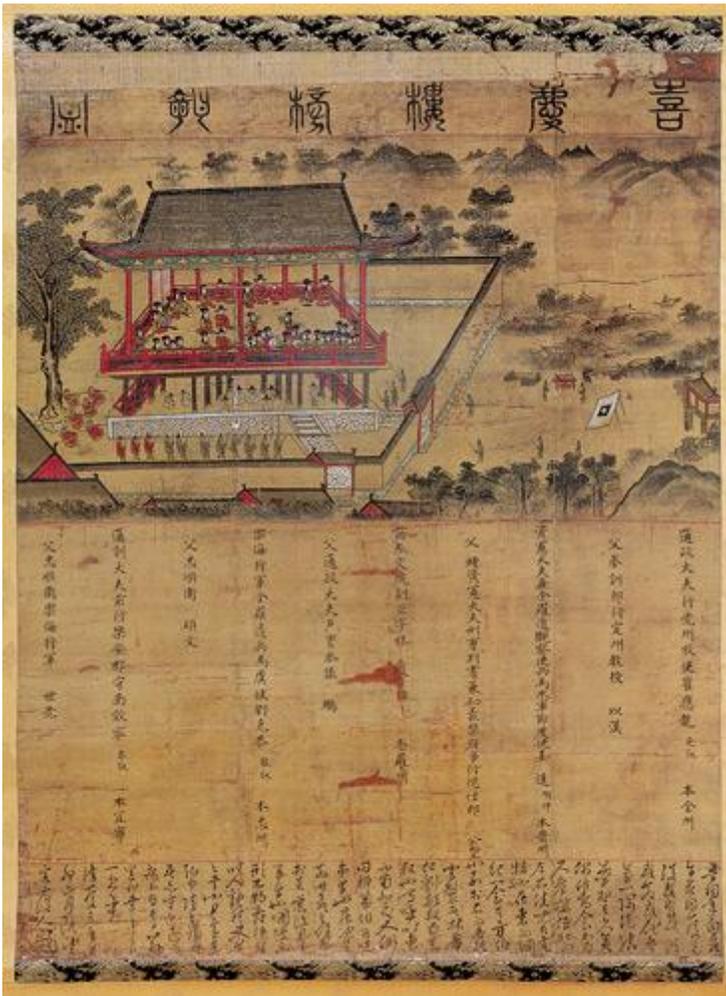
(http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/literati_essentials.aspx?id=10)

Gathering of State Examination Alumni at Huigyeong Pavilion, 1567

Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk; 38 3/4 x 30 1/4 in. (98.5 x 76.8 cm)

Dongguk University Museum, Seoul

This painting celebrates the reunion of five government officials who had passed either the civil- or military-service examination twenty-one years earlier, in 1546. It follows the standard tripartite compositional structure of *gye* paintings, with the title written across the top, followed by the depiction of the event, then followed by a list of the participants. The poetic inscription at the bottom of the scroll expresses both joy (for the long-awaited reunion) and a bittersweet sentiment (for those colleagues who could not join the gathering due to illness). It was written by Choe Eung-ryong, a member of this gathering who is seated at top center. The participants of this social meeting were current or former high-level officials of the Gwangju area, in Jeolla province.



The Huigyeong Pavilion, a famous sightseeing spot in Gwangju, was built about the mid-fifteenth century, more than a hundred years earlier than the event illustrated here. The story of the pavilion's genesis and construction can be found in a collection of writings by an eminent scholar-official of the time, Sin Sukju (1417–1475; [see portrait](#)). Inside the pavilion, a large number of courtesans (*gisaeng*) accompany and entertain those assembled for the festive gathering. Outside, to the right of the hall, is an area for archery, built at the same time as Huigyeong Pavilion.

http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/literati_essentials.aspx?id=09

Flask-Shaped Bottle, 16th century

Porcelain; H. 10 1/2 in. (26.7 cm), Diam. of body 7 7/8 in. (20 cm)

Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul



This porcelain version of a bottle with flattened sides—probably for wine or other drink—offers a clean, sharp silhouette that follows closely that of its earlier leather prototype from nomadic cultures. The finely potted, beautifully crisp white porcelain represents the quintessential ideal of purity and simplicity espoused by the Neo-Confucian literati elite.

http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/literati_essentials.aspx?id=11

Shakyamuni Buddha Triad, 1565

Hanging scroll; color and gold on silk; 27 3/8 x 13 in. (69.5 x 33 cm)

Mary and Jackson Burke Foundation, New York



The widow of King Jungjong (r. 1506–44) and mother of the reigning king Myeongjong (r. 1546–67), the dowager queen Munjeong (d. 1565) was the de facto power behind the throne. A number of works survive that attest to her zealous devotion to the Buddhist faith. Among the best-known examples is the set of four hundred scrolls she commissioned in 1565 in honor of her son, King Myeongjong, and to commemorate the opening of Hoe-am Temple, a prominent Seon (Chinese: Chan; Japanese: Zen) Buddhist temple. This massive undertaking involved one hundred scrolls on each of four triads: those of the Historical Buddha (Sanskrit: Shakyamuni; Korean: Seokka), the Buddha of the Western Paradise (Amitabha; Amita), the Buddha of the Future (Maitreya; Mireuk), and the Medicine Buddha (Bhaishajyaguru; Yaksa). In each set of one hundred, fifty were executed in colors and gold, the other fifty in gold only. To date, of the four hundred scrolls, six extant works have been identified, two of the Shakyamuni triad and four of the Bhaishajyaguru triad.

The composition of these paintings, and presumably of all four triads, is classically simple, focusing on three figures—the central, elevated Buddha flanked by two bodhisattvas—with neither entourage nor background setting. This elegant, comparatively minimal composition continues the tradition of Goryeo Buddhist paintings, while the attenuated figures, ethereal and slightly static, the small facial features, and the puckered lips reveal the direction of the early Joseon style, which adopted elements of Ming Chinese Buddhist works.

http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/worship_paradise.aspx?id=31

The Great Departure, second half of the 16th century

Hanging scroll; ink, color and gold on silk; 59 1/16 x 41 5 1/16 in. (150 x 105 cm)

Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Cologne (Inv.-No. A 11,7)



The fourth of eight traditional episodes illustrating the life of the Buddha, this representation portrays the so-called Great Departure: Prince Siddhartha, who will become the Buddha, or Enlightened One, leaves the palace compound in search of Truth and Salvation. The overlapping narrative reads from left to right, in the scenes both inside and outside the palace. Within the palace, a horse in the lower right brought before the king signals the prince's imminent departure; his wife, the princess, weeps as she caresses the horse; the narrative moves to the left, where the king, seated in a room of the palace, wipes away his tears; finally, in the grand room at the top of the palace compound, another scene takes place following the Prince's departure, with the servants gathered around the distressed princess before two empty chairs. At the top of the painting, surrounded by dark mountains, Siddhartha sits in a red robe shaving his head, then, traveling in monk's garb, he meets a hunter. At the very top, a golden palace is enveloped in clouds. The bright colors juxtaposed with the dramatic play of dark, mysterious mountains and clouds create the mood of this theatrical narrative. It has been suggested that this painting may form a set with the scroll illustrating the Birth of the Buddha now in the collection of Hongaku Temple, Japan.

http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/worship_paradise.aspx?id=35

Seokbosangeol (Episodes from the Life of the Buddha), 1447

Printed book; ink on paper, each page 8 5/8 x 6 1/4 in. (22 x 15.8 cm)

Dongguk University Library, Seoul; Treasure no. 523



King Sejong (r. 1418–50) commissioned the publication of a twenty-four-volume *Life of the Buddha* (Shakyamuni, the Historical Buddha), in a Korean translation, to honor the soul of Queen Soheon, who died in 1446. The publication was carried out by her son, the future King Sejo. This book (volume 23) is an important documentation of *hangeul*-type printing in the mid-fifteenth century, shortly after the invention of the Korean alphabet under King Sejong.

http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/worship_paradise.aspx?id=36

Other images, or larger copies of these images may be found at

http://www.metmuseum.org/special/KoreanRenaissance/exhibition_images.aspx) and reproduced for classroom use without fee as long as they are cited.

HANDOUT 1: KOREAN RENAISSANCE LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. Chosŏn Kingdom in the period 1400-1600 CE
 - a. Came to power in 1392 in a mainly bloodless revolution.
 - b. Rejected Buddhism (no longer state sponsored, although still practiced)
 - c. Brought ideas of Neo-Confucianism (See lesson plan “Neo-Confucianism in Art” for additional information.)
 - d. Powerful literati *Yangban* become patrons of the arts
 - e. Spread ideas through new alphabet (Hangeul) created by King Sejong
 - i. Created for all Koreans to express themselves and not rely on Chinese.
 - ii. Translated many Neo-Confucian texts into ‘Korean’

- II. Art shifts (Three main elements)
 - a. Element One: Retention of Buddhist Art
 - i. Many monarchs, including King Sejong and his older brother, sponsored Buddhist projects.
 - ii. Buddhism was more popular with female members of the royal family, especially Queen Munjeong.
 - iii. Although there are still many Buddhist pieces commissioned, *Yangban* support secularized art and culture.
 - iv. Example: *Medicine Buddha Triad with Twelve Guardians* (commissioned by Queen Munjeong in the second half of the 16th century)
 - b. Element Two: Revival of earlier painting styles
 - i. Influenced by Song Dynasty artists (in China)
 - ii. Landscapes
 1. Focused on earlier subjects, such as the Xiao and Xiang rivers in China
 2. Ex. An Gyeon style, named after the most famous artist of this style
 3. Elements included cloud-like mountains and pine trees, powerful brushstrokes, dramatic use of light and dark ink tones and use of space and voids
 - c. Element Three: Emphasis of Neo-Confucian Ideals
 - i. Honoring subjects who demonstrated Neo-Confucian ideals
 1. Bureau of Painting commissioned works of political figures who promoted the goals of the government, portraits
 2. Paintings depicting *Yangban* gatherings
 - ii. Simplicity in design
 1. Symbolizing purity and restraint
 2. Example: white porcelain

HANDOUT TWO: VIRTUAL MUSEUM TOUR STUDY GUIDE

Directions: While listening to the docent and viewing the museum pieces, take notes in the spaces provided.

Element of Renaissance Style being shown	Pieces that exemplify this theme	Explanation of how each painting fits the theme
Neo-Confucianism	1. 2.	1. 2.
Buddhism	1. 2.	1. 2.
Traditional Subjects	1. 2.	1. 2.

HANDOUT 3: WRITING RUBRIC

20pts	50pts	10pts	20pts
Organization	Content, Ideas	Conventions and Voice (Grammar, word choice, sentence variety, etc.)	Citations (Failure to complete this portion will result in an automatic zero on the project.)
The paper is organized around a central, clear thesis, which is stated in the first paragraph. Supporting paragraphs directly tie to and support the thesis. The flow of ideas is clear.	The paper is clear and focused. It includes all of the key ideas related to the topic, but is not overburdened with unneeded facts. Content is accurate and supports the thesis.	The tone is clear and appropriate for the audience and purpose. Vocabulary is accurate and specific. Grammar and usage are correct. Transitions are clear.	MLA citations, both in text and on the works cited page are completely accurate and used appropriately.
The paper has a main idea and the organization is clear enough to avoid the reader needing to reread. Some facts may not tie directly to the thesis. The thesis could be improved for increased clarity.	The writer is beginning to defend the topic, but development is basic, misses key facts or included incorrect information.	The writer misuses or lacks significant vocabulary. Generalities create confusion. There are a few grammatical errors, which distract the reader. Flow seems choppy or awkward.	MLA citations, both in text and on the works cited page, are present but have more than 2 errors of format or necessary information.
The writing lacks a clear direction. Thesis does not relate to the factual supports. Ideas seem strung together or just a compilation of lists. Ideas seem random.	The paper lacks factual support (only 1 or 2 pieces of evidence). It is too basic or unclear to convince the reader of one's point.	There are many grammatical errors that cause confusion. Vocabulary words are completely lacking or are consistently misused. There are many areas of confusion for the reader.	MLA citations are not included in text or a works cited page is not present. Formatting or necessary information have many errors.