

**Chapter 1 : El Greco, for one - English Crosswords**

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Life[ edit ] Early years and family[ edit ] The Dormition of the Virgin before , tempera and gold on panel, The painting combines post-Byzantine and Italian mannerist stylistic and iconographic elements. Byzantine chapel at Fodele , Crete , in Greece , where El Greco was born Born in , in either the village of Fodele or Candia the Venetian name of Chandax, present day Heraklion on Crete , [c] El Greco was descended from a prosperous urban family, which had probably been driven out of Chania to Candia after an uprising against the Catholic Venetians between and Nothing is known about his mother or his first wife, also Greek. In addition to painting, he probably studied the classics of ancient Greece , and perhaps the Latin classics also; he left a "working library" of books at his death, including the Bible in Greek and an annotated Vasari. One of his uncles was an Orthodox priest, and his name is not mentioned in the Catholic archival baptismal records on Crete. The painting combines post-Byzantine and Italian Mannerist stylistic and iconographic elements, and incorporates stylistic elements of the Cretan School. He lived in Venice until and, according to a letter written by his much older friend, the greatest miniaturist of the age, Giulio Clovio , was a "disciple" of Titian , who was by then in his eighties but still vigorous. Clovio characterized El Greco as "a rare talent in painting". There he came into contact with the intellectual elite of the city, including the Roman scholar Fulvio Orsini , whose collection would later include seven paintings by the artist View of Mt. Sinai and a portrait of Clovio are among them. El Greco was sitting in a darkened room, because he found the darkness more conducive to thought than the light of the day, which disturbed his "inner light". By the time El Greco arrived in Rome, Michelangelo and Raphael were dead, but their example continued to be paramount, and somewhat overwhelming for young painters. El Greco was determined to make his own mark in Rome defending his personal artistic views, ideas and style. El Greco is said to have reacted most strongly or even condemned Michelangelo, but he had found it impossible to withstand his influence. As his own commentaries indicate, El Greco viewed Titian, Michelangelo and Raphael as models to emulate. Architect and writer Pirro Ligorio called him a "foolish foreigner", and newly discovered archival material reveals a skirmish with Farnese, who obliged the young artist to leave his palace. A few months later, on 18 September , he paid his dues to the Guild of Saint Luke in Rome as a miniature painter. Ildefonso In , El Greco migrated to Madrid , then to Toledo, where he produced his mature works. He arrived in Toledo by July , and signed contracts for a group of paintings that was to adorn the church of Santo Domingo el Antiguo in Toledo and for the renowned El Espolio. Allegory of the Holy League and Martyrdom of St. However, the king did not like these works and placed the St Maurice altarpiece in the chapter-house rather than the intended chapel. He gave no further commissions to El Greco. An exceptionally large painting, it is clearly divided into two zones: Lacking the favor of the king, El Greco was obliged to remain in Toledo, where he had been received in as a great painter. During these years he received several major commissions, and his workshop created pictorial and sculptural ensembles for a variety of religious institutions. El Greco made Toledo his home. Surviving contracts mention him as the tenant from onwards of a complex consisting of three apartments and twenty-four rooms which belonged to the Marquis de Villena. He lived in considerable style, sometimes employing musicians to play whilst he dined. She was the mother of his only son, Jorge Manuel , born in , who also became a painter, assisted his father, and continued to repeat his compositions for many years after he inherited the studio. A few days earlier, on 31 March, he had directed that his son should have the power to make his will. Two Greeks, friends of the painter, witnessed this last will and testament El Greco never lost touch with his Greek origins. He believed that grace is the supreme quest of art, but the painter achieves grace only if he manages to solve the most complex problems with obvious ease. In his mature works El Greco demonstrated a characteristic tendency to dramatize rather than to describe. As Jonathan Brown notes, "each figure seems to carry its own light within or reflects the light that emanates from an unseen source". Wetthey says that "by such simple means, the artist created a memorable characterization that places him in the highest rank as a

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portraitist, along with Titian and Rembrandt ". Although following many conventions of the Byzantine icon, aspects of the style certainly show Venetian influence, and the composition, showing the death of Mary, combines the different doctrines of the Orthodox Dormition of the Virgin and the Catholic Assumption of the Virgin. The works he produced in Italy belong to the history of the Italian art , and those he produced in Spain to the history of Spanish art". Davies believes that the religious climate of the Counter-Reformation and the aesthetics of mannerism acted as catalysts to activate his individual technique. There he decorated the chapel of the hospital, but the wooden altar and the sculptures he created have in all probability perished. Ildefonso still survives on the lower center of the frame. Pacheco characterized him as "a writer of painting, sculpture and architecture". El Greco was averse to the very idea of rules in architecture; he believed above all in the freedom of invention and defended novelty, variety, and complexity. These ideas were, however, far too extreme for the architectural circles of his era and had no immediate resonance.

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