

**THE PAINTER'S  
PRIMER; IN  
FAMILIAR RHYME**

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The painter's primer; in familiar rhyme by Anonymous

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**ANONYMOUS**

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THE  
PAINTER'S PRIMER.

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**I**nstructivè information to impart,  
To those who love the *Imitative* art,  
And guide their early footsteps clear and right,  
I would the various rules thereof unite,  
By combinations charming to the mind,  
And leave the soul elated, learn'd, refin'd ;  
But teaching elements, we must dispense  
With tasteful harmony, to give the sense :  
For proper names and methods, rules and laws,  
And tracing home effects unto their cause  
Within such limits would *e'en poets* bind,  
That by their subject all their power's confin'd.

If thus, within so many barriers pent,  
Why fix on rhyme? these maxims to present.  
They first were wrote in prose, *at least in part*,  
To teach a rhyming friend this charming art;  
Who readily with my request complied,  
That for my prose the verse should be supplied;  
O'er which I have employed some studious hours,  
Not much concerned about poetic powers:  
But as my friend had turn'd my prose to rhyme,  
I have endeavour'd with the verse to chime.  
In doing which, should I commit offence  
To those whom *learning* arms in its defence,  
The Muse must be content with my appeal,  
*My motive* only can my pardon seal.  
Experience tells me *what* I've wrote is good,  
If how I've wrote it should be understood;

I humbly own all *teachers* ought to learn  
Their own extent of knowledge to discern.  
Convinc'd of a most useful, ancient truth,  
That *orders*, *softened war*, and *tender youth*,  
Are in their natures easily controll'd,  
And *much depends* upon their *early mould* ;  
This, well admitted—still a cheering ray  
Emboldens me fair *Painting* to display,  
With plain progressive rules, concise and clear,  
As in the following verses will appear.

This charming Art may so engage the mind  
Of those who by true genius are refin'd,  
That while their pencil flows with matchless grace,  
Some awkward habit spoils their form, or face :  
Therefore whene'er you study, well observe,  
You never from a good position swerve ;

Whether you sit or stand, keep ease in view,  
Nor forward bend as writers often do ;  
And whatsoever you copy, careful place  
Upright and level, opposite your face,  
For should you view it *any way* inclin'd,  
So much of Anamorphosis you find.  
Good distance from its point your pencil hold,<sup>1</sup>  
Or ne'er expect a drawing free and bold :  
Begin with simple lines to form your hand,  
Of *levels* and *uprights* obtain command ;  
Then *oblique lines* in all directions draw,  
And *curves*—the origin of beauty's law.  
To give these first endeavours more effect,  
Copy some simple forms of architect,  
With upright lines draw columns, posts, or pales,  
And levels will produce sills, steps, or rails ;



Draw roofs and pediments with lines oblique :  
The flowing curve in nature's works we seek ;  
The undulating flame, the winding rill,  
The tow'ring clouds, the cloud-aspiring hill,  
And animated forms, all curves combine,  
Immortal Hogarth prov'd it "*beauty's line.*"  
E'en works of art thereby are beauteous made,  
Survey the lofty dome, bridge, or archade ;  
*There* strength and symmetry in curves unite,  
Producing order, wonder, and delight.

Let drawings, prints, or statues aid your taste,  
And since wing'd hours too precious are to waste,  
Each day some portion of your time employ,  
Proficiency by practice to enjoy.  
When copying, whate'er you undertake  
Attentively pursue, and truly make

An imitation like, in every part;  
But first let no great matter claim your art;  
Therefore the simple cot, an arch, a stile,  
Must each your whole attention have awhile;  
Even a tuft of grass, a stone, or plant,  
Will great attention in the foreground want.  
Toil not on subjects that engage the art  
Unworthily, but Grace and Truth impart  
In all you undertake, nor grasp too much:  
For every part should have the studious touch.  
Of trees, draw leaves and branches, then whole boughs,  
Then limbs and trunks, then trees, then trees in rows.  
Let not a lit'ral construction bind  
The student, where expression is confin'd:  
By rows of trees, I do not mean strait rows;  
But nature, beautiful, varying, as it flows.

Attentively on first beginning, wait ;  
*Survey the whole with eye deliberate,*  
To find the place of each prevailing part,  
A guide by which you may pursue your art.  
Then carefully your subject thus divide ;  
Let quarters, halves, or some such mode decide,  
Where you should fix proportionate and true  
Those leading parts which first engage your view,  
How large, how small, how level, how inclin'd ?  
How curv'd, how long, how short ? examine, find,  
That just proportion through the whole may run ;  
*A work is half perform'd if well begun.*  
Make no dark touches in this first degree,  
But sketch your outline cautious, light, and free :  
Then take crumb-bread, and rub o'er all you drew,  
Until 'tis scarce discernible to view.