

# Matisse

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# Henri Matisse

(1869-1954)



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*Masters of Art Series*

**Henri Matisse**



*By Delphi Classics, 2025*

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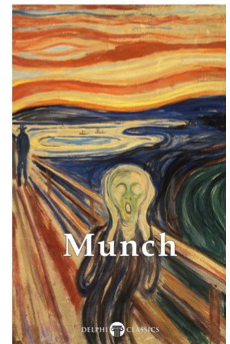
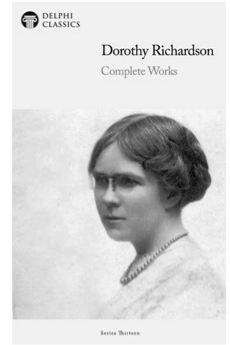
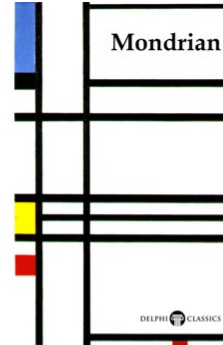
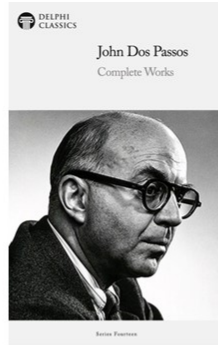
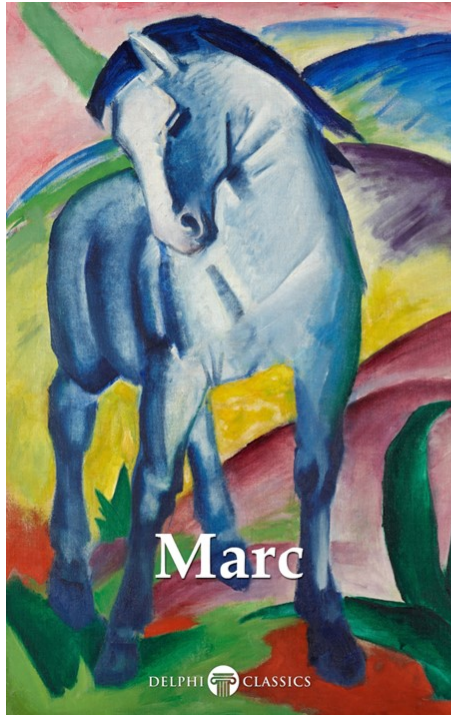
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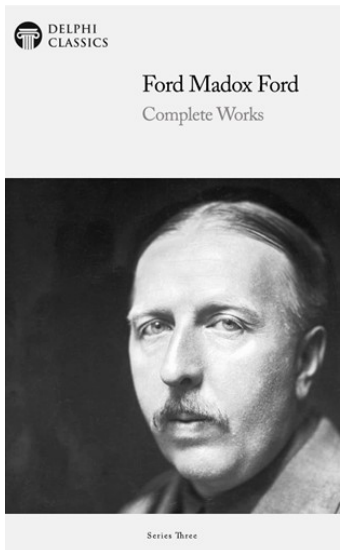
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## The Highlights



*Le Cateau-Cambrésis, Nord department, Northern France — Henri Matisse's birthplace*



*Matisse was born in the house on the left, which was demolished in 1918*





*The family home of Matisse, 26 rue du Château, Bohain, where his parents ran a drugstore*



*Matisse as a young man, c. 1896*

## The Highlights



In this section, a sample of Matisse's most celebrated works is provided, with concise introductions, special 'detail' reproductions and additional biographical images.

## Woman Reading (1895)

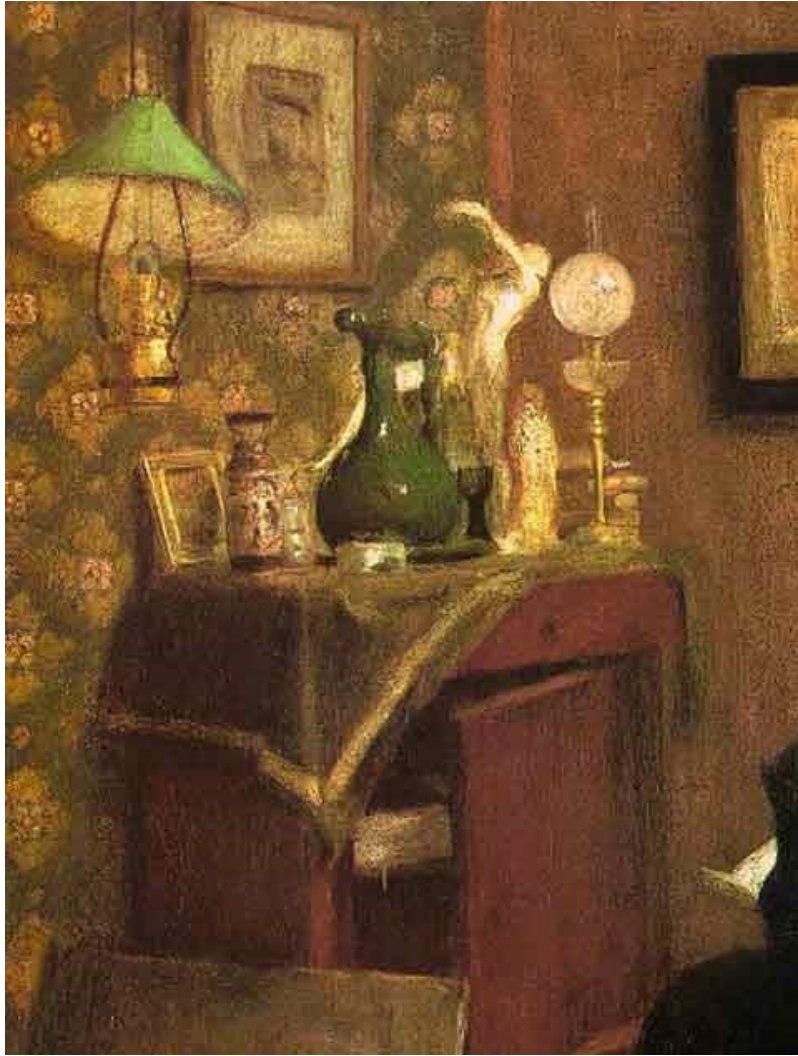


One of the leading figures of Modernist art, celebrated for his mastery of the expressive language of colour, Henri Matisse was born in Le Cateau-Cambrésis, in the Nord department in Northern France on New Year's Eve in 1869. He was the eldest son of a wealthy grain merchant and grew up in Bohain-en-Vermandois, Picardie. In 1887, he went to Paris to study law, securing a position as a court administrator after gaining his qualification. As an artist, he was certainly not a precocious talent. He first started to paint at the age of twenty, after his mother brought him art supplies during a period of convalescence, after an attack of appendicitis. He later described how he had then "discovered a kind of paradise." He promptly decided to become an artist, gravely disappointing his father.

By 1891 he had returned to Paris, this time to study art at the Académie Julian under William-Adolphe Bouguereau and at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts under Gustave Moreau. Initially, Matisse executed still-lives and landscapes in a traditional style with reasonable proficiency. He was chiefly influenced by the works of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon, Nicolas Poussin and Antoine Watteau, as well as by modern artists like Manet and by the popular interest in Japanese art. However, Chardin, the eighteenth century master of still life, was the artist that he most admired. As a student he made copies of at least four of Chardin's paintings in the Louvre.

*Woman Reading* (La Liseuse), an oil-on-board painting executed in 1895, reveals the early influence of Chardin's work. Held today in the Musée Matisse in Le Cateau-Cambrésis, it portrays a young woman, dressed in black, seated and reading, with her back to the viewer. The earthy and dark tones are characteristic of Matisse's early canvases. The viewpoint from behind the subject gives the impression that we are intruding on an otherwise tranquil scene. Although the scene appears still, the busy arrangement of objects on the cupboard hint at uneasiness in the woman's pose. Interestingly, Matisse inserts a self-portrait in the form of a framed drawing hanging on the wall in the upper left. Perhaps she is thinking of the artist himself.

Although the still life collection of oil lamp, picture frame, egg cup and various ornaments is cluttered and unnatural, the young artist's deft brushwork is evident. The masterful glint of white paint, replicating the impression of light reflections from an unseen window, would have even pleased the great Chardin himself. The colourful and vibrant wallpaper reveals the influence of the Japanese style, while the large blank canvas positioned against the cupboard, appearing to project three-dimensionally into the viewer's plane, hints at Matisse's professional eagerness at the time – even the next canvas is primed and ready to be painted upon.





*Detail*



*Detail*



*Detail*





*Detail*



*Chardin's self portrait, Musée Louvre, 1771*



*An example of Chardin's still life work: 'Jar of Apricots', Art Gallery of Ontario, 1758*



*'The Studio at the Académie Julian' by Marie Bashkirtseff, 1881*



*The Matisse Museum, Le Cateau-Cambrésis*

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*End of Sample*