**Biography**

Salvador Dali was born on May 11th, 1904 in the small Spanish town of Figueras, Spain in the foothills of the Pyrenees. This area inspired many of the landscapes found in his paintings.

The name Salvador had been given to an older brother who died in infancy. When Dali was born the name was passed on to him. Growing up, Dali was a difficult child and refused to conform to family or community customs. Dali’s father, a respected attorney, his mother and sister all encouraged Dali’s early interest in art. Dali’s first studio was built for him in the family’s summer home in the coastal fishing village of Cadaques.

After receiving private art lessons, he enrolled in the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts in Madrid. There he joined an avant-garde circle of students that included filmmaker Luis Bunel and poet and dramatist Frederico Lorco. Although Dali excelled in his academic pursuits, he never took final exams. He said he had no need for the type of education offered by formal schooling. He was expelled.

Early recognition of Dali’s talent came with his solo show held in Barcelona in 1925. He received international fame when three of his paintings were shown in the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh in 1928. He was only 24 years old. It was at this time that Dali came under the influence of two forces that shaped his philosophy and his art. The first was Sigmund Freud’s theory of the unconscious, introduced to Dali in Freud’s book *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The second was his association with the French Surrealists who included Marcel Duchamp, Renee Magritte and Joan Miro and was led by the French poet Andre Breton. Under the influence of the surrealist movement, Dali’s artistic style crystallized into the disturbing blend of precise realism and the dreamlike fantasy that became his
trademake. His paintings combined meticulous draftsmanship and detail with a unique and stimulating imagination. It was also at this time that Dali met the woman who was to become one of the most important people in his life... his wife and soul mate, Gala Eluard. With Gala’s help, Dali became established as a notable painter in Paris. During the 1930’s his paintings were exhibited in surrealist shows in the most major European cities and in the United States.

Dali often described his pictures as hand painted dream photographs, and had certain favorite and recurring images, such as the human figure with the half-open drawers protruding from it, burning giraffes, and watches bent and flowing as if made from melting wax.

Dali moved to the United States in 1940 and was sought after by Hollywood. He provided concepts and artwork for a dream sequence in Hitchcock’s Spellbound. He also collaborated with Walt Disney to make a movie called Destino, which Disney then abandoned. Dali also designed one of the most famous sofas in the world. It was a pair of giant lips inspired by Hollywood actress Mae West.

Dali truly created a new movement in art but it was his own unique brand. Although his other pursuits such as jewelry design, film production and clothing were notable, it is his paintings and graphic works, which remain of most importance and mystifying genius. They hang in museums all over the world.

Dali was a larger than life character and wore flamboyant clothes. He was well known for his long curly mustache and had a great talent for self-publicity.

Salvador Dali died in Spain on January 23rd 1989. He is the only artist in history to have two separate museums dedicated exclusively to his works erected during his lifetime... The Salvador Dali Museum in Florida and Theatre Museo Dali in Spain.
**School of Art**

Surrealism was an art movement based on dreams, imagination, fantasy and subconscious.

**About the Painting**

The Persistence of Memory is one of the most famous Dali paintings in existence and is very representative of the artist’s unique style. The landscape, ants and molten objects are just a few of the recurring elements that comprise most of his work.

**Suggestions for Dialogue**

Does this look real?

Is this a weird dream?

Do you see a chicken head or is it a face? Maybe Dali’s profile?

Look at page 22 and 11 in book to see a similar image.

Do you see eyelashes on a closed eye?

How have familiar objects been changed?

Do you understand this painting?

Is this a landscape painting?

How did Dali use color in the foreground versus the background?

Can you see brush strokes? Dali called his paintings hand painted photographs.

Why did Dali name this The Persistence of Memory?
Project Idea

Read “Salvador Dali” book. It will be in the Art Smart box. This book is written so well, it could be the only information you need to read to the class before talking about the painting.

Have students close their eyes and think of a dream or dreams they had had. Tell them to picture in their minds what it looked like. Even if it is bits and pieces for a dream have them draw and color or paint what they remember.