Rembrandt's Portrait of an Elderly Woman

Rembrandt's Portrait of an elderly woman, oil on canvas, 82 × 72 cm. The Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

The portrait of Rembrandt's first wife, Saskia in a Red Hat, is a portrait of rare quality and pure beauty. A true and objective portrayal of the model is attained thanks to his masterly painting. The artist painted his subject's profile carefully and freshly. The bright carnations of Saskia's face, the richness of red velvet, feather, and embroidery, of necklaces and dress, are precise and descriptive. Beautiful as the portrait is, it can be described as a painting of the surface, rich in color, and silhouetted against the dark background. Its objectivity, its gay tones, its accuracy, and its finish are enough to ensure its reputation.

Of startling beauty is her silhouette, the bodice of the dark silk dress, which shimmers with different shades. The whole portrait startles for its refined luxury as the result of the master's rich technique.

Rembrandt considered light in his paintings as the vehicle through which to reveal his love of mankind. Light was to Rembrandt only the means to an end. He was its master. He uses strong light to intensify the center of his interest. The portrait of his lady in a red hat is a true example of his masterly painting.

Key words: portrayal, attained, masterly, profile, richness, accuracy, startle, mankind.

Write a composition on the suggested topic:
Light acts as an intensive medium in Rembrandt's paintings.

Activity 1
1. Find another classical portrait of a woman and write down your description of the picture.