Artemisia was born in Rome, Italy in 1593. She was the eldest child of the painter Orazio Gentileschi. Although there were many famous painters and sculptors in Italy around that time, women were not normally allowed to train as artists. But Orazio saw that Artemisia was much more talented than her brothers, and realized it was worth teaching her. Despite becoming a very accomplished painter, unlike other artists of the time, she was never taught to read or write!

In her dad’s studio Artemisia learned to draw, to mix pigments, and how to paint in the chiaroscuro style. Chiaroscuro is a technique that was popularized by the famous artist Caravaggio, who was a friend of Orazio Gentileschi. It uses areas of strong light and shade to create very dramatic scenes. Artemisia excelled in this style.