

The Victorians

Structure of the tour

- Welcome
- Introduction to the Gallery and paintings
 - what is a gallery?
 - what is a portrait?
- Background to the National Portrait Gallery
- The tour is divided into in two parts. Part 1 will focus on a selection of the Gallery's portraits in detail. The second part of the tour will encourage students to work in pairs to look at one of these portraits in detail

Introduction

- Create a context. Who is the Queen of Great Britain today? How long ago did Elizabeth II become queen? Was she a young woman when she became queen? You may wish to show the students pictures of her coronation. What is she wearing and holding during the coronation ceremony?
- Where can we see images of Queen Elizabeth II today? Discuss the different sources – coins, banknotes, stamps, in the newspaper
- Explain that the tour looks at the Victorian period
- The tour is going to compare portraits from the past and today

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- Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, aged 18, she was crowned queen on 28 June 1838 and her reign was the longest in British history
- She married her first cousin, Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, three years later
- She was married to Albert for nearly 21 years and was completely devoted to him
- After he died in 1861, she wore black for the rest of her life and refused to attend state occasions for many years
- Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole were two of the most famous nurses of the Victorian period. Both tended to the wounded during the Crimean War (1854–56)
- The celebrated Victorian animal painter Sir Edwin Henry Landseer was Queen Victoria's favourite painter

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Symbolism in Victorian portraits

- Gestures – what can we tell by the way people stand?
- Clothing – what can we tell about clothing?
- Objects and symbols – what can we tell by images and symbols?

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NPG 1250

About the portraits

Queen Victoria (1819–1901), Queen of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales 1837–1901 – Coronation Portrait

Replica by Sir George Hayter

Oil on canvas, autograph replica of an original of 1838

NPG 1250

Queen Victoria wrote in her journal on the day of her coronation, 'I really cannot say how proud I feel to be the Queen of such a nation'. Sir George Hayter painted Queen Victoria's coronation portrait in 1838. This version was given to the National Portrait Gallery by her in 1900 and is an autograph replica of the original portrait (in the Royal Collection). The portrait contains symbols of the countries she was queen of, including roses and lions for England, a harp for Ireland, thistles for Scotland and a dragon for Wales.

Additional notes for discussion:

- Queen Victoria was 18 years old when she became queen. What do you think it would feel like to wear a crown and the rich and heavy coronation clothes? What do you think she is thinking?

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NPG 4305

Florence Nightingale (1820–1910)

Jerry Barrett

Oil on canvas, circa 1856

NPG 4305

Florence Nightingale changed hospital nursing during the nineteenth century. She trained as a sick nurse and was invited to take nurses out to tend to the wounded in the Crimean War (1854–56). Her sanitary reforms there lessened the number of cases of disease. In this portrait Nightingale is highlighted in the centre of the portrait, receiving patients in the quadrangle of the Barrack Hospital in Scutari, a suburb of Constantinople.

Additional points for discussion:

- Do you think it was easy to care for wounded and ill people during the Crimean War, more than 150 years ago? What problems do you think Florence Nightingale and the other nurses had to deal with?

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NPG L235

Mary Jane Seacole (1805–1881)

Albert Charles Challen

Oil on panel, 1869

NPG L235

Mary Seacole grew up in Kingston, Jamaica, where she learnt about healing sick people by helping her mother, who was known as a doctress.

She travelled to Britain when she heard about the Crimean War but was turned down when she tried to join Florence Nightingale's nursing sisters, so she travelled independently to the Crimea. She helped the wounded soldiers on the battlefield and was awarded many medals for her work.

When the war ended she returned to London. Through British newspaper reports she had become famous and was celebrated as a heroine on her return.

Additional points for discussion:

- When Mary Seacole tried to join Florence Nightingale's nursing sisters she was told she was not needed, even though she brought letters of recommendation from other doctors. How do you think she felt?

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NPG 835

Sir Edwin Henry Landseer

John Ballantyne

Oil on canvas, circa 1865

NPG 835

Sir Edwin Henry Landseer is shown in an artist's studio, modelling one of the lions for the base of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square. This project took him about eight years to complete and it contributed to his ill health during the last ten years of his life. The dog is thought to be his collie Lassie, known to have been his constant companion in the studio at this time. It is known that he used his pet dogs in his paintings.

In the painting Edwin Landseer is modelling the lions in clay. He used the clay sculptures to make a mould (like a jelly mould) and poured molten bronze into the mould to make the statues you can see in Trafalgar Square today.

Additional points for discussion:

- How are these lions different from the ones in Trafalgar Square?