Uniform & status: portraiture and identity

A learning resource for teachers of GCSE and A Level art
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About this resource

This resource looks at the broad themes of work, uniform and status linking portraits from the National Portrait Gallery Collection, in the lead up to, and during the First World War.

The content examines the impact of the First World War on the changing roles and representation of artists and women, and how this has been reflected in different types of portraiture, including paintings, photographs and widely distributed visual material, such as postcards. The portraits selected in this resource reveal aspects of the Collection of the National Portrait Gallery that offer links to the important artistic, political and social changes of the period.

The resource is aimed primarily at teachers studying GCSE and A level Art. However those studying Art History, History and Citizenship will also find that the images, concepts and discussions will also be of relevance to students’ study. The content aims to give teachers information on the significance and stories of the sitter and artist, the purpose of the image and its impact at the time, and to draw connections between how we view those sitters, artists and images today.

Each section contains an introduction to the theme, selected images and critical approaches to their analysis under three headings – Analysis: compare and contrast, Research for discussion and enquiry and Develop and record. The three strands of classroom activity include critical questions and ideas for teachers and student peer discussion and are designed to encourage ways for students to research, develop and record their own ideas and create personal responses. Finally, there are web links for additional research.

This resource complements the learning programmes developed by the National Portrait Gallery to support the four years of the Centenary for the First World War. npg.org.uk/whatson/firstworldwarcentenary/home.php

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1: Uniforms and uniformity

Changes to society between the two World Wars were enormous, including the democratic underpinning of the female vote. Technological developments at the start of the twentieth century including the film industry, motor cars and automatic guns opened up a variety of different scenarios and ways of thinking. The leisure industry expanded, dance halls became fashionable and morals and social codes relaxed. Cinema enhanced the potential to manipulate people’s attitudes and values in a new way, their beliefs were questioned and fascism also became part of the political landscape both in the UK and abroad.

Uniforms, as the word suggests, are clothes that unify and are constructed to the same repetitive format. Some of us have experience of school uniforms, others of specific working clothes such as surgeons who wear special gowns when in the operating theatre, nurses who attend to them or guards’ uniforms on public transport and in museums and art galleries.

What we wear influences how we are seen by our fellow human beings. People talk of ‘dressing for the occasion’ and our work clothes often differ from those that we wear for relaxation (sometimes called ‘home clothes’) or other non-work occasions.

Women’s clothes have changed drastically since the start of the twentieth century and the changes in society provoked by the Suffragette movement meant that their independence and status as part of a workforce also affected their clothing.
The concept of ‘uniformity’ is related to this discussion. Can we have uniformity of thought and a uniform perspective on life? The conflict of the First World War emerged partly because of disunity of opinion and this is also related to cultural differences. However people are human whatever they think and however they act: the face usually consists of two eyes, a nose, a mouth and the repetition of this schematic representation has been a simple way to denote humanity for centuries. In some cultures the ritual scarring of the face was performed to signify events such as the reaching of maturity but during the First World War the new warfare created new types of wounds and scarring and this led to the development of plastic surgery, whereby surgeons strove to remodel wounded faces and pull them back into some semblance of regularity.
Frederick Roberts (1832–1914) was born in India, into a military family and he attended the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. He was considered to be the most talented field commander since the Duke of Wellington. He served in the Second Anglo-Afghan War and in India in the 1880s, describing events there in his popular memoir, *Forty-one Years in India* (1897). Lord Kitchener was chief of staff when Roberts led the British forces to victory in South Africa during the Second Boer War (1899–1902).

General Sir Michael David (‘Mike) Jackson (born 1944) is a retired British army officer, and one of its most high-profile generals since the Second World War. He embodies the new style of commander for a new type of war. His military career includes working in such trouble spots as Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq. He continues to play a significant role as a commentator on international military affairs.

**Analysis: compare and contrast**

The portraits of Field Marshall Frederick Roberts, 1st Earl Roberts and General and Chief of the General Staff, Mike Jackson show men of military achievement in starkly contrasting ways. The older work is traditional, painted by a well-known and respected artist, depicting the man as stiff, formal, in full ‘dress uniform’. This portrait does not give the impression that he was a small wiry man, as his stance and array of medals combine to bolster his presence. In fact, Roberts was responsible for the introduction of khaki service dress that in turn became the type of ‘army wear’ being worn by Jackson. By contrast Jackson’s portrait in combat uniform is informal, seated, and has a human touch. The trappings of power do not interfere with our interaction with his image. However this is no ordinary man, his informality belies his status and reflects the new type of portrait customary today. In 1906 Sargent’s reiteration of the formal Van Dyck style of portraiture was ‘de rigeur’.

Roberts’s bright and decorative uniform is symbolic of his rank, but impractical for wearing in the field, while Jackson’s camouflage patterned fatigues are practical, and with his shirtsleeves rolled up he looks ready to go into action. Roberts’s medals and sword contrast with Jackson’s sole accessory – his plain and utilitarian wristwatch. The upright, leg raised pose of the left-hand portrait is also in contrast with the informal sitting pose on the right, complete with clasped hands and plain chair. Both are studio or interior settings, rather than ‘in the field’, however the formal and classical columns of Roberts’s background is placed in contrast with the plain, understated room Jackson in which Jackson sits. Roberts looks out of the frame directly at the viewer, and Jackson’s gaze is more contemplative and reflective.

**Research for discussion and enquiry**

There are different kinds of uniforms throughout the world that give people a distinctive ordered identity. Uniforms are generally functional but can also be decorative. Military dress uniform can be both colourful and practical. You might
also say that different fashions are a type of uniform. Look at how people dress for various activities, for example, skateboarders, tennis players, newsreaders and supermarket staff. In these portraits the Field Marshal is wearing ‘full dress uniform’ for a special occasion, whereas Mike Jackson is in ‘combat dress uniform’.

— Why do we need dress codes?
— Do dress codes have a purpose?
— Discuss how individuality transcends uniformity.
— How do we maintain our individuality?
— How can you customise a uniform to reflect your position either in society or amongst your peers?
— How might you feel if you were surrounded by others in exactly the same uniform?
— Would this feeling differ if you wore your own clothes?
— Find groups or individuals around you, whose dress code suggests their identity.
— Make direct comparisons with historic and contemporary approaches to uniform and status.
— Investigate an alternative way of creating an artwork by considering Steve McQueen’s Queen and Country, a co-commission between the Manchester International Festival and the Imperial War Museum, 2007.

Develop and record

As well as exploring figurative responses to military repetition in imagery such as Lady Elizabeth Butler’s (1846–1933) classic painting entitled Scotland Forever! (1881), Leeds Art Gallery, look at artists who have responded to the idea of repeating the same with non-figurative elements within their work like Andy Warhol, Bridget Riley and Yayoi Kusama.

— How does their work make you feel?
— What do you think the artists were trying to say?
— Why do you think Warhol chose to create portraits in this way?
— How successful is a camouflage pattern when used in uniform?
— How similar are Riley’s patterns to the Army’s ‘Multi-Terrain Pattern’?
— Do you prefer figurative or abstract results?
2: Artists, uniform and identity

Different countries have different uniforms in order to denote their own troops and within this ordering there are further delineations of status, denoted by additions such as braiding and ribbons, that show the power structures of the organisations. At the National Portrait Gallery a number of First World War artists are portrayed wearing uniform. It may seem surprising to see artists in uniform when their more natural attire might be practical studio overalls or something more exotically bohemian. In many of these portraits artists are shown in uniforms that display their service rank reflecting the part they played in the First World War whether having volunteered or going to the front in an artistic capacity. But whatever the service, they wore uniform.

Olive Edis opened her first studio with her sister Katherine in the early 1900s in Sheringham, Norfolk specialising in photographing fisherman and local nobilities. She later had studios in Farnham, Surrey and Ladbroke Grove, London. Edis worked with sepia platinotypes and pioneered colour autochrome portraits from 1912 onwards. Her sitters included George Bernard Shaw, Thomas Hardy,
Arthur James Balfour, 1st Earl Balfour, and Emmeline Pankhurst. Olive Edis patented her own autochrome viewer. She photographed British women’s services and the battlefields of France and Flanders (1918–19) for the Imperial War Museum. Edis is not in uniform but the badge ‘NWM’ on her hat stands for the Museum’s previous name, National War Museum. Her five-stranded pearl necklace recurs in other self-portraits, suggesting that it might be a prized possession.

Jacob Epstein (1880 –1959), was born in New York to Polish-Jewish parents, he studied in Paris before moving to London in 1905. He quickly gained a reputation as a brilliant sculptor, creating monuments, portraits and controversial depictions of nudity. His Rock Drill (1913) set the tone for a new approach to sculpture and encapsulated an atmosphere of impending doom that characterised the fear and despair of World War I. Epstein served as a private (his uniform denotes this rank) in the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) but not as an official war artist.

It was standard practice for all ranks of the armed forces to have their portraits taken (in uniform) before they went off to fight or when they were home on leave. Some of these personal images have entered the Collection whilst others of people considered to be distinguished and worthy of recording at the time, were collected as part of the National Photographic Record. It is useful here to notice the similarities and differences in the uniforms, for example pockets, buttons, headgear – there were a variety of cap badges, (see web links at the end of the resource). The farriers in cavalry regiments had the sign of an upturned horse shoe sewn to the upper right arm, and if injured, soldiers were awarded a ‘wound stripe’ which would be displayed as thin vertical stripes sewn at the cuff level of the sleeve. There were skill-at-arms patches, divisional badges, overseas chevron badges and medals denoting acts of bravery that marked service of different kinds.

Soldiers from the Commonwealth had their own uniforms with their own specific distinctions within their own uniform dress codes, thus those from the Indian Army often had turbans and the Gurkhas also had specific outfits. A uniform standardises a mass of people but despite this there is room for individualism. Even within a group portrait such as General Officers of World War I by John Singer Sargent (see illustration on page 3 and NPG web resource, In Focus: John Singer Sargent, NPG 1954), we can recognise specific people perhaps not necessarily by what they are wearing and their military decorations but by their stance, their relative height and their facial features.
Isaac Rosenberg sent the following poem to his friend Sonia Rodker in 1916 with the comment, ‘Here’s a little poem a bit commonplace I’m afraid’:

**In the Trenches**

I snatched two poppies  
From the parapet’s edge,  
Two bright red poppies  
That winked on the ledge.

Behind my ear  
I stuck one through,  
One blood red poppy  
I gave to you.

The sandbags narrowed  
And screwed out our jest,  
And tore the poppy  
You had on your breast…

Dawn – a shell – O! Christ  
I am choked … safe … dust blind, I  
See trench floor poppies  
Strewn. Smashed, you lie.
Isaac Rosenberg was born in Bristol, but aged seven, his family moved to Stepney, London. Like the artist Mark Gertler, whom he met at the Whitechapel Library, he won a Jewish scholarship to the Slade School of Fine Art where he studied between 1911–13. His fellow students included David Bomberg and Stanley Spencer. The poet Ezra Pound encouraged him to write poetry and he published two anthologies: Night and Day (1912), and Youth (1915). He joined the army in 1915, serving on the Western Front where he was killed in action near Arras in April 1918. Two well-known poems stem from this period: ‘Break of Day in the Trenches’ and ‘Louse Hunting’. Talented as both a visual artist and a writer, Rosenberg was torn between disciplines, as he swerved from painting to poetry unable to decide which was his ‘real calling’ in life.

Analysis: compare and contrast

This evocative self-portrait painting is a frank rendering, his piercing blue eyes stare out at us from the shadows created by his hat. The cynical, somewhat imperious look, is at odds with the warmth of the colours that he uses. The head and chest fill the picture space, seeming to be hemmed in by the tight scale, a mere 30 × 22 centimetres.

Completed just before he left for the war, this is an honest, analytical and confrontational painting, full of pathos and humanity – he never came back. His use of parallel vertical brushmarks on the stiff board support makes the painting itself seem to quiver with life. The brushstrokes are broad and consistently vertical, their pattern shuddering and shimmering over the surface of the wooden panel. This, together with the searing carmine used like lipstick on his lips, creates an astonishingly arresting portrait. He grabs our attention by centering the right eye within the space of the painting, forcing us to look at it as it focuses on us, the shadow of the hat that he wears pulled down, makes him seem to peer out at us from under the gloom of the brim.

By contrast, the photograph taken the same year as the painting, offers a view of a younger looking person, his hair, a bunch of dark curls on the top of his high forehead. His eyes stare out into the middle distance, the shape of his head is similar as are his fleshy lips and clearly delineated ear. His uniform, similar to that worn by Epstein, with shiny buttons seems to be made from a thick woollen serge, which one imagines is uncomfortable to wear in contrast to the white cotton shirt of his painted self-portrait.
Mairi Chisholm joined the Women’s Emergency Corps in 1914 with her friend Elsie Knocker. Chisholm was just eighteen and volunteered as a dispatch rider, Knocker was already a trained nurse and keen motorbike rider. Both women were recommended for the Flying Ambulance Corps which was formed to move the wounded from the front line to field hospitals. Realising that many lives could potentially be saved if they administered basic first-aid before transporting the wounded, Chisholm and Knocker set up medical outposts near the front line. Between 1915 and 1917 they were reported to have treated and transported over 1,500 wounded soldiers. Having gained wide press coverage in the British newspapers, the pair returned to England in 1917 to use their fame to raise funds.

The left-hand image of two women in uniform is autographed and in postcard format, which made the images easy to share with family, friends and sweethearts. The image showing them on their motorbikes documents them at work and offers a contrast with the non-uniformed civilians standing by.

Research for discussion and enquiry

The image with the motorbike gives a real insight into the type of ordinary clothes that people wore during the First World War, and it is interesting to note the individuals in the background. Clothes set people apart for a variety of reasons including jobs, fashion preference and cost.

— How many types of uniform can you see in the photograph?
— Was it common for women to ride motorbikes at the time?
— Where do you think this was taken? Is there a way of finding out?
— What sort of expressions do the people have?
— Would you know by looking at this image that it was taken during First World War?
— Find out more about modes of transport during First World War, and investigate the book/play/film, *Warhorse*.

**Develop and record**

Find out about the work of women during the First World War. Investigate the changes in society by viewing contemporary documentary material and studying the images here.

— How do you think that civilians viewed the women motorbikers?
— Many women in the First World War experienced independence for the first time. How might this have changed their lives?
— Do you think that these women continued to work after the war? How do you think the end of the war affected their ability to work?
— Painting and photography are both ways to capture and communicate the complexities of a tense political situation such as war. Which do you think does this most effectively, and why?
— Why does war make a good subject for art?
— Find some war memorials and study these closely. How can sculpture be public and private at the same time?
3: Plastic surgery in World War I and its impact on identity

New war weapons produced new types of wounds that provoked new methods of medical care. Soldiers in all wars have suffered disfigurement, but during the First World War real progress was made in rectifying facial wounds by surgeons who were pioneers in the field of plastic surgery. These innovations helped the wounded to regain some sense of identity and self-esteem.

The methods developed by Sir Harold Delf Gillies in response to the shocking disfigurations provoked by the new military hardware of automatic weaponry led the way in repairing the scarred faces of servicemen. Harold Gillies’s energy and persistence together with the flood of casualties from the battle of the Somme, turned the Queen’s Hospital, Sidcup into the First World War’s major centre for maxillofacial (jaws and face) and plastic surgery. Opened in 1917, the hospital and its associated convalescent hospitals provided over 1,000 beds and between 1917 and 1921, admitted in excess of 5,000 servicemen.

Gillies was born in Dunedin, New Zealand and studied medicine at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge University. Known as the father of plastic surgery, his first book, *Plastic Surgery of the Face* was published in 1920. Gillies’s great
uncle was the Victorian artist Edward Lear and outside his medical profession, Gillies also practised as an artist.

Henry Tonks was born in Birmingham, he studied medicine at Brighton and the London Hospital. After qualifying he became a doctor at the Royal Free Hospital in London and attended drawing lessons at the London Technical Institute where he met the artist Frederick Brown. When Brown became principal of the Slade School of Fine Art, he convinced Tonks to give up medicine and become one of its teachers. While at the Slade he taught Stanley Spencer, Mark Gertler, William Roberts and Christopher Nevinson who became well known for their paintings depicting the First World War. While still in France, he was appointed as principal of the Slade School of Fine Art in 1917.

The drawings depict co-workers who were both doctor-artists. They make an interesting comparison as they rely on a thin black line to evoke the characteristics of the sitters. Tonks was eminently qualified to help Gillies in his role as doctor turned professional artist, as this gave him a specialist and qualified perspective from both the medical and artistic angles. In turn Gillies’s artistic sympathies permitted the required sensitivity towards what could be achieved in respect of his severely damaged patients. It seems that their working relationship was supremely well balanced.

*Before and after:* a portrait of Gunner John Dyson by Henry Tonks in 1917, showing the skill of Harold Gillies’s surgery
(Picture: Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons of England)
These portraits show the facial injuries suffered by Gunner John Dyson. Tonks’s role was to record the work that needed to be done and to provide diagrams for Gillies before he carried out the plastic surgery. Tonks used coloured pastels to draw a series of portraits of the men before and after they underwent surgery.

Walter Yeo, a sailor who was injured in the Battle of Jutland (31 May–1 June 1916) is presumed to have been the first person to undergo what we now know as ‘plastic surgery’. Records show that he was admitted to Gillies’s care on 8 August 1917 and that after the procedure that he was ‘improved, but still had severe disfigurement’ (see Daily Telegraph link). Gillies pioneered a method of using grafted skin while it was still attached to a living blood supply which gave the graft more opportunity to succeed.

A face constitutes a large part of our identity and for it to undergo extreme damage is a huge blow to the psyche and also results in changes in how other people might perceive and respond to such a victim. Simon Weston was badly disfigured during his military career and benefitted from the type of plastic surgery developed by Sir Harold Gillies, and later furthered by Sir Archibald Hector McIndoe (NPG 5927) which helped him to reconnect with the world, albeit with an altered face. Weston joined the Welsh Guards in 1978, aged sixteen. In 1982
he was aboard RFA (Royal Fleet Auxiliary) **Sir Galahad** in Port Pleasant in the Falkland Islands when it came under fire during the Bluff Cove air attacks. Of his platoon, twenty-two members lost their lives, and Weston suffered 46% burns to his body and face. He underwent more than seventy operations to reconstruct his face, and credits his family and old regiment with helping him overcome extreme psychological trauma. During the late 1980s and 1990s Weston became a popular media personality, and is a writer and patron of a number of charities supporting people living with disfigurements, including the Healing Foundation. The painting was commissioned by public vote. Selected by a joint National Portrait Gallery and BBC interview panel, the artist Nicky Philipps was commissioned to paint this portrait of Simon Weston, following a collaboration between the National Portrait Gallery and BBC One’s *The One Show*. Sittings took place in the artist’s studio.

**Analysis: compare and contrast**

A deep humanity and vulnerability is conveyed through Weston’s eyes with signs of age showing in the tracery of crêpy lines and folding baggy skin. The old adage that ‘the eyes are the window to the soul’ informs how we judge a portrait. That Weston stands behind, and holds on to the chair is significant. Royalty sit on thrones, writers sit at desks, Weston keeps himself behind this barrier protecting both us and himself from allowing us to see too close and think too much about the crackle of flame on skin. His unremarkable everyday grey uniform of a civilian suit strikes the correct note and performs as the perfect background tone for the medals providing the only colour in the piece, his Welsh Guard’s cap can be seen placed on the seat in front of him. The medals reinvigorate our admiration, reminding us of his former life as a soldier and their colour enlivens a work that could risk becoming dull and worthy. The gloom at the base of the painting, merges with the shadow to his right, and a soft outline creates a middle distance between the figure and the bright abstract space behind him. He is hemmed in within the claustrophobic space.

Weston bravely turned his circumstances to advantage and used them to help others, gaining respect and admiration for his selfless devotion to charity work. His portrait records his modified disfigurement, in the traditional way that a portrait will chart eye colour or nose shape. What the artist does is to make a painting of a subject and here there is small chance of flattery, yet Philipps transforms and celebrates this person of distinction. The artist works within the stylistic tradition of Sargent and Van Dyck, using the simple tools of paint on canvas in her particular mode to dignify the battered visage and so elevate the man himself. A new face for a new job, he is an extraordinary yet ordinary everyman in his suit with his medals in his hand.

The photograph is much more revealing of his physical disability and we can witness the smooth layering of transplanted skin contrasted against his dark jumper. Also full face towards us, his clasped hands perform the same function as the chair in the painting. The photograph was taken ten years before the painting.
Research for discussion and enquiry

We imagine that our identity is locked inside ourselves, with only some people having the key to our innermost thoughts and feelings. These, when identified, could be called characteristics.

— How do we define ourselves?
— Do our faces reflect our character?
— What happens if our faces change?
— Why would we want to change our faces, or our bodies?
— How does appearance influence the way that we are viewed by others?
— Find out about what is known as an ‘out of body experience’? How might this concept of being able to view oneself from another perspective change the way that we think about our innate characteristics?
— What makes a successful portrait? Investigate what it might mean to create a successful portrait. Who might be the real judge of this? What criteria do we use when making these judgements?

Develop and record

— If you were to choose an artist to create your portrait, who would you choose if money were no object? Successful portraits depend on many factors, not least the relationship between the artist and the sitter.
— What would you wish to be conveyed about you to the future viewer?
— What medium would you choose? What kind of portrait catches your eye (impresses you) by suggesting a personality?
— How can an artist capture the essence of the person? What makes you recognize the person in a portrait, is verisimilitude important?
— How can you tell if a portrait is a good one? Does it reflect the character and facial characteristics? Is a photographic portrait better than a painted one?
— How do public and private images differ? Think about the possible reasons for public commissioning of portraits.
4. Suffragettes: uniforms, protest and identity

The Suffragettes in the early twentieth century wore long dresses and the kind of hats that today we might associate with weddings rather than the everyday. Marching during protests in these types of clothes was difficult and in order to give them a visual cohesion and collective identity, Mrs Pethick-Lawrence suggested that they wore white and used only green and mauve as unifying, decorative colours.

The onset of war changed the social situation of women allowing them to gain independence and responsibilities that had until then eluded them. Many of the jobs that they undertook obliged them to wear specific clothing. Underprivileged women had always worked, especially in factories during the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, but now women of all classes began to have jobs.

Marching Suffragettes wore white for purity, with mauve for dignity and green for hope. These colours advertised their allegiance to the cause. Academic clothing such as the cap and gown distinguish them as part of the intelligentsia and thus worthy of being listened to and formulating cohesive arguments. This overt message was underpinned by the medals and sashes worn together with the banners that they carried. They were aware of the power of propaganda and employed guerrilla tactics of chaining themselves to railings, being arrested and going on hunger strike when in jail. All of these activities added impact and proclaimed their cause. These images not only document women of the time demanding equality with men but also reveal that the type of clothing they wore restricted their movement and reinforced the status quo.
Sylvia Pankhurst designed the silver and enamel Holloway Brooch using the portcullis as a symbol of their oppression and their protest. An example of the brooch can be seen at The Museum of London. It had been presented to Louise Lilley on her release from Holloway Prison in 1912. The standard mauve, green and white colours were repeated and formed a distinct part of the identity for the movement. The portcullis originally symbolising the House of Commons can be seen in the left-hand photograph on page 18, where it is carried as part of the diverse array of banners.

The second grouping is predominantly male, depicting the lone, female central figure of Mrs Pankhurst being forcibly removed, and carried off bodily by a policeman. The shape of Pankhurst’s boot is clearly visible in silhouette along with the horse manure on the street, as at this time horses were still a common form of transportation in the city. Her actions have provoked their reactions and this is eloquently recorded in the instant of the photograph by an unknown photographer. It reveals starkly the plight of the male/female battle for power. It is an action shot, they are moving towards us and the light behind them enhances their silhouettes, their headgear emphasising the angle and direction of looking. Our attention is focussed on the direction of their gaze … all directed towards her.

Hats and headgear formed a part of the everyday uniform of people at the start of the twentieth century. Here we can see six types of hat — from the left, a trilby, a bowler, a boater with ribbon, a toque with central jewel and white feather, a sergeant’s cap with official central badge, two top hats. These men are in formal attire and one holds an umbrella on his arm, the other sports a bow tie. In the distance one can spy a policeman’s helmet, bearskin guard’s hats (still part of the dress uniform today) and a woman with a broad brimmed hat. These hats denote the status and professions of a variety of people at the time, constituting a social uniform. The clothing here locates the photograph at a particular time and clarifies to the viewer, the hierarchy of people within it. That Pankhurst is captured as the sole woman surrounded by men is important, her hat with a jewelled brooch also reinforces and communicates her standing in society. It would have been shocking at the time for such a person to be manhandled in such a manner.
The painting of Christabel Pankhurst shows her in a green dress prominently sporting a Suffragette tri-coloured sash displayed across her chest, she has no hat, but a purple and green slide in her hair. It was claimed that the Women’s Suffrage Movement differed from the general run of political strife in two important ways. It was not a class movement; every rank and grade took part in it, and it was the first political agitation to organise the arts in its aid. The colours were used specifically to communicate a collective belief and loyalty to the cause, much as a football strip is used today. Deploying graphics in the form of banners, posters and broadsheets to advertise their politics prefigured current marketing tactics.

Analysis: compare and contrast

Dame Christabel Pankhurst
Ethel Wright
Oil on canvas, exhibited 1909
NPG6921

Dame Christabel Pankhurst
Lallie Charles (née Charlotte Elizabeth Martin)
Published by Rotary Photographic Co Ltd
Vintage postcard print, 1908
NPG x135535
Pankhurst is portrayed as if moving forward, signalling her active involvement in the Suffragette movement. This declamatory pose is used in other portraits that document the body language she used in public speaking. Images held in the Museum of London show her in a similar dress and pose. This painting was first displayed at the 1909 Women’s Exhibition in London and there is no evidence to suggest that the artist worked from the postcard. The difference is in attire, the painting portraying a more formal garment as one might expect from a painted portrait of the period.

From 1912 onwards, Pankhurst was advocating militant strategies, a fact that might seem at odds with this portrayal of an elegant Edwardian lady. Both illustrated and photographic propaganda postcards were produced to spread the word and gain support.

Research for discussion and enquiry

— How does branding standardise identities whether these be political or corporate (Public Limited Companies)?
— How are posters used as part of political campaigns today?
— How does colour used in advertising and political campaigns represent or support an approach or belief? How is colour used symbolically?
— Why might women not receive the same pay and conditions as men who perform the same jobs?
— If you had the choice, would you prefer to be a man or a woman? Why?
— Marshall McLuhan made a famous statement once, claiming that ‘The medium is the message’, what do you think he meant by this?
— Charles Saatchi founded an advertising agency with his brother Maurice and later inaugurated an art gallery displaying his own collection. What type of connection do you think there might be between art and business?

Develop and record

— List and make notes about three ‘successful’ logos. How do you think that logos function to promote what is known as ‘brand loyalty’?
— Study the two group photographs and comment on their different purpose and their compositions.
— Consider the different visual impact between art that hangs in a gallery, an image on an advertising hoarding and a postcard?
— Collect and compare different types of branding logos from politics to supermarkets.
— Do you think that the Suffragettes have had a lasting impact on society? Find examples that support your case.
Further study and research

Uniforms and First World War related websites

- npg.org.uk/whatson/firstworldwarcentenary/home.php
- artfund.org/queensandcountry/Queen_and_Country.html
- europeana1914-1918.eu/en
- iwm.org.uk
- bbc.co.uk/history/0/ww1/
- theguardian.com/books/bookspic/2008/nov/10/in-the-trenches-william-robertson
- npg.org.uk/assets/files/pdf/learning/InFocus_Sargent.pdf (see pp 9–12)
- www.cymru1914.org/
The different types of badges used to identify each soldier with a particular unit:
- nam.ac.uk/research/famous-units
Postcards from the First World War:
- worldwar1postcards.com/real-photographic-ww1-postcards.php
  Alfred Aaron Wolmark painted Norman Kohnstamm in uniform in 1916, Jerwood Collection:
- bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/norman-kohnstamm-226311
  Walter Richard Sickert (1860 –1942) painted these works, documenting different uniforms and how these clothes might restrict movement in battle:
- bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/the-integrity-of-belgium-29245
- bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/soldiers-of-king-albert-at-the-ready-72130

Plastic surgery and more information about Gillies & Tonks

Please note: some of the images accessed through these links are disturbing.
- teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3g9/gillies-harold-delf
- ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/obl4he/anatomy/24_portrait_of_a_wounded_soldier_before_treatment.html
- gilliesarchives.org.uk/
- telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2636507/Pictures-of-first-person-to-undergo-plastic-surgery-released.html
  The Facial Disfigurement Department (commonly referred to as the ‘Tin Noses Shop’):
- bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01wq86d

Suffragettes

How British women gained the right to vote (KS3 History) and women’s suffrage:
- npg.org.uk/webquests/launch.php?webquest_id=17&partner_id=portrait
- blog.museumoflondon.org.uk/tag/Suffragette
- sylviapankhurst.com/her_campaigns/sylvia__s_suffrage/sylvia_the_suffragette.php
Women at work in a French munitions factory:
- cymru1914.org/en/view/photographs/3444399/
- historylearningsite.co.uk/the-role-of-british-women-in-the-twentieth-century/suffragettes/
- parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/women-vote/overview/thelife/
National Portrait Gallery Learning

For more information about the varied programme of schools’ events and learning resources, see: 

npg.org.uk/learning.php

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Front cover picture:
Mairi Chisholm (1896–1981),
Elsie Knocker (Baroness T’Serclaes) (1885–1978)
Unknown photographer
Bromide postcard print, circa 1915
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