

Life in Towns and Cities

Welcome to this audio guide for looking at paintings. This guidance is for looking at any painting from our Life in Towns and Cities gallery. The guide will escort you around the painting, helping you to explore and enjoy some of the many points of interest.

So first of all consider what it is that made you choose *this* particular painting. Is it the colour scheme, or the atmosphere, or something about the setting or the people that interests you? Does it remind you of somewhere? What intrigues you about the painting?

Now let's look at the setting. Where are we? Perhaps we're in a city street, or inside a building, or looking at a village scene? How would you describe the character of the scene – industrial perhaps, or elegant, urban, olde worlde, or something else?

Think about the smells in the air. Are they pleasant or unpleasant? Where do they come from? Can you smell flowers or smoke, sweet scents or grime? Maybe the smells come from the surroundings or maybe the people.

Does the setting look inviting to you? Why do you think that?

What era do you think we're in? The date of the actual painting may not be the date we're being shown in the picture. Look at the costumes and other clues such as the buildings, transport, the mode of lighting.

Can you tell the time of day? Perhaps it's easy, or maybe not. Take a guess if not.

What about the weather, how's this look? If the scene is indoors, then maybe the clothing of the people will give you a hint.

What about the use of perspective? Sometimes artists use a strong portrayal of perspective to draw a viewer in. Is there much perspective in this painting, a feeling of near and far, or are we looking at one small area? How does this affect your engagement with the painting?

Is the scene crowded or not? Let's take a look at the people. What are they doing? Maybe they look rushed and busy, maybe dawdling or occupied in some sort of work.

If the scene's crowded, and you don't know where to look, try scanning across the picture from side to side, starting at the base of the picture and working your way up - this is a good way to take in all the detail. If you want to pause the audio guide a moment to do this, go ahead.

Focusing just on one person, what can you tell about them? Is she or he relaxed, or hurrying, sitting, standing, working maybe? How about physical comfort- is the person cold or warm, maybe affected by the weather in some other way? Can you tell anything else? Perhaps the person looks affluent and smart, or poorly-dressed? How do you think that person is feeling? What gives you that impression?

How do you think she or he relates to the buildings in the painting? Does the person live or work here, do you think? Or might they be passing through on the way to somewhere else? Are there clues to help you decide, or would you just have to take a guess?

If you were to give this painting a title that's different from the one shown here, what would it be?

We've come to the end of this audio guide now, although you're welcome to spend more time looking at the painting on your own.

Next, you might like reflecting on what you most enjoyed about this brief activity so scroll down to **Wrap up your painting** to have a go at this.