People Watching

Welcome to this audio guide for looking at paintings. This guidance is for looking at any painting in the People Watching gallery.

The guide will help you connect more closely to this painting by noticing things that interest you and catch your eye.

Start out by noticing what it is that has intrigued you about the people in the painting. Are you curious to find out more about them? Is the setting they're in of interest to you? Is the era of history attractive to you? Why have you chosen the painting or aren't you sure yet?

Do you like the mood of the painting? How would you describe it in a few words?

Ok let's look more closely at the people. How many people are in the painting? How are they grouped? Are they dispersed, or perhaps they're forming a group, or a series of groups? What effect does this grouping give, what do you think the painter wanted to tell us by grouping the people like this? How does the grouping affect the atmosphere of the painting – for instance making it boisterous or calm, busy or conspiratorial?

What environment are the people in? Town, country or some other setting such as indoors? What else can we tell about the environment? Look at the background to see if there are any interesting features like other people, machinery, or furnishings. Do these tell us any stories such as where in the world we might be? If there are no clues, how do you feel about that?

Now thinking about the era of the painting - some paintings are set back in time by the painter, while others show scenes contemporaneous with their date of creation. In what era do you think this painting is set, and how can you tell?

What time of day do you think it is? And can you tell what time of year it is?

Now let's get into the story of one of the people in the painting. So look at all the people and choose just one to think about.

What is this person doing in the painting? Is he or she caught in mid movement or still?

Does the character appear to be talking or silent? If talking, what might they be saying and who to? If silent, do they look thoughtful? What might they be thinking about?

If you can see the person's face, are there any emotions to read on it? If you can't see the face, then you might be able to read the body language – perhaps relaxed, tense, slumped or alert, perhaps something else? What can you tell about the person's mood from the face and body? How would you describe their mood?

When this character goes home, what sort of home do you think they'll go to and how much comfort will they find there such as warmth and food?

Now imagine if you can, that a sudden change of fortune, good or bad, is about to happen to this person that will change their day dramatically. What would you like to happen to the person? It could be a piece of good news or a shocking surprise, a turn of fate or a lucky escape, it could be an encounter with an unexpected person or maybe something entirely different. How would it change the way the person is feeling right now? How would it change the kind of day they are having? If the painter were to have depicted the person shortly after this event, how would the painting change? Would you like the painting better this way or not?

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.