

## Looking at Individuals

Welcome to this audio guide for looking at paintings. This guidance is for viewing any painting in the Looking at Individuals gallery.

The guide will help you to spend some time with this painting, enjoying its stories, details and points of interest.

Begin by taking stock of the painting. What's your immediate feeling about it – do you like it? What do you think of the style? Is it realistic, or impressionistic? Do you think the way the person is depicted is romanticized, critical, sympathetic, playful or something else?

Do you have an immediate feeling about the person? What is that feeling? Do you find you warm to the person?

Paintings often tell us some kind of story, paintings that have people in them, particularly so. Let's think about this now.

Unlike a snapshot, which could have been taken without prior preparation, this painting will have been planned out with care, and all details chosen and put in for a reason. It's these type of details that will tell us the story of the picture.

Let's start with the setting. Is the backdrop blank, or are there details to see? What does this tell us about the story of the person in the painting, if anything?

Notice where we are – outside or inside, and if inside, perhaps there's a window with a view. Is the setting domestic or not? Is the person alone or with other people, and are they shown with or without lots of objects and other items of interest? If there are objects, what are they? What do they tell us? Think about whether they depict a specific activity or whether they're showing us a story of some sort such as what the person does for a living, where they live, how they live, whether rich or poor, or perhaps something about the character of the person.

What's the light like? Is the scene brightly lit or dark? What's the source of the light, however much or little there is? How does the light affect the atmosphere of the painting?

What atmosphere does the whole setting have? Describe it to yourself now in a few words, trying to capture the look and feel of the space. For instance, cosy, intimate and warm.

Now let's look at the person. So, how old are they do you think? How would you describe the expression on their face? If you can see their hair, what's that like? Styled or natural? If covered, what with? Does the hair or the hair covering tell you anything about the character's situation or circumstances?

What about the clothes, what's the person wearing? Are they dressed for work, for leisure, for a social engagement, or can't you tell? What can you notice about the wealth or poverty of this character from their clothes? Would you say they have many clothes to choose from or very few? How would it feel to be wearing the clothes? Are they tight, starched, heavy, loose, light, or something else?

What is this person touching with his or her hands? Consider what it would feel like to be touching whatever this person's touching even if it's only air. And what aromas do you think this person might be experiencing? The smell of food or furniture polish perhaps, or flowers, spices, the sea, dust, woodsmoke, fresh air, or something else?

Now imagine this picture is part of a story in a picture book. You turn the page, and see a new picture, the next in the story. What's changed, what's happening now? And what do you think will happen next?

Now that you've explored the picture carefully, do you feel any differently about the person in the painting?

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.