

AXE 3

UNIT 7

SHORT CUT

PICTURING THE MIGHTY

Are the portraits of the mighty only meant to establish their power?



YOUR PROJECT

Record an audio guide to present three portraits of your choice for the National Portrait Gallery. 🎙

Au menu de cette unité :

DÉCOUVERTES CULTURELLES

- 👑 Holbein, un peintre au service d'Henry VIII
- 👑 Elizabeth I, une reine puissante
- 👑 Victoria, l'impératrice qui aimait la photographie
- 👑 Elisabeth II vue par ses contemporains
- 👑 Les spoofs et les caricatures
- 👑 Portraits d'hommes politiques (Churchill)

OUTILS LINGUISTIQUES

- 👑 Le présent en *be + -ing*
- 👑 Les adverbes et les adjectifs
- 👑 Les pronoms relatifs

80

BEFORE CLASS!

Flash to watch!

Watch the video.

Be ready to talk about it in class!



● Portrait or Propaganda?

How do portraits of British Royals serve their political power?

1

King Henry VIII (1491-1547)

- A. Observe this painting and list the elements that symbolise the king's power.
- B. Listen to an expert speak about this portrait on [MP3 n°45](#). Check your answers to question A. What else do you learn about this portrait?
- C. Read the article on [Worksheet n°20](#) to find out the truth about this painting!
- D. This painting has been called "a magnificent piece of propaganda". Do you agree? Why (not)?
- E. Compare this painting with the one on p. 80. What message is conveyed in each one?



The Armada Portrait, 1588



King Henry VIII, Hans Holbein the Younger, 1537

2 Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603)

- A. Observe this painting of Queen Elizabeth I. What elements symbolise her power?
- B. Watch the video to check your answers. What else do you learn about this portrait?
- C. Go further with [Worksheet n°21](#).

Nouns

- crown
- necklace /nek'ləs/
- fireship
- fleet
- dagger
- jewel /dʒu:əl/

Expression

- be dressed in full regalia /rɪ'geɪliə/

Adjectives

- defiant /dr'fəɪənt/
- glorious
- iconic
- imposing /majestic
- lifelike
- life-sized
- self-assured

Help

AXE 3

81

② Evolution of Royal Portraits

Do British Royals still control their image?

1

Queen Victoria (1819-1901)

- A. Look at these two photographs and describe them briefly.
- B. What message is conveyed in each one?
- C. Read the article to learn more about Queen Victoria's passion for photography. Use [Worksheet n°22](#).
- D. Choose one of these two pictures to illustrate the article and justify your choice.



Prince Albert, Queen Victoria and their nine children, 1857



Official portrait of Queen Victoria as Empress of India, 1887

Fame may seem a 20th-century phenomenon, but Queen Victoria was the first public figure to exploit its promotional potential and the earliest – and least likely – international celebrity of the photographed world. [...]

5 Victoria and Albert, married in 1840, became significant champions of the new medium. When the queen died in 1901, she left a collection of 20,000 photographs that charted historic events, cultural advancements and artistic experimentation over the course of her rule,

10 spanning the first six decades of photography. [...]

Countless official portraits of the queen circulated in the public sphere to symbolize the stature of the monarchy. Equally, a trove¹ of personal portraits of her, Prince Albert and their nine children, which reside in

15 albums and boxes at Windsor Castle, were distributed to establish Her Majesty not as a stern², prudish monarch but, unexpectedly, as a doting³ mother warmly engaged

with her family. These photographs constitute a surprising visual record of Queen Victoria herself behind ²⁰ the scenes. [...]

As Philippe Garner, international head of photographs at Christie's, recently said, "She surely recognized the power of photography to underscore to a huge audience the iconic status of the royals." [...] In 1877, despite the ²⁵ public disapproval, Victoria, Queen of England, was also proclaimed Empress of India. While she never visited that country, she relied heavily on her official portraits' being distributed there. They became symbols of the monarchy, her visual identity creating the aura of a deity, further ³⁰ securing her hegemony beyond the British Isles — and deep into the roots of 19th-century photography.

¹ collection • ² austere • ³ affectionate

Philip Gefter, *The New York Times*, 18 April 2014

2 Modern-day representations

A. Observe portrait A

by Lucian Freud. What image does it give of Elizabeth II?

B. A British art critic said that it was "probably the best royal portrait for at least 150 years". Do you agree? Why (not)?

C. Observe portrait B

by Chris Levine.

How unusual is it?

D. Watch the video to find out how Chris Levine's iconic picture was taken.



A



Elizabeth II, Chris Levine, 2008

B

HELP!

Nouns

- lookalike = spitting image
- trait /trɛt/ = characteristic

Expressions

- have bags / circles under one's eyes
- make fun of sb
- conform to = be like others
- juggle with: jongler

Adjectives

- austere /ɔ:stər/ = stern, strict
- captivating / mesmericising
- relaxed = laid-back
- satirical
- spoof = fake
- unconventional
- (un)flattering

VIDEO N°18



3 Everyday people?

A. Observe and comment on the picture.

(Who? When? Where? Why?)

B. What did the photographer have in mind when she took this picture?



Royal Spoof, Alison Jackson, 2013

4 Web research

Go online. Choose a portrait of Elizabeth II by American photographer Annie Leibovitz. Present it briefly to the class and explain why you chose it.