

# Portraits of Power

*What image do painters and photographers give of political leaders?*

1

## The roaring lion



- A. Observe this photograph of Winston Churchill and describe it briefly (pose, attitude, general appearance). Imagine the reason(s) why he has such an attitude.
- B. Read the text and check your answers to question A.
- C. Go further. Explain why Churchill called himself "a roaring lion" (l. 17).

In December 1941 [...] Churchill visited Parliament in Ottawa to thank Canada and the Allies for their help. Churchill wasn't aware that Yousuf Karsh had been tasked to take his portrait afterward, and when 5 he came out and saw the Turkish-born Canadian photographer, he demanded to know, "Why was I not told?" Churchill then lit a cigar, puffed at it and said to the photographer, "You may take one." As Karsh prepared, Churchill refused to put down the cigar. So 10 once Karsh made sure all was ready, he walked over to the Prime Minister and said, "Forgive me, sir," and plucked the cigar out of Churchill's mouth. "By the time I got back to my camera, he looked so belligerent, he could have devoured me. It was at that instant that I 15 took the photograph." Ever the diplomat, Churchill then smiled and said, "You may take another one" and shook Karsh's hand, telling him, "You can even make a roaring lion stand still to be photographed."

The result of Karsh's lion taming is one of the most 20 widely reproduced images in history and a watershed<sup>1</sup> in the art of political portraiture. It was Karsh's picture



Winston Churchill, Yousuf Karsh, 1941

of the bulldogish Churchill—published first in the American daily PM and eventually on the cover of LIFE—that gave modern photographers permission to make honest, even critical portrayals of our leaders.

1 un tournant



## 2 "A remarkable example of modern art"



HELP!

- A. Observe this painting of Winston Churchill. Compare it to the photograph above.
- B. Read the text on Worksheet n°23 to learn about the story behind this portrait.
- C. Go further. Why did Churchill say that his portrait was "a remarkable example of modern art"?

Winston Churchill,  
Graham Sutherland, 1941

### Nouns

- bow tie
- suit /sʊt/

### Adjectives

- grumpy
- flattering ≠ unflattering
- sombre /'sombə/

### Expressions

- pose for sb
- stare at sb

## 3 American presidents' official portraits

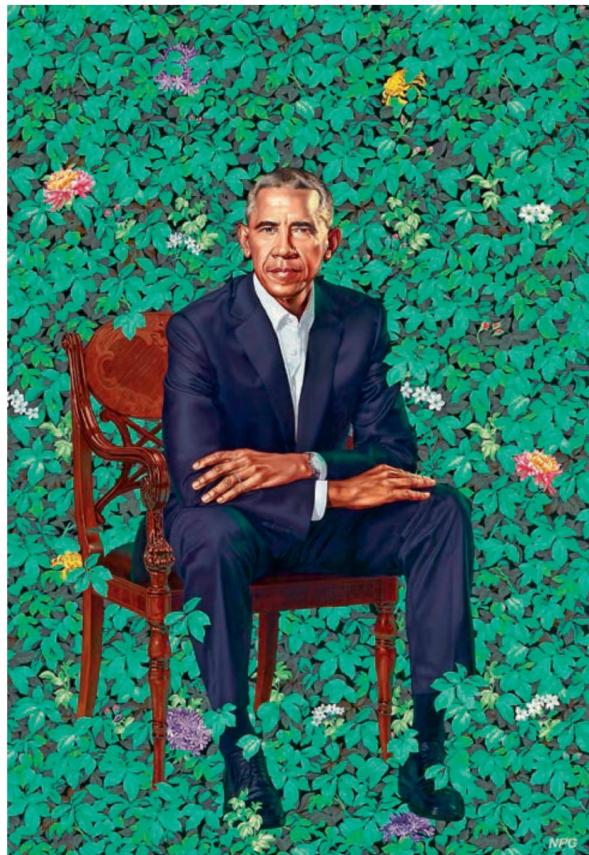
A. Observe these portraits of iconic American presidents. What image does each one convey?

B. Compare these portraits. How do the artists express each president's power?

C. Have your say. Which portrait do you prefer? Justify your answer.



*George Washington (Lansdowne portrait),  
Gilbert Stuart, 1796*



*President Barack Obama, Kehinde Wiley, 2018*

### HELP!

#### Nouns

- rainbow
- sword /sɔ:d/

#### Adjectives

- charismatic /kærɪz'mætɪk/
- colourful
- floral (background)
- self-assured
- solemn /'sɒləm/

## 4 Behind the curtains

Turn to [Worksheet n°24](#) to learn the story behind these portraits (historical context, symbolic elements, reactions...). What makes each portrait unique?

YOUR  
TURN!

## 5 Choose the cover for the catalogue

As the curator of the National Portrait Gallery in London, you were asked to choose the portrait that best illustrates the catalogue of the exhibition "Portraits of Power". Explain your choice to the board of directors.

# 4 Mocking the Powerful

How can cartoons act as a counterpower or as a way to mock the powerful?

1

## What do cartoonists mock

- A. Look at the caricatures of Margaret Thatcher, Donald Trump, Prince Charles and Queen Elizabeth II. What physical traits stand out in each one?
- B. Caricaturists often mock political leaders. Say what message each caricaturist conveys.



### HELP!

#### Nouns

- butler : majordome
- hairdo = hairstyle
- wrinkles: plis ; rides

#### Adjectives

- arrogant
- full of oneself
- self-satisfied

#### Verbs & expressions

- be up to date = be modern
- crush sb
- iron /aɪən/: repasser
- look down on sb

## YOUR PROJECT

You are a guide at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC. The museum is holding an exhibition about British and American iconic leaders. Make an audio guide for visitors to present three leaders of your choice. Do not forget to include some information about the artists' intentions. 

# LANGUAGE LAB



- Unit's vocabulary
- Audio words
- MP3
- Interactive Test

## ★ 1. Put the adjectives in the correct order.

- A. The ... Queen looks regal in this painting.  
(English / dignified / old)
- B. The ... Prime Minister is sitting on a chair.  
(overweight / threatening-looking)
- C. The ... girl is actually the President's daughter.  
(fair-haired / young-looking)

## ★ 2. Find the antonym of the following adjectives using a prefix (*un-, dis-, in-, under-*), then check in the dictionary.

- A. privileged • B. usual • C. conventional • D. flattering  
• E. artistic • F. aesthetic • G. advantageous

## ★★ 3. Choose between the simple present and the present *be + -ing*.

- A. The focal point of the painting is the monarch who (**wear**) a dark blue dress.
- B. In the lower part of the picture a brown horse (**gallop**).
- C. The girls on the left-hand side (**seem**) to be reading.
- D. In this photograph the Prime Minister (**walk**) with her husband.

## ★★ 4. Fill in the blanks with one word from the list:

- counterpower • spoof • portrayed sb • satirical • posed for sb
- A. Artists may be seen as a ... to governments, by denouncing social injustice and inequalities.
- B. I really love caricatures and ... portraits, because they give a ... vision of the powerful.
- C. Royals have always ... painters and photographs to establish their power.
- D. 16th-century paintings of Henry VIII ... this monarch as a powerful king.

## ★★★ 5. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate relative pronoun.

- A. Her mother is a curator ... likes Chris Levine's work.
- B. The painting ... I have seen is about a king ... is being crowned.
- C. His painting, ... I liked very much, was destroyed last year.
- D. This caricature, ... subject is a member of the royal family, is most amusing.
- E. The woman ... I was speaking with is Annie Leibovitz, the famous photographer.

## ★★★ 6. Match each idiom with its meaning.

**Then use them in a sentence.**

- |                           |                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| A. stay in the public eye | a. = sb who looks the same           |
| B. make fun of sb         | b. = modern and fashionable          |
| C. up-to-date             | c. = maintain public attention on sb |
| D. spitting image         | d. = treat sb with ridicule          |

## 7. Interactive test! What is your score?

## OPEN YOUR EARS!



### PHONOLOGY

#### La prononciation du « r »

- Écoutez en faisant attention aux éléments en gras.  
Que remarquez-vous ? **MP3 n°46**

*In churches before the Reformation, screens like this separated the people who sat down there from the altar.*

- Récapitulons.

- Quand la voyelle est accentuée :

u	+ r	se prononce /ɜ:/	= church
i			= first
e			= prefer
a	+ r	se prononce /ɑ:/	= artist
			= Victoria, portrait

### AUDIO MYSTERY

Listen and follow the instructions to solve the mystery! **MP3 n°47**

## Picture challenge

- ★ 3 sentences
- ★★ 4 to 6 sentences
- ★★★ 7 sentences and +

How many sentences can you make using what you have learnt? Collect stars!



*Royal Family spoof, by Alan Simpson, 2014*