



Victorians in Art

Visual Literacy and Critical Thinking

Sometimes when we see a piece of art we know instantly if we like it or not. To understand more about the artwork, we might ask ourselves some questions. These questions can also help us to understand how artists give meaning to what they create and, in turn, how we can create our own art.

Form



What is the **composition** like?
This means the framing, layout, lines, shape, colour, texture, light, and details like the setting, location and characters.

Symbolism



What other **objects** are shown and what do they represent?
What do they add to the story we are being told?

Ideas



What is the artist trying to **tell us**?
How does this relate to the time and place when the artwork was created?

Scale



What **size** is the artwork?
Enormous or tiny?
How large are the things within the artwork?
Is it one artwork or part of a series that all tell a story together?

Personal



How does the artwork make you feel?
What **emotions** do you experience?
What do you think is going to happen next?

The Queen *Victorians in Art*

These two oil paintings of Queen Victoria are in the Christchurch Mansion art collection. Look at them carefully and consider the questions below.



Artist: Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1805-1873)



Artist: Frank Albert Phillips (c.1831-1905)

Describe the similarities and differences between the costume (clothing) that Queen Victoria is wearing in each painting. Can you think of any reasons for the differences?

Describe the colours used in each portrait. Can you think of any reasons for using these colours?

Which portrait is the more formal one? How can you tell?

Which painting do you like best? Try to explain your reasons.

Make a list of all of the objects you can see in the background of each painting. Why do you think there are differences?

Which aspects of Queen Victoria's personality and status do you think each artist is trying to show us? How successful do you think they are?

Children

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These two oil paintings of children are in the Christchurch Mansion art collection. Look at them carefully and consider the questions below.



Boy and Girl in Landscape by Augustus Henry Fox (c. 1822-1895)



Girl and Silver Fish by William Robert Symonds (1851-1934)

Describe the similarities and differences between the costume (clothing) that the children are wearing in each painting. Can you think of any reasons for the differences?

Describe the colours used in each portrait. Can you think of any reasons for using these colours?

Which portrait is the more formal one? How can you tell?

What do you think the children are doing in each painting? What do you think happens next?

Make a list of all of the objects you can see in the background of each painting. Why do you think there are differences?

What do you think the artist is trying to tell us about the status of the children in each painting? Who do you think is the most wealthy?

Which painting do you like best? Try to explain your reasons.

