

THE AMBASSADORS PART I.

**HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER
(c.1497-1543)**



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- **Lesson 3**
- **The Ambassadors**
by Hans Holbein

Holbein the Younger, H. (1533). *Ambassadors* [Painting]. National Gallery, London, UK. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ambassadors_\(Holbein\)#/media/File:Hans_Holbein_the_Younger_-_The_Ambassadors_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ambassadors_(Holbein)#/media/File:Hans_Holbein_the_Younger_-_The_Ambassadors_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)



GROUP WORK – LESSON 3 - DISCUSSION TASK

- Discuss in your group:
- **1. Look at the painting and the two men in it:**
- Who do you think are the men in the painting? What does it mean to be an ambassador?
- How old do you think they are? What can you learn about their personalities from their face expressions and their postures?
- **2. Use your senses and look at variety of objects:**
- Can you identify some of them?
- What about material they are made from and their different textures?
- Why do you think the painter included these objects in this double portrait?
- **3. From everything what you discussed – can you guess a historical period the painting is from?**
- **4. Choose a spokesperson** (or some of you/ all of you can contribute) **for your group who will report the main points from your discussion to the whole class.**



THE PAINTER



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HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER (C.1497-1543)



- The greatest German painter of a Northern Renaissance style;
- famed **for his penetrating portraits** – also of a humanist Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam;
- highly versatile artist, with many other sides to his talent;
- **born in Augsburg, Germany**, into a family of artists;
- spent his early career mainly in Basel, Switzerland;
- became the leading artist of the day in Basel, producing book illustrations (a major publishing centre), **altarpieces, murals, and designs for stained glass, as well as portraits**;



HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER (C.1497-1543)



- in spite of his success, religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants encouraged him in 1526 to move to England;
- in 1532 settled in England permanently;
- by 1536, he **was working for Henry VIII;**
- now most famous for portraits of **members of the royal family and court**, in which he memorably captured the intrigue, as well as the glamour of the age;
- **died in London – probably of the plague – still in his forties and at the peak of his powers.**



The Ambassadors
1533
oil on panel;
207 x 209,5cm;
National Gallery,
London, UK;
Hans Holbein The
Younger



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THE POWERFUL REALISM



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THE POWERFUL REALISM

- **The powerful realism** of this double portrait **is startling**;
- **The ambassadors:**
- two distinguished young men - **they immediately engage our attention**;
- **posing against a rich emerald-green backdrop**;
- **gazing directly out from the composition**;
- each with **an arm resting on a table with shelves for ornaments**.



THE POWERFUL REALISM

- every detail of their clothing + the scientific, musical, and astronomical instruments – has been immaculately depicted;
- the heavy, beautifully textured robes, the selection of objects, and the confident posture of both men - testify to their powerful status, wealth, and learning;
- both are less than 30 years of age. ?



REFERENCE POINTS - HISTORY



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REFERENCE POINTS - HISTORY

- Holbein portrayed his subjects in a realistic yet deeply respectful fashion;
- *the Ambassadors* **is one of his most magnificent works;**
- **commissioned by Jean de Dinteville**, the man on the left,
- De Dinteville - the young French Ambassador to the English Court of Henry VIII - he is pictured with his friend, **Georges de Selve;**
- Georges de Selve - bishop of Lavaur;
- it was painted during their visit to England **in 1533;**
- a time of political and religious crisis in Europe.



REFERENCE POINTS - HISTORY

- painted in London - **they were on a difficult and unsuccessful mission** to prevent Henry VIII from severing ties with the Roman Catholic Church;
- it was usual to portray learned men with their books and personal objects;
- what makes this painting so **remarkable** – **is the extraordinary attention to detail and the amount of information it contains.**



IN CONTEXT



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IN CONTEXT

- *The Ambassadors* was painted at a time of religious conflicts throughout Europe – after Luther's call for the reform of the Catholic Church and the establishment of Protestantism;
- Pope Clement VII refused to annul the marriage of King Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon had also resulted in a major religious crisis in England;
- In 1534, Henry VIII set up the Church of England with himself as its leader.



IN CONTEXT



- - there is partially hidden crucifix behind the green curtain (above de Dinteville's right shoulder) - may refer to the religious conflict;
- - it has also been argued that the painting is concerned with what was thought to be the 1500th anniversary of Christ's Crucifixion.



THE END OF PART I.
Thank you for your
attention!!!!



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