



BOULEVARD

OVERVIEW

Introduction to Gallery 87

Gallery 87 features 17 early to mid-19th-century British landscape paintings. These works were created during a period which witnessed a dramatic shift in how the category of landscape was perceived in England—from a little respected genre to a significant one.

Inspire Your Students Across Curriculum

The V&A's Gallery 87 supports learning and teaching at any grade level, and offers huge opportunities to inspire people across subject areas.

How to Use This Resource

This resource is designed for use by teachers, educators, or students to support and enrich the Boulevard viewing experience, as well as provide further information on a selection of works. Our Boulevard curriculum explores these paintings through a range of different themes inspired by the works, offering ideas for educational projects and activities. This gallery provides particularly rich inspiration for learning in history, geography, meteorology, literacy, technology, and art.

Looking at the Work

The paintings in Gallery 87 are rich in detail. When looking at the works within the Boulevard experience, you may find the following suggestions helpful in engaging students to look closely and in generating general discussion.

Ask students to respond to one or more artworks. Here are some examples of open-ended questions that can be helpful for starting a discussion with students.

- What is your first reaction to this artwork?
- What do you see?
- How does it make you feel?
- What interests or appeals to you?
- How do you think it was made?

- What does this object remind you of?
- What words would you use to describe the world depicted in the work of art?
- If you could step into this painting, what would it feel like?
- Would you like to have this artwork in your house? Why?

Art/History in a Nutshell

The 19th century was a time of significant social, economic, and technological change in Great Britain. The period witnessed the expansion of both Britain's industrial power and its Empire, which came to include vast territories in Canada, Australia, South Africa, India, and Africa. In 1837, Queen Victoria ascended the throne and ruled for more than 60 years. During her reign, steam engine power revolutionized the fields of agriculture, manufacture, and transport in ways previously thought unimaginable. Railways experienced a boom, fueling urbanization and changing the way people lived and obtained goods. As the number of factories increased, people flocked to the cities to work. London became the world's largest city and the capital of the British Empire. Between 1800 and 1900, its population increased from 1 million to 6.7 million.

Throughout the 18th century, history painting, including grandiose depictions of past events or scenes from the Bible and ancient myth, was considered the highest genre and the most fitting evidence of an artist's prowess. But the wars with France between 1792 and 1815 prevented artists from visiting the Continent, helping to forge a more distinctly British cultural identity, which prized the humbler beauties of the countryside increasingly threatened by the industrial revolution. Painters specialized in different types of landscape. John Constable concentrated on the Suffolk/Essex border scenery he knew best, while J.M.W. Turner traveled widely and emphasized dramatic subjects. Others sought inspiration from the Old Masters, or exotic or literary subjects. By the 1850s, critic John Ruskin argued that the natural world provided the noblest subject of all.

Timeline of Key Cultural and Historical British Events 1760-1860

- 1763: Seven Years' War ends (began in 1756)
- 1768: The Royal Academy of Arts is established; Sir Joshua Reynolds is its first President
- 1775: Artist Joseph Mallord William (J.M.W.) Turner was born
Start of the American Revolution against Great Britain
- 1776: Artist John Constable born
- 1778: Start of the Anglo-French War: this was a military conflict between France and Great Britain that took place during the American Revolution. The two countries

fought over who would control the English Channel, the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the West Indies.

- 1783: American Revolution ends
Anglo-French War ends
- 1789: Start of the French Revolution
J.M.W. Turner is accepted into the Royal Academy at the age of 15
- 1799: French Revolution ends
Novelist Jane Austen publishes Pride and Prejudice
- 1815: Battle of Waterloo where multi-national troops led by the Duke of Wellington defeat Napoleon's army; this event ends French domination of Europe
The Congress of Vienna redraws the European map; it marks the beginning of the Pax Britannica, which will last until 1914
- 1818: Mary Shelley publishes Frankenstein
- 1821: Constable shows the first of his six-footers, *The Hay Wain*, at the Royal Academy
- 1824: Constable shows several works at the Paris Salon; he is awarded the gold medal by Charles X
- 1837: Upon turning 18, Queen Victoria assumes the throne (and title Queen of Great Britain and Ireland)
Constable dies
- 1838: Slavery is abolished in Great Britain
The London and Birmingham Railway (L&BR) is established
Novelist Charles Dickens publishes Oliver Twist
- 1845: Great Irish Potato Famine (1,000,000 people die in 4 years and over 10 years, another 1,000,000 emigrate to Great Britain or the U.S.)
- 1849: Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) of artists is formed: this group includes William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and John Everett Millais, with John Ruskin as their champion
- 1851: J.M.W. Turner dies
The Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace was designed to provide a showcase for the world's most advanced inventions, manufactures, and works of art; the event attracted 6 million visitors during the 5 months it was open
- 1859: Charles Darwin publishes Origin of Species
Devon and Cornwall are linked by a revolutionary new suspension bridge

Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy of Arts was founded by King George III in 1768 with a mission to promote the arts of design in Britain through both education and exhibition. Its program was modeled on that of the French Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, founded in Paris by Louis XIV in 1648. The two-fold goal was to raise the status of the artist by establishing sound professional training and expert judgment and to support the exhibition of contemporary works of art of a high caliber. Supporters of the Royal Academy wanted to foster a national school of art and to encourage public appreciation and interest based on recognized canons of good taste. This philosophy was shaped by the teachings of the institution's first president, Sir Joshua Reynolds, who stressed the importance of copying the Old Masters and of drawing from antique casts and from live models. It was through this method alone, he felt, that artists could achieve works of high moral and artistic worth.

In its first year of operation, the Royal Academy enrolled 77 students; by 1830, over 1,500 students had enrolled. Noteworthy students included: John Flaxman, J.M.W. Turner, John Soane, Thomas Rowlandson, William Blake, John Constable, David Wilkie, William Etty, and Edwin Landseer.

The Royal Academy was originally housed in cramped quarters in Pall Mall. In 1780, it was installed in purpose-built apartments in the Somerset House on the Strand. After a stint in the East Wing of the National Gallery at Trafalgar Square, in 1868, it moved to Burlington House, Piccadilly, where it remains. The Royal Academy's first exhibition of contemporary art took place in 1769. Known as the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, this event has been staged annually since then.

Romanticism

Romanticism was an artistic, literary, musical, and intellectual movement that originated in Europe at the end of the 18th century and reached its peak between 1800 and 1850. In part, Romanticism can be seen as a reaction to the rationalism and empirical basis of the Enlightenment. It also rejected the balance and idealization of Classicism. Deeply influenced by Immanuel Kant's writings on aesthetics, Romanticism privileged the subjective, individual experience. Accordingly, it tended to pivot upon the imaginative, the irrational, the personal, the visionary, the transcendental, and the sublime. In its stylistic diversity and range of subjects, Romanticism defies simple categorization. Romanticism runs a gamut from imaginary or exotic themes to the exploration of emotional and behavioral extremes.