



BOULEVARD

GRADES 6-12

A Few Key Points

- Portraits usually show a sitter only once
- Characters typically appear multiple times in cartoons, graphic novels, and movies (but not in paintings)
- Portraiture can express status and also can serve as an historical record (or primary source)
- This portrait shows the many accomplishments of the sitter through multiple vignettes
- The representation of scale is used symbolically; the passage of time is also expressed symbolically
- In this work, the narrative runs counter-clockwise around the central figure
- The figures of *Fame* and *Death* and the *Sun* and the *Moon* add to the sense of the sitter's importance and destiny
- Activity throughout the composition keeps the eye moving; architecture provides structure
- Minute details can be very telling in a picture (i.e. the inclusion of Henry IV's face on Unton's medallion)
- This painting offers insight into the politics of several European countries (not just England)
- History is sometimes compressed within art (i.e. Vignette 4, the composite scene of Unton in the Netherlands.)

Sparking Discussion

- Define a portrait. What are the possible functions of a portrait?
- How many times does a subject typically appear in his/her portrait? /What about in the case of *Sir Henry Unton*?
- In what situation or genre might we expect to see a person/character appear repeatedly?
- Why was this portrait commissioned?
- How does the composition show a sense of Sir Henry's importance/authority?
- What are some of the details in the painting that reflect Unton's status?

- Why do you think that not all figures are presented at the same size?
- What function do the figures of *Fame* and *Death* serve?
- Why are the *Sun* and the *Moon* shown in the same painting?
- How is the idea of time conveyed by the artist?
- How does architecture function in the composition?
- What function does text (words) play in the painting?
- Why does the painting have so many scenes?
- Which part of Sir Henry's life do you personally find most interesting? Which do you find the most curious?
- How many European countries/powers are represented within the painting –explicitly or implicitly? Which ones?
- What are some of the ways that history can be documented?
- Why do you think the painter showed Unton at a battle in the Netherlands he did not fight in? (Vignette 4)

Activities

1. Writing a Letter –Taking an Elizabethan Perspective

Choosing the perspective of *either* Sir Henry (who appears prominently at his writing desk, quill in hand) or his wife Dorothy (who appears in the banquet scene at Wadley House and again in the final scene of Unton's memorial), write a 2-3 page letter to someone Henry or Dorothy would know (or write a letter from husband to wife or vice versa). Maybe you will write a dispatch about ambassadorial matters, recount a battle, or reflect upon a perilous journey you have taken. Perhaps your letter will be more domestic in nature, discussing daily life among the upper class during Elizabethan times, or describing the banquet, musicians, and the masque of Mercury and Diana performed at Wadley House. You might even choose to pen a letter as Dorothy, after her husband's death, commissioning an artist to make a grand and unusual narrative portrait (discussing the details/events you want pictured and why). It's up to you! Make sure your letter reflects the viewpoint of the person you choose and draw upon information from the painting as your starting point.

2. Visiting Italy During the 16th Century

In vignette 3 of the painting, Sir Henry Unton is shown traveling by horse through Italy (the locations of Padua and Venice are indicated in script on the painting). Research what Italy was like during the 1570-80's around the time Unton was there. Based on your research, write a 4-5-page travelogue describing what a well-to do traveler might encounter making the journey across the Alps into and across Italy.

3. Where in the World is Sir Henry? (and what was going on in that location at the time?)

As a well-to-do British gentleman and ambassador, Sir Henry Unton traveled widely throughout his lifetime. Several vignettes within his portrait attest to this fact, but they also bear witness to key political dynamics being played out in Europe at the end of the 16th century, including religious conflict, alliances, and territorial contests. Sir Henry Unton served first under the Earl of Leicester on his campaign in the Netherlands, and then as Ambassador to France. During this time, Unton helped French King Henry IV fight back encroaching Spanish forces. Research and analyze the major political positions and alliances of Britain, France, and Spain between 1550 -1650.

Your comparative analysis should be 4-5 pages long and should take into account the following questions:

- Who were the leaders of these countries?
- Whom did they call upon to help them fight?
- Who was ruling the Netherlands and why was this location such a source of contention?
- What role did religion play in the warfare of the times?
- What other issues might have been at stake?
- As a subject of Queen Elizabeth I, what was Sir Henry Unton's relationship to all of this?

As a variant, your teacher may choose to have you focus on one country's position or to have you analyze Sir Henry Unton's participation in the Eighty Years War. He/she may also ask you to work in groups and hold an in-class debate, arguing the diplomatic position of one of these countries.