



## PAINTING OF GEORGIANA CAVENDISH, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE BY HARRIET CARR, 1792

REFERENCE: ZCE F/4/1/3/14 | SUGGESTED AGE GROUPS: KS2, KS3, KS4, LIFELONG LEARNERS | PORTRAITURE, THE GRAND TOUR

### THE GRAND TOUR

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was fashionable for wealthy British families to send their sons, and occasionally daughters, on a Grand Tour. This saw privileged young men and women setting off usually from London to travel across Europe. The tourists were affluent enough to spend multiple years on the Tour. They would often carry letters of introduction with them to integrate into society while abroad.

### JOHN AND HARRIET CARR

John Carr (1764-1817) and Harriet Carr (1771-1848) were siblings who set out on their Grand Tour in 1791, returning to England in 1794. They were the children of successful

northern businessman Ralph Carr and his wife Isabella.



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Ralph and Isabella were initially against Harriet going on the Grand Tour but eventually gave their approval because it was thought that the tour would benefit Harriet's health – she had a cough thought to be tuberculosis. Some of their objections were around fears of the political situation in Europe and potential dangers to travellers. John and Harriet's ultimate destination was Italy, travelling via France and Switzerland.

John and Harriet spent almost six months in Rome with short trips to Bologna, Florence, Naples, and Turin. They had planned to leave for England in early 1792 but the outbreak of the Franco-Austrian War prevented this. They returned to Florence in May 1792, staying there until November 1793. In December 1793 John and Harriet made a final visit to Rome before leaving for England and arriving home in the summer of 1794.

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## HARRIET CARR & ART

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Almost all of Harriet's Grand Tour letters include reference to her interest in art and her efforts to improve her own artistic knowledge and skills. While in Italy she created a number of paintings and portraits which she brought home with her.

Harriet mentions the portrait of Georgiana in a letter to her mother written on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1792 (ZCE/F/1/1/4/6) – 'I have succeeded in making a tolerable Likeness of the Duchess of Devonshire, a thing that has not often been done before, as she is Difficulty personified ...'.

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## GEORGIANA CANENDISH, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE

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This painting is of Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806), wife of William, 5th Duke of Devonshire. The Cavendish family were at height of British aristocratic society and Harriet's association with Georgiana shows the social circles John and Harriet belonged to while on the Grand Tour.



At this time Georgiana was effectively living in exile in Europe. On 20 February 1792 she secretly gave birth, in France, to a daughter, Eliza, the illegitimate child of Charles Grey of Falloden, Northumberland. Georgiana spent much of the period 1791-1793 in Europe before returning home to her husband in London in September 1793.

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## OTHER ONLINE RESOURCES

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### 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ART

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Tate page about Neoclassicism: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/n/neoclassicism>

Summary of Neoclassicism: <https://www.theartstory.org/movement/neoclassicism/>

Podcast about Neoclassical art and the Enlightenment: <https://www.theartstory.org/podcasts/the-enlightenment-and-neoclassical-art.htm>

Tate page on Grand Manner portraiture: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/g/grand-manner>

Tate page on portraiture: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/portrait>

British Museum page on Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG25175>

Artsy page on 18<sup>th</sup> century art - <https://www.artsy.net/gene/18th-century>

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### GEORGIANA, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE

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Biography of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire: <https://www.regencyhistory.net/2012/10/georgiana-cavendish-duchess-of.html>

British Museum page on Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG25175>

# LEARNING ACTIVITIES: PAINTING OF GEORGIANA CAVENDISH, DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE BY HARRIET CARR, 1792



**TOPIC:** PORTRAITURE, FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY WARS, THE GRAND TOUR  
**SUBJECT AREAS:** HISTORY, ART

Background	Activity	Resources
<p>Almost all of Harriet's Grand Tour letters include reference to her interest in art and her efforts to improve her own artistic knowledge and skills. While in Italy she created a number of paintings and portraits which she brought home with her.</p> <p>Harriet mentions the portrait of Georgiana in a letter to her mother written on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1792</p>	<p><b>See:</b> Who is shown in this portrait?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Who painted this portrait?</p> <p><b>See:</b> When was the portrait created?</p> <p><b>See:</b> Where was the portrait created?</p> <hr/> <p><b>Think:</b> What is a portrait?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What are the main characteristics of a portrait?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What style of portrait is this?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What were the main artistic styles and movements in Europe during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century?</p> <p><b>Think:</b> What impression do you get of the Duchess of Devonshire from the portrait?</p>	<p><a href="https://www.artsy.net/gene/18th-century">https://www.artsy.net/gene/18th-century</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG25175">https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/term/BIOG25175</a></p>



(ZCE/F/1/1/4/6) – ‘I have succeeded in making a tolerable Likeness of the Duchess of Devonshire, a thing that has not often been done before, as she is Difficulty personified ...’.  
This painting is of Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (1757-1806), wife of William, 5th Duke of Devonshire. The Cavendish family were at height of British aristocratic society and Harriet’s association with Georgiana shows the social circles John and Harriet belonged to while on the Grand Tour.

**Think:** What impression do you get of the Duchess of Devonshire from how Harriet describes her in the letter to her mother?

**Think:** How can personality be shown in a portrait?

**Think:** What are satirical prints?

**Think:** How might Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire have been considered scandalous during the 18<sup>th</sup> century?

**Think:** What societal expectations were places upon women during the 18<sup>th</sup> century?

**Think:** What societal expectations are placed on women today?

**Do:** Discuss whether the background show the location the painting was created or if has this been added for artistic effect.

**Do:** Look at the British Museum’s ‘related objects’ section on the Duchess of Devonshire. What can you learn about her from these objects?

**Do:** Compare Harriet’s portraits of [Lady Elizabeth Monck](#) of the Duchess of Devonshire. What are the similarities and differences?

**Do:** Discuss what Harriet might have meant by writing ‘I have succeeded in making a tolerable Likeness of the Duchess of Devonshire, a thing that has not often been done before, as she is Difficulty personified ...’. How might this lead to differences in the outcomes of portraits of the Duchess of Devonshire?

**Do:** Look at the British Museum’s satirical prints of the Duchess of Devonshire. How does the press portray the Duchess’s character?



- Do:** Look at the British Museum's satirical prints of the Duchess of Devonshire. What can you learn about the public opinion of the Duchess from these documents?
- Do:** Discuss why satirical prints were made of the Duchess of Devonshire. What were the causes, intentions, and consequences of this?
- Do:** Find contemporary examples of women being treated similarly by the media. Compare this to how the Duchess of Devonshire was portrayed in press and print.
- Do:** Compare Harriet's portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire to satirical prints of the Duchess. How are different characteristics of the Duchess portrayed?
- Do:** Discuss whether the Duchess of Devonshire is shown in this portrait to be depicting herself or depicting a character.
- Do:** Experiment with ways to show the subject's personality in a portrait.
- Do:** Experiment with ways to create portraits where the subject is depicted as a character.
- Do:** Create a satirical print of a current topical news or political story.
- Do:** Create an artwork inspired by your interpretation of the Duchess of Devonshire.