

## Notes for Teachers

### How to use this resource

Encourage your students to follow our research journey by reading through the resource.

They will encounter a selection of prompt questions and activities as they go through, which will encourage them to reflect on what they are reading.

### 3. Who was John Everett Millais?

Millais is a well-known Victorian artist, and we were already familiar with some of his work. But to help us better understand the context of the painting, we decided to research him from scratch, so we didn't miss anything out.

An online search revealed that there are some paintings by him in The National Portrait Gallery [NPG] in London, so we went to look at these. At the NPG we made use of the Heinz Archive, which contains a wealth of documentary evidence about the Gallery's collections. We looked at records of other portraits by Millais, and tried to discover if there were any other paintings of the Hoare family.

### 4. Why was the painting made?

Sarah Pearce's note in the object file told us that the painting was begun just before the sisters' 20th birthday, and that it took 8 months to complete. But we wanted to know more.

**What would you like to know about the circumstances of the painting's creation?**

**TAKE A MOMENT TO NOTE SOME QUESTIONS DOWN.**

The NPG let us see the object file that they had compiled on 'The Twins' when it was included in an exhibition at the Gallery in 1999. And we were fortunate to be able to talk to the curator of that exhibition, Peter Funnell, a leading expert on Millais, who told us more about the artist's work as a portraitist.

We found out more about Millais by looking at other paintings by the artist and visiting the library.

This research enabled us to explore the following questions:

*Whose idea was it to have the painting made? Who paid for it?*

The painting was commissioned from Millais by the twins' parents to mark their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. On meeting Kate and Grace for the first time, Millais described them as *"really pretty, elegant girls"* (Funnel and Warner, 1999, pp. 209)

The NPG exhibition catalogue told us that: *"Thomas Rolls Hoare of the paint and varnish manufacturers Noble and Hoare commissioned this double portrait for 1,500 guineas"* (Rosenfield and Smith, 2007, pp. 102)

The picture was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in London, in 1878.

*Why did the painting take 8 months to finish?*

Millais began work in December 1875, but by the following April concerns had been raised by the twins' parents about the clothes that their daughters were shown wearing in the painting.

Millais' friend Louise Joplin recalled what happened in her autobiography: *"He has had to paint out the riding-habits of the twins, as their people don't like them, and he says they look better in other things, so the objectionable hats will go too, I suppose."* (Jopling, 1925, pp. 96)

The original double-breasted riding jackets and skirts were altered to a more fashionable military-style walking outfit, and the portrait was eventually completed in August 1876.

The dimensions of the painting (153.5cm x 113.7cm) are unusual, and the canvas seems to have been cropped down.