

<b>1. Art and Power</b>	
<b>2. Knowledge and didactic objectives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To understand the ways in which art has been used for both depicting and creating power.</li> <li>To learn about the role of art and artists in history.</li> </ul>	<b>3. Timing</b> 90 min
<b>4. Grouping of students</b> Small groups and whole class.	
<b>5. Historical thinking skills</b> Interpretation of evidence Agency of historical actors historical empathy	
<b>6. Development or sequence of the activity</b> <p>This activity is divided into four sequences. After an introduction, students work in small groups and complete three cases, which all look at art and power in different historical contexts. After the cases there is a whole class discussion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In order to work with the three cases included in this activity, students need to be familiar with the historical context related to the cases. Students can read this background knowledge individually (available in the HistoryLab website.) Alternatively, the teacher can explain about the historical context through direct instruction. (approximately 20–30 minutes).</li> <li>If students are using visual texts as historical evidence for the first time, it may be advisable to use time in the beginning to model some of the interpretational steps involved. For this, the teacher may utilize some of the other visual texts found at the HistoryLab website.</li> </ol>	

3. The class is divided into groups of 3–4 students (approximately 6 groups), who work together on the three cases included in the activity.
4. Each case consists of a visual text and a main question. Additional questions are posed in order to help students to approach the text.
5. Each group works together in completing all the three cases. In addition, each group is assigned to one of the cases, which they are expected to analyze more in depth (see annexes). (approximately 30 minutes)
6. After completing the three cases, the groups having a special focus on the same case team up to discuss their findings (10 minutes). The teacher can observe these discussions and give feedback to students.
7. A whole class discussion, where teacher guides students to elaborate on the common themes concerning art and power. The focus here is not anymore on individual cases but more on the commonalities (approximately 20 minutes). Complementary resources can be utilized here rather than during the group work with cases, as many of the links offer analysis on the visual texts. The whole class discussion may address questions such as: What kind of features are common for describing power in all the art works? How are religion and secular power connected?

## 7. Assessment techniques and instruments

### What to evaluate?

Each group (3–4 students per group) will submit their findings on the three cases. The teacher will assess this report.

### Assessment guidelines for the group work

A good report should address several of these points:

#### Case 1

- The divine nature of power: different kind clerical symbols and in the painting and the strong presence of highest-ranking catholic priesthood including Pope Pius VII
- The costume of Napoleon underlining his power: Napoleon is dressed in coronation robes similar to those of Roman emperors.

- *The composition of the painting: Napoleon is the undisputed center of the painting. He is standing and has an active role while others are more or less passive spectators. Napoleon, instead of the Pope, is holding the crown, which is a statement of power in itself.*
- *The timing of the painting: It was commissioned before the coronation and completed within three years. Thus, Napoleon used the painting to strengthen his position and power in the crucial years after the coronation.*
- *Boilly's painting indicates that people were interested in public viewings of the painting*
- *In a time before photographs, paintings were an important way to communicate about historical events such as coronations and convey a desired narrative.*
- *Boilly's observations focus on ordinary people's reactions*

#### Case 2

- *The wall of the medieval castle is made for defensive purposes but can also be interpreted to be a symbolic description of a decent world order.*
- *The painting depicts peasants working hard in a field. On the background above them is a castle representing dominant also a symbolic one: it isolates the rulers from the lower social classes. The towers of the fortress reach toward the sky whereof their power comes.*

#### Case 3

- *The drawing was made more than 80 years after the original event. It is therefore not an eyewitness account of events.*
- *The drawing suggests that the native Americans were "asleep" when the Europeans arrived.*
- *Europeans are described as being decisively more advanced in development. They also have religion on their side*
- *Note that in one hand Vespucci holds a navigational instrument (an astrolabe) while in the other he holds a staff with a crucifix at the top. This conceived difference in development entitles Europeans to subjugate native Americans.*

### ***When and how to evaluate?***

The group reports are assessed after the activity with the guidelines given above. In addition, the teacher should provide formative assessment during the joint group discussion and during the whole class discussion by commenting, for example, on the validity of students' arguments.

### **8. Complementary resources**

#### **Case 1:**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Coronation\\_of\\_Napoleon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Coronation_of_Napoleon)  
<https://joyofmuseums.com/museums/europe/france-museums/paris-museums/the-louvre/the-coronation-of-napoleon-by-jacques-louis-david/>  
<https://www.louvre.fr/en/explore/the-palace/think-big>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTSIAPmR5wk>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5E6aTzld7Q>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLfi146llmc>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n3K59FU-ooY>

#### **Case 2:**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limbourg\\_brothers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limbourg_brothers)  
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/renaissance-reformation/northern-renaissance1/limbourg-brothers/a/limbourg-brothers-trs-riches-heures>  
<https://www.wikiart.org/en/limbourg-brothers>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yO1Gac\\_YeCM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yO1Gac_YeCM)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdTEZl2\\_g9o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdTEZl2_g9o)  
<https://www.wikiart.org/en/limbourg-brothers>

#### **Case 3:**

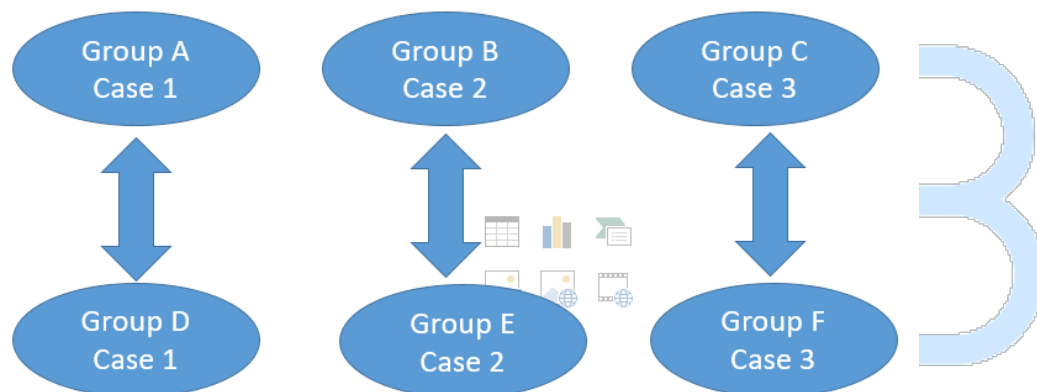
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/renaissance-reformation/northern/northern-ren-16c/a/johannes-stradanus-and-theodoor-galle-the-discovery-of-america>  
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/343845>  
<https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/rmgc-object-101921>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1CGw0Tbkes>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0GCOAPxIVk>

## 9. Annexes

*Each group work on all the cases but have a special focus on one case, which they then discuss with another group*



*HistoryLab website link:*

## Art & Power

Art has played an important role in illustrating and justifying the power of the elites and rulers of different eras. Take a critical look at the following works of art and consider how they describe power in order to justify it.

### Case 1

#### painting A

Title: The Coronation of Napoleon ([French](#): Le Sacre de Napoléon)

Artist: Jacques-Louis David

Date: 1807



<https://www.louvre.fr/en/explore/the-palace/think-big>

The painting was completed in 1807 and was commissioned by Napoleon in 1804. It depicts the [coronation of Napoleon](#) at Notre Dame cathedral in Paris. The artist [Jacques-Louis David](#) was the official painter of [Napoleon](#). The painting is very large: almost 10 metres wide and about 6 metres tall.

#### Assignment:

**What kind of elements in painting A seem to underline and justify the power of Napoleon?**

When, by whom and for which purpose was the painting created? In what kind of historical context is the painting set? Whose advantages does it serve? Who are present and what is the role of various people? What kind of symbols (of power) can you find?

#### Painting B

Title: Public Viewing David's "Coronation" at the Louvre

Artist: Louis Léopold Boilly (French, 1761–1845)

Date: 1810



<https://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/ep/original/DP270310.jpg>, public domain.

This Boilly's painting depicts one of the three occasions when David's work on Napoleon's coronation was exhibited for the public between 1808 and 1810. Boilly was a well respected portraitist of his time and he painted more than 5,000 portraits of middle class people as well as nobility.

#### Assignment:

**In what way does the existence of Boilly's painting relate to Napoleon's power?**

**How would you describe the setting of the painting?**

When and by whom was the painting created? What can one conclude from the date (1810) of the painting? What kind of reactions does the public seem to have? What different types of purposes may the painting have had in early 19<sup>th</sup> century France?

#### Case 2



Title: The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry  
Artist: The Limbour Brothers  
Date: 1412–1416



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tr%C3%A8s\\_Riches\\_Heures\\_du\\_Duc\\_de\\_Berry#Contents](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tr%C3%A8s_Riches_Heures_du_Duc_de_Berry#Contents)

The Limbourg brothers Herman, Paul and Johan were famous medieval Dutch artists. Their best-known work is called The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry made for the Duke of Berry Jean between 1412 and 1416. This work is a manuscript illustration, consisting of 206 leaves of parchment. In addition to the Limbourg brothers, it is believed that later artist have also contributed to this work which contains a large collection of illustrated prayers.

#### Assignment:

Analyze this illustration from The Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry above. How does it reflect the worldview of medieval times?



Who are portrayed in the work? What roles do people have? How are people placed in the illustration? How about the animals? What kind of divisions can be detected? Where does the power come from in the illustration? Where does it lead to?

### Case 3

Title: Allegory of America

Artist: Johannes Stradanus (Netherlands,

Date: ca. 1587–1589



Source: <https://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/dp/original/DP801479.jpg>

The drawing above describes the discovery of America. The work was drawn by a Dutch artist Johannes Stradanus who worked as a court artist for the Medici family. The work centres



Amerigo Vespucci, who was an Italian explorer. Between 1497 and 1504 Vespucci made several trips to Central and South America. Today the Continent is named by Vespucci's first name.

### Assignment:

**Evaluate how the painting depicts Europeans and indigenous peoples. In addition, consider why the encounters between Europeans and Indians are described as they are.**

When and by whom was the drawing produced? What may have been the artist's motivation for drawing this piece? What kind of symbols of power can be seen and how are they placed? What takes place in the background?

Disclaimer

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