

## Travelling for culture: the Grand Tour



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# Introduction

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In the eighteenth century and into the early part of the nineteenth, considerable numbers of aristocratic men (and sometimes women) travelled across Europe in pursuit of education, social advancement and entertainment, on what was known as the Grand Tour. A central objective was to gain exposure to the cultures of **classical antiquity**, particularly ancient Greece and Rome, and particularly in Italy. Today, the Grand Tour is an interesting object of study because of what it can tell us about how different cultures encountered one another. We can ask why the ancient world held such fascination for elite European culture at this time, for example, and explore how visitors conveyed that fascination through art and literature. We can also ask how the experience of other groups, such as women and children, might have compared to those of the typical male Grand Tourist.

In this free course, you'll have the opportunity to explore some of these questions, and to gain an introduction to the Grand Tour. The course also provides a snapshot of how our study of this historical and cultural phenomenon can be conducted through different disciplines in the Arts and Humanities, with each section of the course tackling the Grand Tour from a different perspective. In the first, Classical Studies, you will find a short introduction to one of the most iconic destinations of the Grand Tour, the Colosseum in Rome, because a good understanding of the historical and cultural significance of such monuments is an important foundation for studying later responses to them. Sections on Art History and English Literature will show you how portrait painting and poetry provided different ways of recording the encounters with Rome that took place on the Grand Tour, before a final section, Creative Writing, shows how such paintings and poetry can act as triggers or sources of inspiration for later writers too, leading to more imaginative engagements with elements of the Grand Tour.

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course [A112 Cultures](#).

Taken together, these sections offer a multifaceted perspective on the Grand Tour, and give you some insight into the study of different disciplines that you might undertake if you were to study A112.



# Learning Outcomes

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After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand some of the key characteristics of the Grand Tour as a cultural practice in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe
- appreciate why the ancient world was so significant for modern visitors of this era
- analyse a range of different texts and images, both ancient and modern
- reflect on how these texts and images can prompt new creative activity, and put this into practice.

# 1 Discovering the ancient world

*This section on Classical Studies was written by Joanna Paul*

In this section, you'll gain some insight into the main focus of the Grand Tour's fascination – the classical world – by studying the Colosseum. You'll consider the purpose of the **amphitheatre** in antiquity, and sample some of the kinds of evidence that we have for it, before moving on to think briefly about the Colosseum's cultural symbolism, and the reasons why it held such significance for visitors on the Grand Tour.

## 1.1 The Colosseum in antiquity



**Figure 1** The Colosseum in Rome, Italy.

The Colosseum has been one of the most iconic sights in Rome since it was built in the 70s CE. Work on this colossal amphitheatre began in 70 CE under the emperor Vespasian, forming part of his bold reconfiguration of the area of the city which had previously been occupied by the sprawling palace complex of the emperor Nero, the Domus Aurea (or 'Golden House'). With Nero's reign having ended (in 68 CE) in disgrace and scandal, it was in the interests of the new dynasty of emperors (the Flavians) to eradicate as many traces of their predecessor as possible – and what better way to signal their benevolence than by replacing the luxurious private dwelling of the emperor with a building dedicated to the entertainment of the masses?

The building that was most likely known in antiquity simply as 'the Amphitheatre' was finally completed and inaugurated in 80 CE, in the reign of Vespasian's son Titus. Now, for the first time, Rome had a permanent central and monumental location in which around 50,000 people at a time could enjoy the spectacular shows of the arena, including gladiatorial games, animal hunts, and perhaps even mock sea-battles; as well as public execution of criminals. The purpose of the amphitheatre was not solely entertainment, though; it also provided the emperor with an important political tool. As well as winning popular favour by putting on games, it was a place in which he could appear in front of the people, rather than being largely set apart from them in his elite residence. Gladiatorial combat was also a way of asserting the specific qualities of Roman identity, particularly their military prowess, virtue and valour.

## 1.2 The Colosseum in ancient poetry

We can learn something about the cultural significance of the newly-built Colosseum by reading the work of Martial. Born in what is now Spain in around 40 CE before moving to Rome in his twenties, Martial was a prolific poet who wrote hundreds of short poems called 'epigrams', often witty and satirical in tone, and covering a multitude of different subjects. His earliest surviving work was a collection of poems generally known by the title *De Spectaculis* ('On the Spectacles'), written to commemorate the inaugural gladiatorial games which were held in the amphitheatre over a period of 100 days in 80 CE. Martial's poetry was often overtly flattering to his imperial patrons, as the celebratory tone of the opening poem in the collection makes clear:

Let savage Memphis speak not of the Wonders that are her Pyramids; let Assyrian labour glory not in its Babylon; let the soft Ionians win no praise for their Temple of the Crossroads Goddess [Artemis]; let the close-packed altar of antlers lure no crowds to Delos; let not the Carians' immoderate praises elevate their Mausoleum, swaying in empty air, unto the stars. Each labour resigns its title in favour of the Amphitheatre of the Caesars, and Fame shall speak of one marvel in place of all.

(Martial, *De Spectaculis*; Martial, 2015, p. 3)

The poem catalogues some of the canonical Seven Wonders of the World – from the Hanging Gardens of Babylon to the spectacular Mausoleum of Halicarnassus – but, according to Martial, all are found wanting when compared to the new amphitheatre. Its future reputation is secure (almost as if Martial knew how it would still be revered as a symbol of Roman culture in the twenty-first century): the new Colosseum is already seen as a supreme embodiment of Roman power, overriding the 'Fame' of all of the other monuments.

### Activity 1

Let's turn to the next poem in Martial's collection. Read the poem (reproduced below) and, as you read, think about the following questions:

1. How does Martial continue his celebration of the Flavian Amphitheatre (the Colosseum) in this poem?
2. What kind of opinion of the emperor Nero does Martial offer here?

Here, where the Colossus of the Sun views the stars close at hand and towering cranes rise up in mid-street, the hateful halls of a bestial king once dazzled, when in all Rome stood just one house. Here, where the spectacular Amphitheatre's hallowed bulk is being raised up, was Nero's lake. Here, where we marvel at the baths—gifts to the people, swift in coming—a regal estate had robbed the poor of their homes. Where the Claudian Portico spreads out generous shade, ended the palace's most distant wing. Rome is given back to herself, Caesar, and under your guardianship her former master's pleasures belong to her people.

(Martial, *De Spectaculis* 2; Martial, 2015, p. 3)

Note your responses to the questions in the box below.

Provide your answer...

### Discussion

There are a number of details that you might have picked out, and different ways of interpreting the poem, so don't worry if your responses to these questions look different to the list below.

1. The main tactic of this poem is a methodical and repetitive comparison between what used to be on this site (the Domus Aurea) and what is there now (the Colosseum). You might have noticed the repetition of the phrase 'here, where...', which has the effect of making us feel like we're standing on the spot with the poem's narrator, looking in awe at the things that he's pointing out in front of us – the 'spectacular Amphitheatre' and its associated structures, such as the **baths** and the **portico**. These things are impressive and welcome in their own right – the Amphitheatre is 'hallowed', the building of the baths was 'swift', the portico offers shade – but the praise of the Amphitheatre gains so much more significance by being explicitly contrasted with what used to be there.
2. In his references to the palace, Martial uses the Domus Aurea as a symbol of everything that was wrong with Nero and his regime. Although the palace 'dazzled' – reminding us that it too was visually impressive – Martial plays up (or exaggerates?) its size, pointing out its 'distant wing' and telling us that it was as if one house had taken over all of Rome, 'robb[ing] the poor of their homes' in the process. Lest we should be in any doubt about what these comparisons mean, Martial explicitly refers to the disgraced emperor as a 'bestial king', living in a 'hateful' palace, before ending with an address to the new emperor, Titus, praising him for having returned Rome 'to herself'.

In his conclusion to the poem, then, Martial shows how the use of this part of Rome seemed to have radically changed thanks to the new dynasty of Flavian emperors. The provision of pleasures was still its main purpose, as the final line of the poem makes clear, but these were now pleasures provided for the masses, offering a sense of a shared culture that went far beyond the elite enjoyments housed in the Domus Aurea.

## 1.3 The Colosseum on a Roman coin

Martial's poetry is one useful piece of evidence for how the Colosseum might have been regarded in antiquity – but of course, it is just one man's viewpoint, and any study of the ancient world must remember to treat all sources carefully, rather than taking them at face value. The poems offer an unambiguously positive and impressive vision of the amphitheatre, but we must remember that Martial might have been exaggerating the impact of the building and its inaugural games in order to seek the new emperor's favour. To gain a more complete understanding, we need to look to other pieces of evidence, such as the coin in Figure 2. This coin is dated to 80 CE, so, like the poem, it is associated with the opening of the amphitheatre. On its obverse side (the image on the left), it depicts the emperor Titus in a **toga**, surrounded by weapons and armour. The inscription round the edge (with greatly abbreviated words) lists his various titles, including emperor, chief priest, and 'father of the fatherland'.





**Figure 2** Copper alloy coin of Titus, 80–81 CE, British Museum, London 1844,0425.712.

### Activity 2

What does the other side of the coin (the reverse) show? How might we use this coin as evidence for our understanding of the amphitheatre and its cultural significance in the ancient world?

*Provide your answer...*

### Discussion

The reverse of the coin shows the Colosseum, and though there is clearly limited space for a detailed depiction of the structure on such a small object, you might have noticed the effects of showing the amphitheatre from an elevated angle. Not only can the distinctive exterior of the building be seen but so can its interior, with a mass of tiny dots indicating the crowds at the games, and thus underlining its importance as a venue for mass gatherings and shared entertainment. Singling out the Colosseum as a subject for depiction on a coin shows how important it was for Titus to be associated with it. Not only that but the very nature of coins as objects that would be spread around the empire, passed hand to hand far beyond Rome itself, makes them valuable tools for propaganda.

The coin, then, offers a different perspective on the Colosseum, and shows how it was used to symbolise Roman imperial strength and magnificence right from the beginning.

## 1.4 The Colosseum and its meaning through time

The previous activities have given you a very brief glimpse of how studying the ancient world involves looking at different kinds of sources together. The surviving evidence from antiquity is often fragmentary, and any attempt to gain a fuller understanding of these distant cultures will usually resemble a jigsaw puzzle, as we put together different pieces of evidence and work out how they fit together. We also have to be aware of how ancient places and cultures change over time. Martial's poem and the coin were both evidence for how the Colosseum might have been regarded when it was first built, but the meanings of the amphitheatre, and interpretations of the events that took place within it, are far from stable.

One of the most significant shifts in how the Colosseum and its games were viewed accompanied the rise of Christianity in the Roman empire. Though its spectacles remained hugely popular for a long time, objections to the violence and the way in which it transfixed an audience were registered by authors such as Tertullian who, a century or so after the Colosseum's inauguration, condemned the arena for its dangerous incitement of passions, and the way in which it made audiences complicit in brutal punishments. Later, in the fourth century, Saint Augustine described what happened when his friend Alypius,

who previously 'held such spectacles in aversion and detestation', was persuaded to go to the amphitheatre in Rome.

### Activity 3

Read the following extract from Augustine's *Confessions*. What happens to Alypius?

He said: 'If you drag my body to that place and sit me down there, do not imagine you can turn my mind and my eyes to those spectacles. I shall be as one not there, and so I shall overcome both you and the games.' [...] When they had arrived and had found seats where they could the entire place seethed with the most monstrous delight in the cruelty. He kept his eyes shut and forbade his mind to think about such fearful evils. Would that he had blocked his ears as well! A man fell in combat. A great roar from the entire crowd struck him with such vehemence that he was overcome by curiosity. Supposing himself strong enough to despise whatever he saw and to conquer it, he opened his eyes. He was struck in the soul by a wound graver than the gladiator in his body [...] As soon as he saw the blood, he at once drank in savagery and did not turn away. His eyes were riveted. He imbibed madness. Without any awareness of what was happening to him, he found delight in the murderous contest and was inebriated by bloodthirsty pleasure.

(*Confessions* 6.8; Augustine, 1991, p. 100–1)

Provide your answer...

### Discussion

Augustine paints a powerful picture of how Alypius' confidence in his ability to stand firm against the cruelty of the games is swept away by the febrile atmosphere in the amphitheatre. As soon as he opens his eyes, Alypius is transfixed by the violence; nor is it simply grim fascination, but rather, as Augustine describes it, he becomes almost drunk on the pleasure of watching the bloodshed, such that he loses any sense of himself.

As well as motivating the moral critique of the games by writers such as Tertullian and Augustine, the Colosseum assumed another important role in the development of Christian culture and identity as a site strongly associated with the persecution of its followers. Although the execution of Christians by various means in the arena was sporadic, and in no way limited to this group, the martyrdom of Christians became strongly associated with the Colosseum, and a dominant feature of many modern recreations of the site – such as the nineteenth century painting in Figure 3. From this brief consideration of the Colosseum's history in later antiquity, then, we can start to see how different layers of meaning attach themselves to ancient places and practices. What was initially a symbol of Roman greatness quickly became, from a different perspective, a symbol of Roman immorality and cruelty. After the Roman empire fell and the Colosseum collapsed into ruin, it took on additional meanings as a symbol of how even the greatest empires perish.



**Figure 3** François Léon Benouville, *The Christian Martyrs Entering the Amphitheatre*, 1855, oil on canvas, 3.90 x 4.70m. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

## 1.5 What was the Grand Tour?

This complicated layering of the Colosseum's meanings is just one way of explaining the rise of a phenomenon like the Grand Tour. An encounter with the ruined amphitheatre was not just a chance to see a Roman building – it was an opportunity to contemplate what the ancient world meant on a much wider scale. For many centuries – certainly from the Middle Ages through to just before the First World War – classical art and literature were deemed by many in the West to be high points of cultural achievement. **Renaissance** artists across Europe, for example, would study classical sculpture and attempt to imitate its forms, while the educated elite (the vast majority of whom were men) would have at least some command of Greek and Latin and would be well-versed in classical literature by authors such as Homer, Virgil, Horace and Ovid.

For a long time, encounters with classical antiquity were only possible through texts, or by already being in places where its physical remains were still visible – one reason why Italy, with its ready supply of ancient ruins and fragments of sculpture, was the birthplace of the Renaissance. But by the late seventeenth century, it was increasingly possible for the educated elite to travel across Europe in order to witness the splendours of antiquity, alongside other cultural highlights, first-hand. The Grand Tour flourished especially from the early eighteenth century through to the early nineteenth (although it is important to note that these kinds of journeys around Europe certainly continued for the rest of the nineteenth century and beyond, but with different kinds of travellers, and different motivations and contexts for the trips). On coming of age at 21, it became fashionable for aristocratic young men to complete their educations by spending some years travelling. Other travellers were not, of course, precluded from taking these sorts of trips – as you will see in the Art History section – but the Grand Tour as an idea was typically identified with young men. The itinerary would depend on one's starting point, but it would often take in many of the locations marked on the map below, culminating in a visit to Rome.



**Figure 4** A map showing the route of the Grand Tour.

What did being a ‘tourist’ of this kind mean? Many Grand Tour travellers would certainly have been motivated by the opportunity to encounter classical antiquity, to admire its ruins and artworks, and to reflect on their meanings, particularly in Rome. But it was also an important way of shaping cultural identity, for besides any intellectual pretensions, partaking in the Grand Tour was a signal of elite status. Visitors might commemorate their Tour and proclaim that status by commissioning the kinds of portraits you can study in the next section on Art History, as well as shipping home artworks and artefacts to adorn the interiors and grounds of their country houses. The evidence of this practice is scattered through guidebooks, in travel writing published and unpublished, and in the poetry and other literary reflections that you’ll sample in the English Literature and Creative Writing sections. As you progress through this course, you’ll see how the Grand Tour demonstrated the significance of ancient cultures well into the modern era.



## 2 Portraits of the Grand Tour

*This section on Art History was written by Clare Taylor*

As you've already discovered, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a classical education was at the core of elite learning, which was rooted in the study of Latin and Greek language and literature as well as ancient history and culture. The Grand Tour became part of this education in the classical world, and many of these tourists would already have been familiar with the ancient sites they were to visit from published accounts and illustrations. At the same time, the Grand Tour brought its tourists into contact with new and exciting 'foreign' places, people and objects. These cultural encounters with the unfamiliar – which could be both pleasurable and dangerous – had to be managed, and the art that might be produced in response to the Grand Tour – from paintings to sculptures, landscape gardens to interior decorations – was one way of doing so.

### 2.1 The Grand Tour portrait: people

Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787) was the most successful and fashionable painter of eighteenth-century Grand Tour portraits. One example of his work is the painting he made of Sir Gregory Page-Turner in 1768, when the sitter (the subject of the portrait) was 20 years old (Figure 5). You are going to explore this portrait now.



**Figure 5** Pompeo Girolamo Batoni, *Sir Gregory Page-Turner*, 1768, oil on canvas, 135 × 100 cm. Manchester Art Gallery.

#### Activity 4

First, spend a few minutes looking at Figure 5 and jot down any questions that it raises for you about the sitter and how he is portrayed. Think about the figure as well as the accessories and objects around him.

*Provide your answer...*

#### Discussion

You might have wondered where the figure is supposed to be, what the objects are that he is surrounded by, why he is dressed so elaborately, and also why he is turned away and holding his hand out to his right. Keep these questions in mind as you move on.

The questions that emerged as you first looked at this painting can be answered by applying the approaches Art History uses to help us look at paintings. Let's begin by looking at what is called the painting's form: that is, the things that make an artwork look

as it does to us, the viewers. We usually start with composition, or how the various parts of the painting are organised. Here, the figure is clearly outlined against a background of buildings and objects – some on a table behind him, others representing parts of a building. You will come back to what these are and why they are there in a moment. Returning to composition, there are also particular shapes here – if we think just in terms of horizontals and verticals, the table and what may be part of a ledge or balcony create horizontal lines, while the column on the right and the building in the distance set up vertical lines. These lines seem to almost frame the view of distant buildings. The column on the right also suggests that, in the viewer's imagination, the painting carries on upwards, beyond the edge of the actual canvas on which the picture is painted, an impression reinforced by the draped material with a tassel hanging down from cords.

Turning to think about the figure, do you think the relative scale of the column and the sculpture of a figure wearing a helmet behind him make him seem smaller than he really is? He is painted in what art historians call a three-quarter (rather than full) length view and slightly turned away. It's his figure that catches our eye in a pose that has been called a swagger, and although his left hand rests on an unfurling piece of paper his right hand gesture suggests he wants to show us the objects in the painting. His expression doesn't seem to convey a particular mood, but what it does show is that he is looking out of the painting to his right, the same direction that his right hand is gesturing towards. Colour and light are also important here, as he is painted in an eye-catching embroidered red suit, his face and right side brightly lit in contrast to the paler light on the ruins seen in the distance.

Finally, when thinking about a painting's form, we consider where the viewer of a work of art is positioned. In this reproduction of the painting we are looking at the painting straight on, but Page-Turner's gaze and gesture suggest we are positioned towards his right. If we were looking at the painting hanging on a wall, that might be easier to work out as we could move around to look at the portrait from different angles.

## 2.2 The Grand Tour portrait: places and objects



**Figure 5 (repeated)** Pompeo Girolamo Batoni, *Sir Gregory Page-Turner*, 1768, oil on canvas, 135 × 100 cm. Manchester Art Gallery.

What other questions might we have about Batoni's portrait (Figure 5)? Perhaps you wondered what it depicts and who the figure represents. We know that the sitter is Sir Gregory Page-Turner (1748–1805). He was the heir to his great uncle's estates, the income from which was around £24,000 a year (a considerable sum in the eighteenth century), so he could afford not only Pompeo Batoni's fee, but to undertake the Grand Tour in the first place.

The whole point of a Grand Tour portrait was to ensure that viewers back at home would be able to recognise the sitter's familiarity with the classical monuments they had visited on the tour. They were in effect proof of their physical presence in places such as Rome and Pompeii. Portraitists like Batoni therefore incorporated references to these places. You might have had some ideas about the setting in Figure 5 already from the distant

ruins in the background; in fact, this depicts the Colosseum. Batoni has clearly picked out the tiers and the curved form of the building. This portrait is, then, set in Rome, and the sense of place is reinforced by the (worn) map of the city the figure holds, implying that he is already familiar with its sites and monuments because he has spent time visiting them. Even his gesture seems to invite the viewer to join him on a tour of these places.

Other objects in the painting refer to the importance of a classical education to elite members of society such as Page-Turner: the bust (or head and shoulders sculpture) is of the Roman goddess Minerva, while the marble tabletop is scattered with books and an inkwell, implying that he is (literally!) turning pages by reading and writing about the places he has seen. Minerva represents poetry and wisdom, so the portrait could be implying that Page-Turner was seeking to take on the qualities represented by this female goddess. However, portraits are sometimes not what they seem, since the bust of Minerva was, in fact, a studio prop used by Batoni in other Grand Tour portraits of English sitters, enhancing the loosely classical associations of the portrait.



**Figure 6** Marble statue of the Apollo Belvedere, c.350 BCE, Roman copy after a Greek original. Musei Vaticani, Rome.

The portrait also nods to ancient sculpture in another way. The sitter's pose is loosely based on a marble sculpture called the Apollo Belvedere (Figure 6), which shows the god Apollo as if he has just released an arrow from a bow. This connection between portrait and sculpture is a visual reference only viewers with knowledge of this sculpture – including presumably Page-Turner himself – would have appreciated.

## 2.3 The Grand Tour portrait: people and professions

You are now going to have a go at analysing another Grand Tour portrait by Batoni, using the example of Batoni's portrait of Page-Turner that you looked at as a guide.

### Activity 5

Look at Figure 7 and jot down your thoughts about its scale (use the caption information to help you), the setting, as well as the figure's pose, gesture, expression and the colours used. Don't worry about trying to identify all the objects, just note any that you think might be significant.



**Figure 7** Pompeo Girolamo Batoni, *Colonel William Gordon of Fyvie*, 1766, oil on canvas, 290 × 217 cm. Fyvie Castle, Scotland.

Provide your answer...

#### Discussion

This portrait is on a much larger scale than the one of Page-Turner. However, like Batoni's portrayal of Page-Turner, the figure is set against a network of vertical and horizontal lines made up by architectural shapes. These are created by the plinth on which the sculpture of the female figure sits and the setting of antique remains, but there are also diagonals in the architectural fragments at the figure's feet. This geometric effect is softened by the inclusion of trees and foliage that appear stretched behind and above the figure, again creating the illusion that the picture carries on beyond the canvas edges. The figure is depicted full length, posed with one foot raised above the other, one hand on hip, the other stretched out to hold a sword, and wearing a determined expression. It's also brightly lit, showing off the colours of his military uniform, tartan plaid and socks.

Like Page-Turner, Batoni painted Colonel Gordon (1736–1816) while he was on the Grand Tour, but Gordon's portrait is not just that of a tourist since it brings the culture of ancient Rome into direct contact with his profession. Gordon is shown as an active figure, wearing the uniform of the 105th Regiment of Foot and grasping the sword he used as a threat to quash a revolt in the Houses of Parliament in 1780. However, he is also surrounded by ancient remains, including the Colosseum, and his tartan is draped in folds that recall those of a toga. The importance of place and military victory is reinforced in the orb and laurel wreath he appears to receive from Roma, the goddess of Rome, who is depicted in the statue.





**Figure 8** Antonio Zucchi, *Portrait of James Adam*, 1763, oil on canvas, 173 × 123 cm.



**Figure 9** The Medici vase. Second half of first century CE, marble, height: 152 cm. The Uffizi, Florence.

Other professional men also saw the benefits of Grand Tour portraiture. One example was the architect James Adam (1732–1794), whose practice back home in Britain with his brother Robert was to enjoy huge success. The brothers designed country and town houses in a neo-classical style, that is one which reinvented the public architecture of ancient Rome by adapting its proportions and material forms such as domes and pillars. Antonio Zucchi's portrait of James Adam was painted in the final year of Adam's Grand

Tour of 1760–63 (Figure 8). Almost overwhelmed by the huge marble urn to his right (known as the Medici vase, Figure 9), and with a figure of Minerva behind him, Zucchi shows Adam in a three-quarter length pose. The architect is depicted extravagantly dressed (like Page-Turner) but this is evidently winter, as he is draped in a fur-trimmed robe. Adam grips dividers in one hand, a rolled plan in the other. Zucchi signifies that although Adam might be dressed like one of his aristocratic clients, he is an architect, and one steeped in the classical knowledge necessary to his profession: the capital on which Adam's left hand rests was his own design.

## 2.4 The Grand Tour portrait: couples

The Grand Tour has sometimes been seen as a journey made only by elite young men. In fact, the reality was that women and families also toured the principal Italian sites, as did people travelling later in life, and a range of non-aristocratic artists and writers. You're now going to examine two portraits which can help us shed light on the meanings ancient places carried for women and families, starting by looking at a portrait of a married couple. Unusually, this depicts tourists from elsewhere in the North Atlantic world, from Carolina, in what became the USA.

### Activity 6

The American painter John Singleton Copley (1738–1815) exhibited his double portrait, now known as *Mr & Mrs Ralph Izard (Alice Delancey)*, of the successful merchant Ralph Izard and his wife while they were on the Grand Tour together (Figure 10). It is thought to be the work Copley exhibited at London's Royal Academy in 1776 when it was called *A Conversation*.



**Figure 10** John Singleton Copley, *Portrait of Mr & Mrs Ralph Izard (Alice Delancey)*, 1775, oil on canvas, 175 × 224 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Edward Ingersoll Brown Fund, accession number 03.1033.

Spend a few moments jotting down why you think the earlier title was chosen. Who might be having the conversation with whom and what might it be about?

Provide your answer...

### Discussion

Of course we cannot know what the sitters might be intended to be conversing about, but we can take some clues from their depiction and the objects that surround them. The Izards are posed on either side of a table and Alice gestures towards the drawing Ralph holds, her gaze directed towards him, while he looks outwards beyond her. The Colosseum is centre stage in the distance, while behind Ralph an enormous Greek red-figure pot is placed beside a column, and between the couple is a statue. The

inclusion of these buildings and objects suggests these might be central not only to the couple's relationship, but part of 'a conversation' with the viewer, too.

Copley and the Izards had travelled together to southern Italy, visiting the sites at Pompeii and Herculaneum before returning to Rome. On the one hand this Grand Tour portrait is intended to demonstrate their wealth and discriminating taste; put simply, the Grand Tour offered opportunities for the collection not only of ancient objects but also of contemporary objects in the new style of neo-classicism. The table the Izards are depicted seated at is designed in this style, which the Adam brothers were to make so desirable; details such as the circular motifs (called anthemions) and the rams heads are taken from classical architecture. However, like the other portraits you have looked at, this picture also contains personal messages unique to the sitters. The paper Ralph holds is a sketch thought to be by Alice (since she gestures towards it), which represents the sculpture, often identified as Orestes and Electra (two characters from Greek mythology), which is placed in the centre of the painting. The Izards are therefore portraying the shared act of classical education, viewing treasures of Roman and Greek art and architecture, but also (in the case of Alice) learning by copying them.

## 2.5 The Grand Tour portrait: families



**Figure 11** Pompeo Girolamo Batoni, *Portrait of Thomas and Anna Marie Barrett-Lennard with their daughter Barbara Anne*, 1749–50. Essex Record Office, accession number 466.

Personal relationships are also central to the *Portrait of Thomas and Anna Marie Barrett-Lennard with their daughter Barbara Anne*, 1749–50 (Figure 11). Some of the compositional elements you've explored in other Grand Tour portraits by Batoni are also seen in this earlier work. The figures are set against horizontal and vertical lines formed by a tabletop and architectural details such as the ledge. There is the same idea of an open window with a distant view; however, here the view is not of the classical ruins of Rome but the natural world of the garden. The composition is also based around the family circle. The poses and expressions of the parents are inclined inwards, towards the figure of Barbara Anne, and their gestures are linked. It is Barbara Anne who, like Gregory Page-Turner and Colonel Gordon, is the focus of our gaze and nearest to the viewer. She is painted posed on her mother's knee with her left hand resting on her lap and looking straight out towards us. Her expression is one of happiness, unlike the sad expressions of her parents.

Seemingly there's not much here to connect this portrait with the other images of tourists you have looked at so far, which all depict claims to classical knowledge. This Grand Tour portrait had a very different message. Thomas and Anna Marie lived at Belhus in Essex, and visited Rome the year after their only daughter, Barbara Anne, had died from tuberculosis, which is when Batoni painted this group portrait. Batoni therefore painted



Barbara Anne in Rome not from life, but rather using a miniature portrait by the artist Thomas Hudson (1701–1779) which her parents carried with them. Portrait miniatures were an important way of keeping the likeness of a loved one close to you in the eighteenth century. For the Barrett-Lennards then it was Batoni's skills in portraiture that were the key in commissioning this family memorial, rather than including overt reminders of place.

The Grand Tour portraits that you have studied in this section, then, show that these kinds of paintings could carry different messages. The images might commemorate a prestigious visit to a European city, celebrate or memorialise family relationships, or enhance the status and renown of the subject by depicting their close encounter with and knowledge of the ancient world. The same sorts of influences and motivations could also characterise the literature that was born out of the Grand Tour, as you will see in the next section.

## 3 The poetry of the Grand Tour

*This section on English Literature was written by Nicola J. Watson*

The young gentlemen who travelled to continental Europe in the eighteenth century in search of an education did not confine themselves to commissioning portraits or bringing back artefacts to adorn their houses; typically, they also wrote letters and journals detailing their experiences. Sometimes, if they had literary pretensions, they would publish these, and in fact the last decades of the eighteenth century saw a proliferation of published 'Tours'. However, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars closed Europe from 1795 to the British leisure traveller, and it was only in 1815, with the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, that a version of the Grand Tour was once again available. This section of the course will focus on a particularly famous piece of travel writing that describes an experience of Rome in 1817. This is extracted from Canto IV of a lengthy poem by George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824) entitled *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, first published in London in 1818.

This poem has been chosen because it determined the ways in which tourists understood and experienced the ruins of classical Rome for the remainder of the nineteenth century. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that whenever the nineteenth-century tourist saw the Colosseum they saw it through Byron's eyes and coloured by his sentiments. Everyone wanted to be Byron – and you'll see when you read an extract from the poem that this is partly because the autobiographical 'I' of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is so prominent, and so attractive. This is why this imaginary portrait of Byron in front of the ruins of the Colosseum was made by William Westall, and circulated extensively in the form of an engraving (Figure 12). And this is also why Byron's verse was very extensively quoted in the most important guidebook of the day, Murray's *Handbook*, which made it easy for tourists to visit Rome with Byron's poem stuffed in a pocket.



**Figure 12** After William Westall, *Lord Byron Contemplating the Colosseum in Rome*, engraving.

Reading Byron is a way to begin answering the question of why (and how) ancient places have continued to matter long after the original cultures collapsed. So too is studying how Byron's verse became so **canonical** in tourist and travel literature. It shouldn't surprise you, though, that the sort of understanding of ancient place and culture created by Byron's verse had at least as much to do with the political conditions of his time as it did with contemporary scholarship of classical antiquities. Put another way, for Byron, contemplating the ruins of Rome served as a way of exploring and projecting his own conflicted subjectivity as a republican aristocrat (a stance that would become much imitated as a 'Byronic melancholy'). But it also served as a way of contemplating the ruins of Europe in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars (which ended in 1815), and with it the end variously of the neo-classical ideals of the Enlightenment, the utopian ambitions of

the French Revolution, the grandeur of the Napoleonic Empire, and the restoration of European monarchies through what Byron regarded as a deeply corrupt peace settlement made by the triumphant alliance post-Waterloo.

## 3.1 Byron at the Colosseum

To get the most out of Byron's literary account of a trip to ancient Rome, we need to be able to make sense of his verse, so first you'll spend some time on the basic skills and techniques that you'll need. Reading poetry can be a bit daunting, so a good way to start is to listen to Samuel West reading an extract from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV*.

### Activity 7

First, listen to the audio recording of the poem.

Audio content is not available in this format.



Audio 1: Samuel West reads nine stanzas (128–9 and 139–45) excerpted from Jerome J. McGann's edition of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto IV*.

Now listen to the recording again, this time while taking a careful look at the text, in Reading 1 (open this in a new tab or window so you can find your way back to the course easily): [Reading 1](#)

Make a note of any words or phrases you find difficult to understand. There are three things that may help. Firstly, you will find that quite a lot of words have an apostrophe in them – this is what's called a contraction, and marks where an 'e', for example, has been removed. This is so that the reader knows that they are supposed to squash the whole word up into one syllable. Secondly, Byron goes in quite a lot for personification, that is, dealing with abstract non-human entities (such as Rome, Murder) as though they were persons. Finally, there are going to be some words that won't be very familiar, for example 'maws', perhaps. The dictionary is your friend here.

Note: there is no discussion for this activity.

Provide your answer...

## Looking at Byron's verse in more detail: paraphrase

Now you're going to work on Byron's poetry in more detail, by looking at a single **stanza**. Studying English Literature is all about being able to read accurately, and the skill of paraphrase is an essential basic. It's a pretty useful skill generally, in fact. To paraphrase means to put the poem's meanings into your own words – when it comes to paraphrasing poetry that means putting it into prose, glossing more unusual words, and often adding quite a lot of words to make explicit ideas that have been compressed grammatically.

Let's look more closely at stanza 128 from the poem:

ARCHES on arches! as it were that Rome,  
 Collecting the chief trophies of her line,  
 Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,  
 Her Coliseum stands; the moonbeams shine  
 As 'twere its natural torches, for divine  
 Should be the light which streams here, to illume  
 This long-explored but still exhaustless mine  
 Of contemplation; and the azure gloom  
 Of an Italian night, where the deep skies assume...

Here is a first try at paraphrasing this first stanza from Reading 1 (Figure 13). It's run on like prose and the added words are in red.

Here are ARCHES piled on top of arches! as though it were that Rome,  
 Collecting the chief trophies of her line i.e. history,  
 Would build up all her triumphs i.e. triumphal arches in one dome,  
 Here Her [Rome's] Coliseum stands; the moonbeams shine  
 As though they 'twere its natural/appropriate torches, for divine  
 Should be the light which streams here, to illume [illuminate]  
 This long-explored but still exhaustless [unexhausted] mine  
 Of contemplation; ...

**Figure 13** A paraphrased version of stanza 128.

At more length, this is a worked-up prose version of the stanza and its run on into the next stanza:

Here arches are piled up on arches! As though the city of Rome, collecting up the memory of all her past military victories, had wanted to build all her triumphal arches into one circular building, the Coliseum. The moonlight which shines on it is the most appropriate sort of lighting for this place, both natural and heavenly, illuminating this long-famous and yet still fascinating-to-contemplate place. The dome of the deep blue Italian night-sky hangs above this vast and wonderful ruin and echoes its shape.

A reflection on that exercise would be something like this:

That was really hard to do! And I'm not sure I've got it right, either, or even quite understand it. What's all that stuff about the skies assuming hues that have words, for instance? All the same, I found out something really interesting that I'd never noticed before – about how cleverly Byron had collapsed the idea of the Roman triumph with the triumphal arch and so made the Colosseum into the epitome of the Roman Empire. I also discovered how many ideas Byron had compressed into single words, e.g. 'natural' and 'mine'. And I also discovered that his verse is way better than my prose.

### Activity 8

Now that you've spent a bit of time reading this part of the poem more carefully, how would you sum up Byron's thoughts on the Colosseum and the ways in which it epitomises the ancient city of Rome. How does he characterise ancient Roman

imperial culture? Does he admire it? What can the modern tourist do with and within the surviving ruins? What sort of encounter is this?

*Provide your answer...*

#### Discussion

Byron's vision of Rome is epitomised by this miniature essay on the Colosseum. He sets up a little drama here: the ancient ruins are first of all viewed as, like all ruins, 'Romantic', in that they speak of the past (stanzas 128–9); then, from stanza 139, Byron experiments with revivifying them through his imagination as the epicentre of imperial power; then he focuses this story of imperial power through the memories and affections of the dying gladiator ('I see before me the Gladiator lie', stanza 140; here Byron is bringing the famous statue (Figure 14) to life); and then returns, via the idea of the revengeful Goths who would indeed eventually overrun Rome, to the Colosseum as a ruin, best viewed by moonlight which softens dilapidation.



**Figure 14** Marble statue of 'The Dying Gladiator' (also known as 'The Dying Gaul'), first or second century CE. Capitoline Museum, Rome, inv. MC0747.

The passage as a whole is a meditation upon the bloodiness of empires, and of their ends, strung between attraction to ancient heroism and cynical disillusion at modernity, in which the heroic dwindles into a world of 'thieves, or what ye will.' Most importantly, though, this passage also dramatises the power and movement of Byron's imagination – it all happens in his head with a little aid from moonlight. And it also casts Byron as an especially glamorous tourist – like the dying gladiator, these stanzas suggest, he is an exile, far from home, defeated by the inevitability of death, but his emotions are the centre of attention all the same. A tourist to Rome might well feel trite or belated – but not if he or she could channel Byron. For this reason, Murray's guidebook excerpted this passage in its entirety, allowing tourists to play at being Byron on the spot, preferably by moonlight.

## 3.2 Rhyme

One of the things you may have discovered when paraphrasing Byron's verse was its extreme compression. You may have also found out that by comparison to the verse form your prose was much longer, much clumsier and, you might imagine, much more difficult and less rewarding to memorise and to quote. In the next activity, you're going to practise some more basic techniques of understanding the sort of verse form Byron is using here. These are essential skills for pursuing the study of English Literature, and they are helpful in practising creative writing too. So here goes.

You're going to start with the question of **rhyme**. Return to the opening stanza that was paraphrased in the previous section. This time you're going to ignore the argument of the

verse entirely and concentrate on its form. You're going to start with the rhymes Byron uses at the ends of his lines – what is generally called 'a rhyme scheme'.

The first rhyme has been marked as 'A', the second as 'B', the third as 'C' and so on. (This is a bit like taking apart a mechanical watch to see how it works.) This is how it looks:

---

ARCHES on arches! as it were that Rome,	A
Collecting the chief trophies of her line,	B
Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,	A
Her Coliseum stands; the moonbeams shine	B
As 'twere its natural torches, for divine	B
Should be the light which streams here, to illum	C
This long-explored but still exhaustless mine	B
Of contemplation; and the azure gloom	C
Of an Italian night, where the deep skies assume	C

---

What this shows is that the stanza splits into two sets of four lines (each of these is called a **quatrain**), but that the last line of the second quatrain is also part of a concluding **couplet**. As it happens, it's a bit more complicated and clever than this suggests because rhyme 'A' is almost a **half rhyme** with rhyme 'C' (it isn't so very far from 'Rome' to 'gloom'). And although couplets are typically used to clinch the end of a stanza's argument, in this instance the sentence doesn't finish but floats off into the next stanza in an appropriately obscure and shadowy and contemplative way. Compare that effect to the way that the first three lines, which all call naturally for a breath at the end, produce an effect of witty statement – and very quotable statement, too. You might now like to try marking up the rhyme scheme yourself on a stanza of your choice.

Hopefully you have enjoyed your virtual tour of the Colosseum with Byron. The main point you should take away is the sense that modern eyes see ancient ruins through the lens of present circumstances, personal and historical. In Byron's case, this means that we see a Romantic subjectivity meditating on ancient imperial ruins in the ruins of Napoleon's empire. Byron's take on the Colosseum centred all subsequent nineteenth-century tourist accounts and arguably outlined a distinctively modern tourist sensibility. This, put very simply, might be that the sensitive soul contemplates the past in silence and solitude, and in an obscure light. This might seem like a very different way of consuming the Colosseum to that celebrated in the Grand Tour portraits that you studied in the last section. A sense of classical civilisation as something to emulate through connoisseurship and social display is replaced by solitary musing at the site of a civilisation's collapse. Or you might take the view that the Grand Tourist and Byron are nonetheless engaged in a broadly similar enterprise – creating modern identities in relation to the ancient past. Encountering the ancient past in a city like Rome certainly encourages the artistic and literary expression of a range of personal responses. As the next section will show, a more detailed look at the process of literary creativity can also provide a useful complement to your study of poetic texts like Byron.



## 4 Postcards from the Grand Tour

*This section on Creative Writing was written by Fiona Doloughan*

As a practice-based area of study, Creative Writing is primarily concerned with the production of new texts by writers who may come from a wide variety of backgrounds and have different interests and levels of skill. It seeks to provide opportunities for student writers to learn their craft, through creative practice and skills' development, as well as by reading and reflecting on published writing and work in progress. You have already seen examples from Art History and English Literature of engagement with the Grand Tour, in the form of Grand Tour portraits, and Byron's verse, penned in response to his visit to Rome in the nineteenth century. For present-day writers and students of Creative Writing, such things might appear less directly relevant. But in this section of the course, you'll explore how many of the things that fuelled those earlier artistic and literary representations of the Grand Tour can still be relevant from a Creative Writing perspective.



**Figure 15** Géo Dorival, *Rome - Par La Voie Du Mont*, c.1920, advertising poster, 106 × 76 cm. The Roman Forum was another important site for Grand Tourists, and remains so today.

In what follows, you'll consider what writers actually do (their creative practices or processes, if you will), and observe one example of how a writer might engage with the ideas that lay behind the Grand Tour by connecting their own writing to classical antiquity. There are of course many writers who find a source of inspiration in the literature, archaeology or broader culture of Greek or Roman antiquity, or who journey in their writing to places and cultures from the past. You might have read, for example, *The Eagle of the Ninth* (1954), by English novelist Rosemary Sutcliff, a story set in Roman Britain in the second century CE; and you may be aware of any number of other historical novelists who take inspiration from antiquity, from the novels set in ancient Rome by writers such as Robert Graves and Robert Harris, to recent fiction that reimagines stories from Greek mythology, by authors such as Kamila Shamsie and Natalie Haynes. It is also the case that many twentieth and twenty-first-century travel writers perform, in effect, their own Grand Tours and incorporate into their work a sense of their own biography as well as a sense of history and place.

Of course, not all writers today are planning to produce a piece of historical fiction or a travel book that engages directly with an ancient place – but we can still see how writers might use ancient objects, paintings or texts as prompts or 'triggers' for writing with a view

to getting a piece of writing 'off the ground'. The topic of classical antiquity may also offer a springboard for representing a different kind of reality, something formed in imagination, even if it touches on aspects of the world 'out there'. The Grand Tour was a cultural phenomenon that was inspired, at least in part, by a desire to encounter the ancient past, and it prompted writers (and artists) to explore different and imaginative ways of recording that encounter. Writing, in general, can be a way of responding to the world and of recording observations, expressing views, exploring connections and creating a dialogue between the writer and the potential or eventual reader.

## 4.1 Rilke and the Archaic Torso of Apollo

In the English Literature section, you examined in some depth the ways in which Byron's poetry captured his experience of visiting Rome in the early nineteenth century. To expand your sense of how poetry and creative writing can take a cue from the material remains of the ancient world, you're now going to turn to another example: poetry written about a fragment of Greek sculpture. Although this takes us to another part of the ancient world, and is not specifically about the experience of travelling to an ancient site itself, nevertheless it shows us that the creative potential of a cultural encounter with antiquity is by no means limited to the phenomenon of the Grand Tour itself.

The artefact in question is a sculptural fragment of a male statue (Figure 16), of which not much more than the torso remains. It has been dated to the early fifth century BCE, and was discovered in 1872. It is now on display in the Louvre Museum in Paris.



**Figure 16** Marble statue of a male torso, c.480–470 BCE. Height: 132 cm. From Miletus, Greece. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Ma 2792.

A few decades after its discovery, the Bohemian-Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) wrote a very successful poem in response to viewing this statue: ‘Archaic Torso of Apollo’ is a sonnet (here translated from the German by Stephen Mitchell). It first appeared in Rilke’s *Neue Gedichte* (1908) (*New Poems*), volume 2. The word ‘archaic’ in

the title refers to the period of Greek history in which Rilke imagines the statue belonging (a period usually considered to end c.480 BCE), and he also identifies it (though this can only be a guess) with Apollo, the god associated with the sun, music, poetry and truth. One critic has written about Rilke's 'fascination with the material traces of the past' (Waters, 2010, p. 71), but for our purposes the thing you need to know about Rilke is that he worked as secretary to the sculptor Rodin in Paris from 1905–6 and began to write poetry that responded to the objects around him. He was a poet who 'wanted to write poems with the same kind of muscularity and physical presence as Rodin's sculptures' (Doty, 2014).

### Activity 9

Now read Rilke's poem. As you read, think about how Rilke builds up a description of the torso and make some notes about how he uses imagery to animate the sculpture that he is describing.

#### Archaic Torso of Apollo

We cannot know his legendary head  
with eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso  
is still suffused with brilliance from inside,  
like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned to low,

gleams in all its power. Otherwise  
the curved breast could not dazzle you so, nor could  
a smile run through the placid hips and thighs  
to that dark center where procreation flared.

Otherwise this stone would seem defaced  
beneath the translucent cascade of the shoulders  
and would not glisten like a wild beast's fur:

would not, from all the borders of itself,  
burst like a star: for here there is no place  
that does not see you. You must change your life.

(Rilke, 1995 [1908])

*Provide your answer...*

#### Discussion

While you may have noticed different things, you may have been struck immediately by how Rilke talks about what is absent (e.g. the head, the eyes), as well as what is present (the torso) and, as is often the case for writers, he imagines, on the basis of

what he sees, the 'inside' of the representation, that is, what is not on outward display. Outwardly, we have a fragmented piece of sculpture, albeit a finely made one, but the sculpture in the poem is animated by human drives and impulses (towards pleasure and procreation). The statue is 'lit up' from the inside and gleams. What is particularly interesting is the way that the poet turns the tables on the viewer who is gazing at the statue so that it appears that it's the other way around: the viewer is being watched and must respond by making changes to their life. For a writer like Rilke, art is a means of transforming apparently inert matter into something more dynamic and creating a bridge between past and present, viewer and viewed, object and subject.

## 4.2 Objects and the creation of stories

Having read Rilke's poem, now's the time to try writing your own response to the statue.

### Activity 10

Can you write a descriptive passage of no more than 100 words based on what you imagine about the torso? You could use any existing knowledge or experience of ancient cultures to help you, or if you've never studied Greece or Rome before, see where your imagination takes you! For example, do you think it's a (damaged) representation of a god or of an athlete participating in ancient games? Does it embody an ideal of (male) beauty, or perhaps create awe (a mix of fear and wonder) in the viewer? It is important to note that, for the purposes of this Creative Writing activity, you are not bound by facts and the histories of material objects. You are simply being invited to respond to what you see. When you're ready, move on to the discussion.

*Provide your answer...*

### Discussion

Here is an example response:

When I look at this almost limbless body, what I see is an ideal of manhood: a strong, finely-toned trunk with sculpted abdominal definition. I imagine that the model for such a sculpture might well have been an athlete of great prowess, as the representation exudes vigour and strength. The provenance of the statue is not clear to me but it seems to be modelled on a classical ideal. From a twenty-first-century perspective, the anatomy of the nude figure appears correct, though the pubic area is missing.

There are different ways to describe or react to the image and your reflection might be quite different from the example reflection. It's just an attempt to draft a short descriptive passage that nevertheless starts to wonder about the function of the statue and where it came from.

You might be asking yourself why someone would want to describe or react to a statue. There are of course many answers to such a question, ranging from the professional to the emotional. You might, for example, be an audio-describer trying to give to a partially sighted person a clear sense of what they cannot see in detail, or you might be a visitor to a gallery and be struck by a particular statue's beauty and want to

write about it to family or friends. How you write about it will depend on why you are writing about it.

### Activity 11

Now read a second draft of the example response in the previous activity:

The perfection of your marbled, stylised exterior is what first stands out: a perfectly chiselled, finely wrought torso signalling your masculine prowess. You exude strength and virility. Yet you are forever stuck in this pose, a beautiful, near-limbless trunk of worked alabaster, a tribute not just to some Greek ideal but to the conceit and skill of your maker. Were you sculpted to order to decorate a temple precinct or were you a model athlete whose Olympian splendour distinguished itself and demanded to be recorded?

I wonder what you would say, noble statue, if you could talk, what tales you would tell. Would you speak of martial deeds or of epic contests? Perhaps you were just brawn, something to be gazed at, a male equivalent of the beautiful Venus de Milo, lacking skills of elocution and rhetoric? We shall never know. Your history must be pieced together from fragments and from ancient texts. Are you the ancient equivalent of a twenty-first-century gym junkie? A Mr Universe? A winner on the TV show Britain's Got Talent? Who knows.

Today you stand before a crowd of twenty-first-century onlookers, both virtual and real. I wonder what you make of us.

What changes have been made from the first draft in the previous activity and what might it have been trying to achieve in responding in this less descriptive way?

*Provide your answer...*

### Discussion

You may have thought that this revised draft was trying to move away from 'static' description towards more 'interaction' and 'dialogue' with the statue. You will see that the statue was addressed directly in the second paragraph and there was a hint of speculation: it asked the statue questions but in a way these are rhetorical questions, since it is known that the statue will not respond. Nevertheless, it speculated on what the sculpture might signify to present-day viewers, as well as to viewers in the past. So it's beginning to move away from what is available to see directly and is beginning to indulge in speculation and in fictions. It also turns the tables in the final paragraph where it wonders what the statue thinks of us, those viewing it. In short, moving towards a more creative response.

In this exploration of Creative Writing, then, you have had an opportunity to do two things that are important to work in this field: you have had a go at writing yourself, responding to a prompt, and you have been encouraged to reflect on how other writers respond to similar prompts, building on your encounter with Byron in the last section. The brief consideration of Rilke's poem is just one example of how writers often draw on material from antiquity, exploring the past and gathering inspiration in a similar way to the Grand



Tourists, and reimagining its stories and people, whether in ancient or modern-day contexts. Poets, in particular, seem to have an affinity with incomplete material (unfinished texts, missing sections) and/or statues that have been partially destroyed. The fragment or the fragmentary becomes for many writers the beginning of a new tale or piece of poetry. It is often what is missing, or the gaps in our knowledge, that inspire writers.

As you have seen, the culture of classical antiquity can be for writers today a rich legacy and a vital source of inspiration, as it was for the Grand Tourists that you've been reading about earlier in this course. Writers may 'raid' the past for ideas and translate what they have encountered to different settings, reworking examples from the past for modern-day audiences and, perhaps, finding themselves landing in unexpected places!

## Conclusion

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In this free course you have been introduced to the Grand Tour as a cultural phenomenon of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in which members of the elite travelled to European destinations – particularly Italian cities like Rome – for the purposes of leisure, education, and enhancing their social and intellectual status. An encounter with the ancient world and its fragmentary remains was a central part of this experience, and you have seen how Grand Tourists commemorated and reflected upon this encounter in various ways, especially in art and literature. Even within antiquity, ancient artefacts and buildings like the Colosseum could carry different meanings in different contexts, and visitors in the modern world have played an important role in the ongoing reinterpretation of what ancient cultures mean today.

If you are interested in delving further into Classical Studies and different ways of studying the ancient world, you might be interested in our free course which introduces you to the Greek and Latin languages: [Discovering Ancient Greek and Latin](#).

If you'd like to learn more about studying Art History, try our free course [Art and Visual Culture: from Medieval to Modern](#).

For more on different ways of approaching poetry, try this English Literature free course: [Approaching poetry](#).

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## Glossary

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### Amphitheatre

A large circular or oval-shaped open-air building, with seating arranged around a central space in which spectacles or contests (such as gladiatorial combat) could be staged.

### Baths

In the Roman world, baths were large multi-room complexes which provided facilities for bathing and exercise.

### Canonical

The canon is a group or body of related works (e.g. texts, images, or objects) that are generally agreed to be especially authoritative, important and worth studying.

### Classical antiquity

The historical period usually understood as spanning from around the eighth century BCE to the fifth century CE, centring on the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome.

### Couplet

A self-contained set of two lines related to each other by rhyme, as AA, or BB.

### Half rhyme

When the vowel shape of a word is similar to or reminiscent of another without being a full rhyme; as in 'home' and 'bloom'.

### Portico

An architectural structure usually consisting of a row of columns along a walkway or at an entrance to a building, with a roof.

### Quatrain

A self-contained set of four lines related to each other by rhyme, usually ABAB.

### Renaissance

The term commonly used to describe the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe, a historical period characterised by a renewed cultural interest in classical antiquity.

### Rhyme

When the vowel shape of a word is the same as another; as in 'love' and 'dove'.

### Stanza

A piece of verse laid out on the page as a separate chunk. A poem is often made up of multiple stanzas, and usually these stanzas will be formally very similar.

### Symbol

A thing that represents or stands for something else.

### Toga

An ancient Roman garment consisting of a long piece of cloth which had to be draped around the body and over the shoulders in a particular way.

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## Acknowledgements

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## Text

Martial, *De Spectaculis* 1 and 2, trans. Gideon Nisbet (2015) *Epigrams*. Oxford University Press

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