

'Becoming Royal' Lesson 1: The Queen's First Gift



Curriculum focus – History, Art and Design and Literacy

Look at and discuss the images with the class using the Teacher's Notes. Explain who the Duchess of Kent is. Why do you think Prince Albert is looking pleased as he hands the new-born baby to her?

Ask your pupils if they have any photographs of themselves when they have just been born? How do people react when they hear that a new baby has arrived? What sort of presents do they give to celebrate the occasion? Is it any different for a royal baby?

Why do you think the lithograph is called the Queen's First Gift?

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In the painting by Landseer, Vicky is now a few months old. The pendant around the baby's neck is set in a small wreath of diamonds and pearls, and was perhaps a christening present from her grandmother, the Duchess of Kent.

Why do you think the Duchess gave a small baby such a valuable jewel? Do any of your pupils have a keepsake or a christening present from when they were born? Eos was Albert's favourite pet. What type of dog do you think it is? The Barbary Dove in the painting was probably one of the pets in Buckingham Palace. Why do you think the artist put the dove and the dog in the picture?

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Art and Design Activity

Design and create a card for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, congratulating them on the birth of their first child. Think carefully about what you are going to put in the picture. Will you include Eos in the picture? Or the Duchess of Kent?

Ask the class to think about what Victoria and Albert would like. Research other events that took place at the time, which might inspire the design.

Writing Activities

Write a verse of poetry for the inside of the card with the title 'The Queen's First Gift'. Ask the class to look at the painting and write down some words inspired by the picture that could be used in the poem. Or perhaps research some contemporary poets and poetry that would be applicable to use inside the card.

Study of Victoria's artists

The artist Sir Edwin Landseer was a favourite of Queen Victoria and she commissioned many paintings from him. He is very well known for the way he paints animals. He was also a sculptor who created the very famous lions in Trafalgar Square. His works can be found in The National Gallery, The Wallace Collection and The Royal Collection.

Ask the class to research the artist and prepare a short presentation and display for the class or for a school assembly.

They could also focus on other prominent artists from the period, such as Winterhalter, or examine important individuals, such as Roger Fenton, in the new technology of the time: photography.