

AWAY WITH WORDS

TIME TRAVELS

The 'Floating City' of Venice is built on more than one hundred islands in the Adriatic Sea. Imagine you can step into this painting, and back in time to the city in the 18th century. Stroll in the sunshine taking in the many wonderful sights, from the Doge's Palace and the beautiful churches, to the ancient library, not forgetting to spend some time watching all the different people and absorbing all the sights, sounds and smells.

Talking points

Step back in time to explore the surroundings; make comparisons with the present-day city.

Creative challenges

Create a diary entry, postcard, puppet play and fantasy cityscape.

KEY WORK



Canaletto

Venice: the Molo with Santa Maria della Salute

c. 1740–45



TITLE Venice: the Molo with Santa Maria della Salute
DATE c. 1740-45
SIZE 57.7 x 93.5 cm
MATERIALS Oil on canvas

ARTIST Canaletto
DATES 1697-1768
PLACE Italy

ANIMATION > VENICE: THE MOLO WITH SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/ZFG1MEKZ8KI](https://youtu.be/zfg1mekz8ki)

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THE PAINTING

This painting shows the Doge's Palace on the right, looking across the square past the two tall marble and granite columns. One of the columns holds a bronze statue of the winged lion that is the symbol of both St Mark and of Venice. On the other stands St Theodore who was patron saint of Venice before St Mark was adopted. He holds a sword and shield and stands on what has variously been identified as a dragon or a crocodile. Beyond the pillars is the magnificent San Marco Library, one of the earliest surviving public libraries. It was founded in 1468 and it contains some of the world's most important classical texts. Beyond that lies the mouth of the Grand Canal.

On the opposite bank there is the church of Santa Maria della Salute and the Dogana, or

custom house. The church was commissioned by the Senate in 1631 as a votive church dedicated to the Virgin Mary, protector of *la salute* (health), after the plague epidemic of 1630–31 that killed over 80,000 Venetians. On top of the Dogana is a sculpture of the globe held aloft by Titans and with a figurative weathervane on top.

There are lots of people from all walks of life strolling in the sunshine along the quayside in front of the Piazza San Marco (which is called the Molo). This was once the ceremonial landing spot for important visitors or officials and was called the 'front door' to Venice. There are gondolas with their distinctive ferros, alongside fishing vessels and sea-going sailing ships.

THE ARTIST

This view of Venice was painted around 1740–1745 by Giovanni Antonio Canal or Canaletto. Canaletto means little canal in Italian.

Canaletto was born in Venice, the son of a theatrical scene painter. He painted precise and evocative views of Venice which were very popular, especially with wealthy English tourists who wanted a souvenir of their visit.

Canaletto would sometimes alter the position or size of a building in his paintings in order to display a building to better advantage, or make a more pleasing composition. Each painting also contained many tiny but expressive figures (and dogs), each telling their own story.

GLOSSARY

Doge

The chief magistrate of Venice (until 1797).

Gondola

A long narrow, flat-bottomed boat used on Venetian canals. A person (gondolier) stands at one end of the boat and uses a long pole to steer it.

Ferro

The ornament on the front of a gondola, meaning iron in Italian.

Tricorne

A hat with a brim turned up on three sides.

Periwig

A wig worn by men in the 17th and 18th centuries, usually powdered and having hair gathered at the back with a ribbon. Still worn by judges today.

VOCABULARY

gondola

column

gondolier

Doge

ferro

canal

piazza

lagoon

tricorne

DISCUSS



- Step back in time and into this painting. Take a walk around the square in the sunshine. What do you see? Do you meet anyone? Some black-robed lawyers? A sailor, and a fisherman? A tourist in a blue coat, periwig and tricorne hat? Perhaps you make friends with a dog or stroll round the Doge's Palace or visit the library? Do you sit at the foot of one of the columns chatting with the fisher folk mending their nets? Or take a ride in a gondola over to the church and the custom house? What are you wearing? What sounds can you hear? What if you meet Canaletto doing some sketches?
- Using Google Earth, locate this part of Venice. Make a simple route map of the walk you took and the places you visited. What has changed from this area when it was painted by Canaletto in 1745 and what is still the same?

ACTIVITIES



- Write a diary account of your visit to Venice.
- Design and make a postcard or a travel brochure for the city - then, or now.
- Make some simple puppets using the cut-out character sheets on page 7, and lolly sticks or wooden spoons. You could make a drawing of the painting as a theatre set. In a group, devise a play or compose a song about Venice for your puppet theatre.
- Canaletto often rearranged the buildings of Venice to make, for him, a more pleasing composition. Choose some of the important buildings of London or any other city and place them together to make a satisfying townscape. You can draw or paint, or make a collage from images you find from various media. Think about showing them linked by bridges, stairs or more imaginative means.

VENICE: THE MOLO WITH SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE

ACTIVITY Cut-out characters



VENICE: THE MOLO WITH SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE



IN DETAIL



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