

# AWAY WITH WORDS

## HOMeward BOUND

No matter how much the traveller has enjoyed their journey or how many adventures they have had along the way, it is always good to return home.

Some places have the ability to stir up a feeling, an atmosphere or conjure up a particular mood. It can be hard to put your finger on what exactly it is that is creating the mood. The effects of light and shadow or the time of day can help to develop an atmosphere.

### Talking points

Consider atmosphere and the effects of light.

### Creative challenges

Descriptive and atmospheric writing prompts; compose a diary account.

### KEY WORK



Aelbert Cuyp  
*The Avenue at Meerdervoort*  
Early 1650s

# THE AVENUE AT MEERDERVOORT

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**TITLE** The Avenue at Meerdervoort  
**DATE** Early 1650s  
**SIZE** 69.8 x 99 cm  
**MATERIALS** Oil on canvas

**ARTIST** Aelbert Cuyp  
**DATES** 1620-1691  
**PLACE** The Netherlands

## THE PAINTING

In this painting Cuyp represents an evening view looking over the river Maas with the Castle of Meerdervoort on the left and a distant view of the city of Dordrecht on the right. You can glimpse the Grootte Kerke (Great Church).

The composition of this painting is an unusual combination of an urban view and a rural landscape separated by a central avenue which draws the viewer's gaze into the picture.

On the avenue a man in a red cloak is walking with his two horses, accompanied by a small dog. A cow is lying down while another is turning away. Behind the man in red is another man on horseback, and there is also a woman and two boys standing in the avenue. They are believed to be the sons of the family who lived in the castle. There are also two men fishing on the riverbank and overhead a flock of geese are returning home. The painting is drenched in an atmospheric golden light.

## THE ARTIST

Aelbert Cuyp was considered one of the finest landscape painters of the 17th century. His father, J. G. Cuyp was also a painter.

Cuyp was born in Dordrecht, one of the oldest cities in Holland, and it is the setting for many of his paintings. He specialised in land, sea and riverscapes often including groups of cattle and recognisable landscapes.

## GLOSSARY

### Landscape painting

The depiction in art of natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, bodies of water, fields, forests and coasts. It may include buildings as well as people. The genre can be traced back to 4th-century China.

### Ethereal

Having a delicate, unearthly beauty.

## VOCABULARY

avenue	rosy glow
landscape	ethereal
windmill	languid
luminous	harmonious
golden	dappled light
serene	

## DISCUSS



- What feelings does the atmosphere of this painting evoke e.g. sadness as the sun sets, relief to be returning home, or happiness at having reunited with old friends?
- Look closely at the painting and notice where the light is falling. What colour is the sky? What is the effect of the light through the trees? Notice where the shadows fall.

## ACTIVITIES



- Create a list of words and phrases to describe the atmosphere of this painting. Include all the senses: sight, sound, texture and smell. Write an atmospheric description of the landscape.
- Revisit your list of words or phrases and create a list that has the opposite effect. What if it was early morning or midnight? What if it was snowing heavily? How would the atmosphere change? Choose a different atmosphere to write about.
- Write a diary account of how the man in the red cloak spent the day. Why was he travelling down the avenue with his two horses and dog? Who did he encounter? Did he visit the Castle or Dordrecht or both places? Did he spend some time fishing with two friends? How is he feeling now that he is returning home?

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