

# THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Art of English

Advanced



## I. Symbols ( Gallery 7)

1a) Find the painting from which this detail is taken. The title of the painting is 'L'Umana Fragilita' (Human Fragility)

1b) Look carefully at the painting. Can you find these details?

- The huge winged skeleton
- The child whose wrist is clasped by Death
- The ring of pale roses around the mother's head
- The bubbles blown by the child at the bottom left
- The faces of a child and an old man at the top of the picture
- The serious stone face of the statue on the right

1c) Use these words and phrases to connect the details above to their symbolic meanings in complex sentences.

- the human life span
- the short length of a human life
- death
- Terminus, a Roman God of death
- the family name, Rosa
- the artist's dead son

<i>is/are references to</i>
<i>suggest(s)</i>
<i>is the embodiment of</i>
<i>symbolise(s)</i>
<i>is/are probably an allusion to</i>
<i>represent(s)</i>

'The huge winged skeleton *is the embodiment of* death.'

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## 2. Descriptive Language (Gallery 15)

2a) Find paintings in this gallery showing water. Talk to your partner about the different ways that water is shown.



Is it freshwater or sea water?  
What is the weather like?  
What colours are used?  
What would it feel like to be in the painting?

2b) Working with your partner, put together a list of words and phrases that could be used to describe the scenes in this painting.

churning,  
turbulent,  
strong, rushing

calm, peaceful,  
meandering,  
quiet

Try using metaphorical language too.

### *Similes*

The water *is like* a mirror.  
The waves *look like* feathery wings.

### *Metaphors*

The water *is* a dark, growling  
monster.  
The long, grasping fingers of the sea...

2c) '*Nothing in the world is more flexible and yielding than water. Yet when it attacks the firm and the strong, none can withstand it, because they have no way to change it.*'

Lao Tzu

What does this mean? Can you find a painting that demonstrates the ideas in this quotation?

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## 3. Paintings: Giving an opinion (Gallery 6)



3a) Use the phrases below to express your thoughts about some of the paintings in this gallery.

Something that fascinates me about this picture is...

The thing I like about this painting in particular is...

What strikes me in this image is (that) ...

Something I admire about this work is...

What makes this picture difficult for me is...

I really find this picture..., because...

3b) Ask others in your group about the paintings. Do they share your views? Do their ideas make you change your mind?

3c) If there was a fire in this gallery and you were only able to rescue one picture or object, which would it be?

Once you have made your choice, try to convince others to agree with you!

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### 4. Ceramics: Subordinate Clauses (Gallery 27)

#### 4a) Can you find these objects?

- i) The figure of Nobody is dressed in a blue costume. (Case 2)
- ii) This money box doesn't look like it could contain many coins! (Case 4)
- iii) The tiny tea set includes six cups. (Case 5)
- iv) On this plate, St Peter is accompanied by a cockerel. (Case 10)
- v) The lion was made in Spain. (Case 11)



Now try to put these subordinate clauses into the right sentences to describe the objects further.

,which is decorated with a flower pattern,  
,who is a person blamed when things go wrong,  
,in whose head a candle can be placed,  
,whose head can be used as a cup,  
,which is made in the shape of a shoe,  
,who is holding the key to Heaven.

4b) Choose some objects with your partner. Create simple sentences about them, and then challenge your partner to add in a subordinate clause using:

who

which

whose

4c) Find another pair and see if they can work out which object you are describing.