

Scotland Forever! – Elizabeth Thompson Butler (1881; Leeds Art Gallery)

<http://www.leedsartgallery.co.uk/gallery/listings/l0081.php>



- What is the subject matter of this painting? **A battle scene.**
- Are the horses waiting for a signal to move or are they in the process of moving? How do you know? **The artist has done different things to show us movement even though a painting is in actual fact still. The horses' legs look as if they are moving and are going in different directions. Many of the soldiers have their bodies forward as if they are clinging on and pushing their horses onwards. The ground is blurry beneath the hooves.**
- Is this an old or modern battle scene? How do you know? **The fact that it is a cavalry battle already shows that it's from a different era. The uniforms look old – particularly the red jackets which are the complete opposite of camouflage! The fact that they also have swords and there is no sign of modern weapons or vehicles adds to this.**
- There are lots of people and horses in the painting, so much to look at. Does the artist want to draw our attention to anyone in particular? If so how have they done this? **The soldier at the front in the middle stands out – partly because he is in the middle but also because he is a horse's length ahead of the front line. He also has his sword raised and appears to be turning his face round to shout something to his men.**
- Look at his horse's face. What does it make you feel? **It looks as if this horse is staring straight at us. It is almost as if it is coming directly towards us and is about to rush out of the painting itself.**
- What do you think the man is shouting? Shout your idea in your most rousing, powerful cry! **Any idea is good. The reality is presumably the title of the painting, Scotland Forever! This a Scottish regiment at the Battle of Waterloo in 1881.**



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- Tap your hands on a table so that it sounds like horses galloping. As you get faster, make the sound louder. When you get to full speed shout Scotland Forever! If you are with other children, when you shout it they all have to shout it back at the same time in reply to you.
- Do you think the artist was there at the battle? **It looks very realistic but she was not there in reality. She painted this 66 years after the battle.** In that case, do you think she saw a later battle and adapted it? **No! She did go to barracks and sketch soldiers training and sometimes asked them to pose.**
- Do you think this painting is glorifying war or showing how terrible it is? **Some people think it is the former, some the latter. Elizabeth Thompson Butler wanted to honour the brave men who had fought for the country whilst also showing what a terrifying experience war is.**
- What do you think people thought about this painting when it was first painted almost 140 years ago? **It was a huge hit. She was one of the most celebrated artists of her time. But it was beyond tough for her to be accepted as an artist because she was a woman. She could not obtain membership of the most important male dominated art establishments like the Royal Academy. Later on her paintings fell out of fashion and they remain so today but they were the action films of their day and people fought to see and buy them in art galleries.**

Follow on ideas

- Discuss what would thoughts have been going through the soldiers' heads before, during, and, if they survived, after the battle. Imagine you are one of the survivors and write a letter home to a loved one after the battle describing what you saw, what you felt and what happened.
- Life in Lockdown activity: There is a lot of talk about heroes and heroism at the moment. Choose a modern day scene of heroism and paint it.

Topic Links

- Victorians
- History of women's rights
- Movement/Forces