

CRITICAL STUDY FRAMEWORK KS4 (1)

MOOD

This painting has such a charming and quaint edge to it that you cannot help but smile. The way that Spencer has captured the individual features of each character, through the detail of their shapes and colours is both unique and unassuming. It is a narrative based depiction which truly reflects Stanley Spencer's sense of intrigue in the most every day, casual goings on of village life.

Works that are similar in context and style are those created by Lucien Freud and David Hockney.

I have chosen to study Spencer's artwork as my project involves depicting everyday episodes and I want to employ his naïve style of creating figures that seem so fluid, comical and yet sadly tragic in their unpretentious depictions.

CONTENT

Village Life (1940), painted in Gloucestershire, shows an old couple and their grandchild witnessing 'the coming of God in the sky', while on the right, a sheepish Stanley Spencer is accompanied by the tall, commanding figure of Daphne and his first wife Hilda, who looks away. The figures stand out boldly in brighter colour from the flat grey road, pavement and fence behind them, their bodies slightly distorted and exaggerated in Spencer's typical style. The title of Village Life (or sometimes Village Gossip) explains what the scene is all about from the scornful look of the large women, arms tightly folded across her chest, glaring at the smaller gesturing figure of the child, who is almost pointing at the timid and downcast head of the figure in the black suit, who is actually Stanley Spencer himself (self-portrait).



FORM

- Spencer uses oil on canvas for this colourful and busy painting
- The piece is divided across the centre by a just visible diagonal line running from top right to bottom left. The colours are muted but with good tone and some shadow. The figures are painted across the centre of the canvas touching both vertical edges so that your eyes are completely focused on and drawn to this arguing little group. The painting has a smooth surface with an even balance of colour painted in minute detail explaining Spencer's amazing draughtsmanship.

CONTEXT

In July 1939 the artist Sir Stanley Spencer joined his friends on a painting holiday at Leonard Stanley in Gloucestershire. While he was there, he produced scrap books of drawings intended to record key moments in his life. One of these drawings went on to become this larger work called Village Gossip.

Sir Stanley Spencer (1891-1959) was a highly original, not to say quirky, English artist who, after his student days at London's Slade School of Art, returned to his childhood village of Cookham, Berkshire, and spent the rest of his life there painting powerfully 'naïve' and vivid depictions of his life and surroundings. In more cartoon mode, Spencer painted a host of images in which the human characters are sometimes humorously, sometimes hauntingly distorted.

Spencer's work falls into the category of Naïve art as his figures are almost innocently misshapen in style & shape but his scenes reflect the everyday occurrences of the time.