

## The Colours of Boucher

*The Rising of the Sun* and *The Setting of the Sun*,  
painted by François Boucher in 1752-3



**François Boucher is one of the most influential French painters of the 1700s. This pair of monumental paintings are on display at the Wallace Collection, which holds the most important collection of his paintings in the world.**

François was the son of another painter, Nicolas Boucher, who probably taught him how to paint. He also worked with another famous French artist called François Le Moyne, who became King Louis XV of France's leading painter. In fact, Boucher worked with a lot of famous artists and even taught Jean-Honoré Fragonard, who painted one of the Wallace Collection's most famous works called *The Swing*.

These two paintings, *The Rising of the Sun* and *The Setting of the Sun*, show how light and colour change during the day. In Greek and Roman legend, the god Apollo created day and night. In his sunrise painting on the left, Boucher has depicted Apollo getting ready to ride his fiery chariot across the sky, bringing light to the world. In his sunset painting on the right, Boucher depicts Apollo on his return, with his chariot disappearing into the sea, taking the light of day with it. In both paintings, other gods, goddesses and sea spirits surround Apollo, creating two scenes packed with dramatic movement.



**Boucher's style influenced a whole period in French art called Rococo. Rococo paintings often use light, pastel colours and lots of figures, foliage and fabric to create drama.**

**What do you think about Boucher's paintings and what do you know about sunrise and sunset?  
Investigate this painting further with our looking and thinking activity below.**

# Activity

## Investigate the Colours of Boucher

The King of France, Louis XV, was a big fan of Boucher's work and regularly asked him to make paintings to decorate his palace. It was the King's famous companion, Madame de Pompadour, who gave Boucher the idea to make these two paintings inspired by sunrise and sunset. The designs were later copied for tapestry wall hangings, made for the King's bedroom.

Have a look at the colours in Boucher's paintings. These questions might help you to look closely and think more about his clever use of colour.

- **What colours are the same in both paintings?**
- **What colours can you see in one painting that you can't see in the other?**

Boucher also uses colour to help us work out that he's telling one story across two separate paintings. Look for colour clues in both scenes.

- **Are some figures wearing the same coloured cloth in both paintings?**

Light and dark colours are also important in Boucher's paintings. Can you tell which of the paintings is sunrise and which is sunset, just by looking at the colours he used in each one?

- **What colours remind you of sunrise?**
- **What colours remind you of sunset?**
- **Overall, are some colours lighter or darker than others?**

## Sunrise and Sunset

Sunrise is when the sun begins to appear above the horizon and sunset is when the sun disappears back below the horizon, both due to the Earth's rotation. Sunset can be very dramatic and often more colourful than sunrise. This is because in the evening, there are more tiny particles such as dust in the air than in the morning and as light from the sun hits the particles, it creates different colours in the sky. The more particles there are in the air, the more colours you can see.

Both sunrise and sunset can make the sky look like a painting, with lots of different shapes and colour. Many painters have tried to paint their own versions of sunrise and sunset and you'll see more in our collection.

**Why not explore our collections online to see how many you can find?**

