

Activity

Cicero's Story

The Young Cicero Reading by Vincenzo Foppa,
painted around 1464



Take a long look at this painting. We know from the title that the person depicted is called Cicero and we can see that he is reading a book, but what else? Where might Cicero be and what do you think he is reading about? Perhaps Cicero is a chef looking for a recipe or a wizard reading up on his spells. Could he be a librarian who needs a few more books? Is this just another day at school for Cicero or is he simply having a relaxing afternoon read?

This painting is the only one of its kind in the Wallace Collection because it's a fresco. That means the artist, Vincenzo Foppa, painted it directly onto the wet plaster walls of a palace courtyard instead of painting it onto wooden boards or canvas like many other paintings. The palace once stood in the Italian city of Milan and belonged to a very important banking family, called the Medici. In the 1800s, the palace was demolished but this fresco was saved.

You might wonder how a piece of wall ended up in a museum in London or even how Cicero feels, having been moved all the way from Milan. Why not try writing Cicero's story using this fresco as your inspiration?



Cicero was a great Roman writer, lawyer and philosopher who lived over 2,000 years ago.

Creative Writing Challenge.

Your short story could either start or end with Cicero reading. Could his book be a problem to be solved or a solution to a problem? Perhaps Cicero is the narrator of your story. You decide!

If you're not sure where to start your story, try writing out some key moments and build your story up in sections. Start with an introduction, then a build up to a problem, then add a solution to your problem before finally adding an ending. One fun way to build a story is to write out many different suggestions for each section of the story then mix and match the sections together to build a topsy turvy tale.