

LEARNING ENGLISH THROUGH BRITISH ARTWORKS

Discover 12 British Artworks in London's
free galleries as you practise your English



By Speak Street

FUN SOCIAL LEARNING
**SPEAK
STREET** LDN



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OCTOBER A ROUNDEL

October – A Roundel, c. 1480

The Victoria & Albert Museum

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Look at the stained glass window

When was this image created?

Who is the man in the image?

Where is the man?

What is he doing?

Why is the image of a man working, important?



We can see a man in the centre of the window. He is wearing typical medieval clothes: a red tunic (top), yellow patterned hose (tights) and a capuchon (hood) on his head, as it was probably cold working in the fields. He is carrying a wicker (dried wood) basket containing seeds. He is planting the seeds in the fields, probably for wheat that will be ready in early Spring. The fields and leaves around him are quite stylised (simplified lines and shapes).

Religion was very important to people in medieval times and their lives would follow church celebrations and the change of the seasons. Most people lived in the countryside, in small

villages their whole life and everyone relied on the land for their food.

This is part of a stained glass window called a roundel (because of its round shape). It is about the size of a large dinner plate and was probably set a priest's house in Norwich, in the east of England. It was made during medieval times, around 1480. The artist and glassmaker are unknown. The coloured glass was expensive and probably came from Europe, so this was quite an expensive item.

This roundel was part of a set of 12, called 'Labours of the Months'. These roundels show different scenes throughout the year, of the lives of people working on the land. Here we

are looking at October. Other roundels of December and January, from Southern Europe, show scenes of more aristocratic (upper-class and probably wealthy) people: eating, drinking and celebrating religious festivals.

Stained glass was usually found in churches and for many people this was perhaps some of the only artwork they saw. As many people did not read or write, the meanings of images helped share messages.

Often, stained glass showed characters from the Bible. Why do you think here we see an ordinary person? Imagine what you might have thought about if you looked at the light shining through this roundel after a hard day's work.



Questions

Describe the artwork in your own words.

What do you think the message of this image is?

Where can we see these kinds of images now?
