

# A picture tells a thousand words

## LINKS TO:

Stage 3, Module 8

Learning Object 2: *A slow connection*

## Exercise 1

### 1.1 What are the main ideas in the text?

In English, summarise the main ideas in each paragraph.

#### Paragraph one

This paragraph summarises Saleh's life, including his birth in Indonesia, his training with Payen, and his journey to the Netherlands to study art.

#### Paragraph two

The painting was completed in 1857. It shows the arrest of Prince Diponegoro, who had been fighting against the Dutch colonials.

#### Paragraph three

The painting was returned to Jakarta after being in the Netherlands for 200 years.

#### Paragraph four

The artist has included a self-portrait in the painting.

### 1.2 Were there particular words or phrases that you found difficult to understand? What strategies did you use to understand these words or phrases, or to understand the text as a whole despite not being sure what some words meant?

There are a couple of strategies that I use to understand words or phrases that are difficult to understand. First of all, I would look at the context and try to see if I can understand the word preceding or following that difficult word or phrase. For example, at first I had difficulty interpreting the word *mengabadikan*, which appears in paragraph two. The word before it is *lukisannya*, and I know *lukisan* means 'painting'. The phrase following it is *sebuah saat penting*, which I know means 'an important

moment'. However, I still wasn't sure what the word means. I know the word is a verb because it starts with the prefix *meN-*. I also know that the base word is *abadikan* because the change of sound from *meN-* to *meng-* indicates that the base word starts with a vowel. I applied a second strategy: I looked up in the dictionary what the word *abadikan* means. *Abadikan* means 'capture', from this I worked out that *mengabadikan* is the verb captured, and that in the context it means immortalised or captured in an image.

### 1.3 When was this painting completed?

The painting was completed in 1857.

### 1.4 What event does the painting commemorate?

The painting shows the arrest of the Prince Diponegoro in 1830.

### 1.5 How long did Raden Saleh spend in Europe before he returned to Indonesia?

Saleh travelled to Europe in 1829, and returned to Indonesia in 1851. He was in Europe for 22 years.

## Exercise 2

### 2.1 Reading on the line: What does the image literally illustrate? Describe the people, objects and background of the image.

The painting shows a large group of people outside a white, colonial-style building. The people in the painting include uniformed white people and Indonesians. At the top of the stairs you can see a man in a long white tunic being dragged away from the house.

There is a man on a carriage on the other side of the house.

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There is a woman kneeling by the man who is being arrested. She is covering her face.

Many of the Indonesian men in the painting have their heads bowed or are turned away from the centre of the action.

The white men have oversized heads.

In the distance I can see mountains.

## **2.2 Reading between the lines: What inferences can you make from the content of the painting?**

I can infer that the man who is being taken away by the uniformed men is not being taken willingly, and that he has many Indonesian supporters. The house he is being taken from looks quite beautiful and imposing. If it is his home, this might imply that he is quite wealthy or influential.

I can infer that the Indonesian people are not happy about and do not support the arrest of Diponegoro. They are not actively resisting his arrest, but they are hanging their heads or kneeling as though in protest or despair. The woman seems to be the one expressing the most emotion.

## **2.3 Reading beyond the lines: What other information can you draw on to inform your understanding of the painting?**

I think it is possible to infer that the artist does not support the arrest of Diponegoro, both from the way he has painted the man being arrested in a flattering way — as though he is a great hero — and also because he has painted the Dutch colonials with oversized heads, like cartoon figures.

I wondered about the role of the woman in the painting. Since there is only one woman, and she is the most emotionally expressive figure in the painting, I wondered whether it was more acceptable for women to express their emotions in public at that time than for men to do so.

I think it is possible to infer that most of the Dutch men in Indonesia at the time were part of the military, and wore military uniforms, although perhaps this is just because the focus of the painting is a military arrest.

The depiction of the Indonesian men shows the very different style of dress Indonesian people of the time wore. Many of the men are wearing headscarves or turbans, loose white pants and long-sleeved white shirts with waistcoats over the top. A couple of the men are wearing patterned fabrics that look as though they may be traditional batik cloth.

This distinct difference in costume is an interesting reflection of the cultural difference between the Indonesians and the colonials. I think this is particularly interesting in this painting, which is heavily influenced by the European Romantic painting style. As a painter, Saleh appears to have adopted the aesthetic of the European painters, but not to have accepted their political rule over his country.