

# Sir Joshua Reynolds



- (1723-1792)
- Sir Joshua Reynolds was the most successful portrait painter of his era and became a founder and first president of the Royal Academy.



# Short Biography



- Reynolds was born in Plympton, Devonshire, on July 16, 1723, the son of a cleric.
- He learned portraiture from a painter in London and in 1749 sailed to the Mediterranean .
- After three years travelling in Italy he returned to London, where he soon attracted notice by his portraits of prominent persons. He came to be the first English painter to achieve social recognition for his artistic achievements.



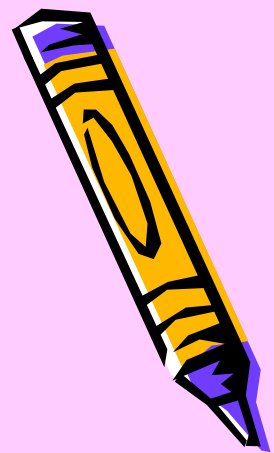
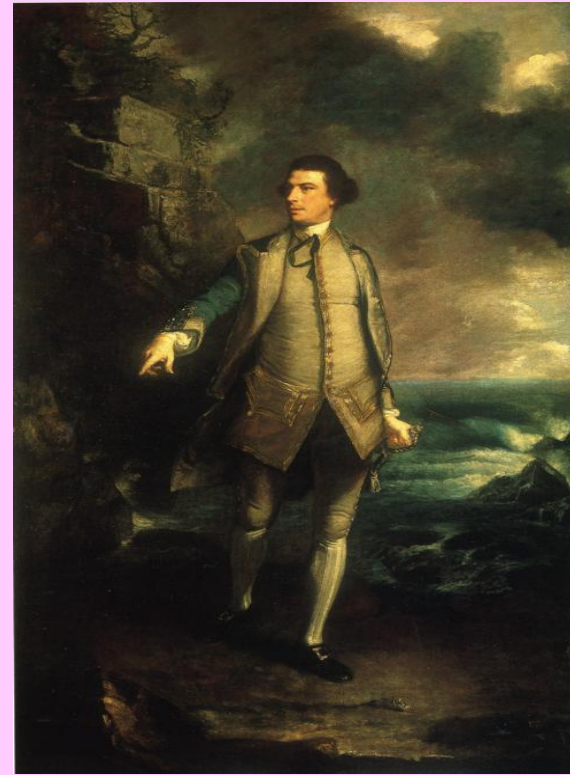
- In 1764 Reynolds founded the Literary Club, which included essayist and critic Samuel Johnson, actor **David Garrick**, and others.
- Reynolds is credited with more than 2000 portraits. Stylistically, he was influenced by Michelangelo and the Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens.
- Reynolds's portraits were distinguished by calm dignity, classical allusions, rich colour, and realistic portrayal of character.



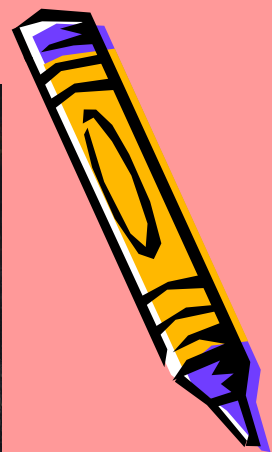
- In 1784 he succeeded **Allan Ramsay** as painter to the king; in the same year he exhibited his portrait of the English actress **Sarah Siddons** as *the Tragic Muse* (1784, Huntington Art Gallery, San Marino, California), probably his greatest portrait.



- In 1753, Reynolds settled in London. He became popular very quickly. The **Portrait of Captain Keppel**, on whose ship he had left to Italy, brought him his first success.
- In 1781 the painter visited Holland and Flanders, and was impressed by the works of Rubens. The influence of the great master can be seen in his portrait of the **Duchess of Devonshire and Her Daughter** (1786).



- His works can be divided into *two types*. The first is where he struggled to "elevate" the genre of portraiture with the help of classic samples and associations. Such compositions are pompous and contain allegoric figures and details, taken from classical mythology and art.
- The other type of portraiture - he usually painted people he knew well in this style - is intimate, without spectacular attributes, and psychologically subtle. The portraits of children and women are lyrical and straightforward, though sometimes sentimental.



- During his latest years he also tried himself in historical paintings, unconnected with classical subjects e.g. *Macbeth and the Witches*.
- Three years before his death Reynolds became blind and had to stop his work. He died on February 23, 1792 and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral with honours as a man of national fame in Britain.
- Reynolds' portraits give his subjects an appearance of action, though he posed them in attitudes that imitated the Italian masters. His use of vivid colours also reflects his study in Italy. Unfortunately many of his pictures have faded badly with time.



# Reynold's well-known paintings are:

- Nelly O'Brien (1760-62, Wallace Collection, London);
- Lady Sarah Bunbury (1765, Art Institute of Chicago);
- Heads of Angels (1787, Tate Gallery, London);

