



THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH 1727-1788

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## CHRONOLOGY

Born 1727 to dissenting Low Church (Methodist) family in Sudbury, Suffolk  
Last of 9 children  
Father in the wool trade  
Lackadaisical student, inveterate sketcher  
Life-long Passion for the local landscape  
To London at 13 c1740  
Training in London with Hubert Gravelot  
Respected by his fellow artists even as a teenager  
Conversation pieces: Portraits-in-little  
Capt Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital chartered 1739  
Decoration of the Foundling Hospital  
Marriage to Margaret Burr, illegitimate daughter of Duke of Beaufort July 1746  
Portrait of the Artist, Wife and Daughter c1748  
Loses first-born daughter Mary in infancy  
Return to Sudbury  
Birth in Sudbury of daughters Mary (1750) and Margaret (1751)  
Mr & Mrs Andrews c1750  
Move to Ipswich late 1751-early 1752  
Painted portraits of local public servants and elite  
Painter's Daughters Chasing a Butterfly c1756  
Portrait of William Wollaston c1759  
Cornard Wood aka Gainsborough's Forest c1747-1748  
"Pickpocketing the Rich" --The Gainsboroughs move to Bath 1759 winter season  
Bath as social center--"the busiest Idle Place in the World"  
William Wade, Bath Assembly master of ceremonies  
Portrait of William Wade c1770  
Gainsborough's Friends: theatrical and musical

Wm Jackson, David Garrick, Karl Friedrich Abel, William Hoare, the Linley family  
Portrait of Thomas Linley c1777  
Mary and Elizabeth Linley, the Linley Sisters RA 1772  
Influence of Anthony van Dyck in local collections:  
Wilton, Corsham Court  
"Show Pictures" for his Studio's Show Room:  
Ann Ford, Mrs Philip Thicknesse 1760  
The Blue Boy (Jonathan Buttall?) c1770  
Lord and Lady Howe c1763-4  
Face Business cannot keep Gainsborough from his beloved landscape. Influence of Rubens, Claude and Rosa as well as the 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch landscape painting  
The Harvest Waggon c176  
Competition: Sir Joshua Reynolds, George Romney, Allan Ramsay  
The Foundation of the Royal Academy 1768  
Gainsborough, RA moves from Bath to London in 1774  
Resides in Schomberg House, Pall Mall  
Influence of van Dyck and Rubens  
The Hon. Mrs Graham c1775-7  
Breaks with the Academy 1773-1777  
Rev. Henry Bate-Dudley, journalistic supporter  
Royal Patronage of Gainsborough from 1777  
Grace Dalrymple Elliott RA 1778  
Final Break with the Royal Academy 1784--thereafter,  
Gainsborough shows his work in Schomberg House  
Gainsborough loses royal painter position to Reynolds 1784  
Concern about the mental stability of his daughters  
Giovanna Baccelli 1782  
Mary "Perdita" Robinson 1781  
Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire 1783 and c1787  
Elizabeth Linley, Mrs Richard Brinsley Sheridan 1785-7  
Sarah Siddons 1785  
The Halletts: The Morning Walk 1785  
Late Landscapes and "Fancy Pictures"

Gainsborough travels to Lake District, West Country and to Flanders

Onset of his illness (cancer) 1785

Inspiration for fancy pictures is genre subjects of

Bartolome Esteban Murillo

Two Shepherd Boys with Dogs fighting 1783

The Cottage Door c1780

Cottage Girl with Pitcher and Dog 1785

Cottage Girl collecting Faggots 1782

Deathbed reconciliation with Reynolds

Death of Gainsborough 1788

Reynolds's 14<sup>th</sup> Discourse (of 15) on Gainsborough after

Gainsborough's death

Death of Sir Joshua Reynolds 1792

The Legacy of Thomas Gainsborough

Sir Thomas Lawrence

Sarah Moulton-Barrett "Pinkie" 1794

Blue Boy sold 1921 to Henry E. Huntington

Huntington Museum & Library in California has largest

collection of British full-length portraits (including

Gainsboroughs) anywhere.

2022 The Huntington lends the Blue Boy to the National

Gallery 100 years after its departure

## VOCABULARY

alla prima—at one go

conversation piece—a group portrait of people with a relationship whether it is a blood kinship, friendship or some common interest usually at leisure and often out of doors

dismounted equestrian portrait—a horse and rider portrait in which the rider stands/leans next to his mount. The British made something of a specialty of this kind of

portrait, having a premier example in van Dyck's *Roe a la Chasse* (1635) now in the Louvre.

fancy picture—according to Oxford Reference a term applied in 18th-century Britain to certain types of sentimental genre pictures. Gainsborough's fancy pictures usually have contemporary pastoral settings, depicting idealized peasants who behave rather more as if they are in the studio than the countryside, although recently they have been interpreted as 'harrowing' portrayals of rural poverty. He used street urchins as his models. Reynolds, in contrast, favoured classical or allegorical themes, with titles such as *Hope Nursing Love* and *Venus Chiding Cupid*.

Grand Manner (or Grand Style)—Tate Gallery defines the Grand Manner as an English term used widely from the 18th century to describe what was considered to be the highest echelon in art—a style based on an idealized, classical approach, and espoused by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Grand manner had been used for history painting, but Reynolds adapted it very successfully to portraiture.

History painting—the highest echelon of western painting from the 16<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with subjects designed to edify and moralize, subjects drawn from religion, history, antiquity, mythology, allegory and literature.

Pastoral portrait—a portrait (male or female) in which the sitter has shepherd's accoutrements: a lamb, or shepherd's crook

Show piece or show picture—a prime example of an artist's work, displayed in his studio to impress and encourage prospective clients

Swagger portraits—a modern term for full-length portraits which have great elegance and panache

trompe l'oeil—an artwork designed to trick the eye

Wet-in-wet—where paint is applied where wet paint already exists

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[www.gainsborough.org](http://www.gainsborough.org) (Gainsborough's House, Suffolk)

