

About the Grand Tour

In the 1700s, the European cultural phenomenon of the Grand Tour reached its culmination. Wealthy Europeans, especially young British noblemen, undertook the challenging journey across northern Europe to reach Italy. Some would spend up to eight years on their cultural pilgrimage, which possibly included a lengthy period of study. Thus, in contact with the touchstone of the classical past, these aristocrats forged their personal, intellectual, and civic identity.

As Grand Tourists entered Rome and partook of its splendors and celebrations, they accumulated art to commemorate their journey. They commissioned portraits in oil, pastel, and marble, often including notable Roman sites and artifacts. They collected ancient objects along with contemporary artworks copying classical forms or motifs, often from artists who also acted as dealers, restorers, and scholars.

After discussing the Grand Tour, examine the *Portrait of John Talbot, later 1st Earl Talbot*, below.



Portrait of John Talbot, later 1st Earl Talbot

Pompeo Batoni
Italian, 1773
Oil on canvas
108 x 71 3/4 in.
78.PA.211

- What can we tell about this man just by looking at him? (He looks young and confident; his pose is relaxed.)
- Describe the objects that surround him. What do they say about the sitter, John Talbot? (Like Charles Watson Wentworth, John Talbot associates himself with the classical past by surrounding himself with allusions to his interest in classical antiquity. The Ludovisi Mars statue on the left and the Medici Vase on the right represent two of Rome's most popular and important works of art. The broken capital in the left foreground and the base of a column at the right refer to Rome's classical architectural heritage.)