Eva Frankfurter
Learning Resource
Eva Frankfurther was born on 10 February 1930 in Dahlem, Berlin, into an educated Jewish family. She was the youngest of three children. Her mother died when she was 18 months old and her father remarried a few years later.

For eight years, despite the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany, Eva and her family lived in relative comfort, protected from the social and political tensions of the time. However, on the eve of November 9, 1938, almost 200 synagogues were destroyed, over 8,000 Jewish shops were sacked and looted, and tens of thousands of Jews were removed to concentration camps. This horrific event became known as Kristallnacht.

It was no longer possible to protect the children from the social and political tensions that surrounded them, and in April 1939 Eva and her siblings were sent to live in the UK. They were sent to Surrey to live in a school for refugee children, run by refugee teachers. Their father and step mother arrived in the UK shortly afterwards in August 1939, a few days before the outbreak of war, and they were all able to be together again.

They settled in London where living conditions became more and more difficult, and the Frankfurthers, along with everyone else, experienced rationing, the cold British winters and with very little money, they found it hard to make ends meet. In addition, by 1941, London was being bombed regularly and to escape the air raids, Eva and her sister were evacuated to Hertfordshire, and only rarely managed to meet with their parents over the next four years.

QUESTIONS:
How do you think Eva might have felt coming to the UK at this time?
Why do you think her parents arrived later?

After the war, in 1946, Frankfurther attended St. Martin’s School of Art in London. Her fellow pupils included Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff. Her interest in people and portraiture was developed during these formative years at art school, although at the time, there was much debate around different styles of painting; mainly figurative versus abstraction.

‘My colleagues and teachers were painters concerned with form and colour, while to me these were only means to an end, the understanding of and commenting on people’, she later explained.

While a student at St. Martin’s, Eva made use of the long summer vacations to work and travel in the USA. She became fascinated by the multi-ethnic populations of the US. In New York, she visited Harlem, an African American district.

After leaving St Martin’s, Eva spent three months painting in Italy, as well as discovering Italian Renaissance painters in the hill-towns near Florence. She loved the vibrant outdoor life in Italian towns.

In a letter to her father she wrote, “I liked the life better than the art...the way the priests in their black hats race about on motorbikes...and the rag-and-bone-man has a sky-blue painted cart drawn by a donkey whose harness is covered with painted rams’ horns and bells as if the Pope were coming.”
After her travels, Frankfurther returned to London, determined to stand on her own two feet, and took up a job as a counter hand and washer-up at Lyons Corner House, Piccadilly, a well-known cafe and meeting place, popular in the 1950s. She worked in the evening so she was able to paint during the day. In 1952, she moved out of her family home to Whitechapel and rented a room in a house that was later to be condemned by the hygiene inspectors.

The artworks of Eva Frankfurther are compassionate portraits of ordinary working people in postwar London. Her paintings, drawings and lithographs feature people from the communities she lived alongside, including newly arrived immigrants from the Caribbean, Jewish immigrants and White British men and women, all of whom collectively represented the working class of the East End of London.

‘West Indian, Irish, Cypriot and Pakistani immigrants, English whom the Welfare State had passed by, these were the people amongst whom I lived and made some of my best friends,’ Eva Frankfurther.

Frankfurther was interested in capturing the lives of the marginalised, common themes for her were: Mothers and children, identity and migration.

‘Always, wherever she was, she drew and painted [...] people: ordinary, working people’, putting the lives of others at the centre of her art.

**Lyons Coffee House**

**QUESTIONS:**
What do you know about the people in these paintings?
What do they have in common?
Looking at the pictures above: What do you think the Lyon’s Corner House was? What may it have been like to have worked there? Who may have worked there?

Reflecting on Eva’s own experience, why might she have been drawn to paint these people?

Teacher tips
Lyons Corner House was a chain of cafe/restaurants popular in London in 1950s. The one Eva worked at in Piccadilly, was a large establishment, at its peak, it employed around 400 staff and there were many tables to serve. She worked evening shifts so she was able to paint during the day.

Imagine the atmosphere at the Corner House. Eva worked as a counter hand and washer-up.

Ask your group to think about gender/class/wages/living conditions/different ethnicities

Mothers and Children

What similarities can you identify in the paintings above?

Teacher tips
Composition: They are shown cradling their young children, looking off to the side of the painting while the child gazes out at us.
The women are painted in profile.
What clues can you see in the background?

Painting style: Similar palette for each picture - what colours can you see?
How does this make you feel or make you think about?
What surface has she painted on for each of the pictures?

Story: What do you think the women have in common?
What could they be looking at?
What mood do you think she is capturing?

Mothers are often seen in Eva’s paintings as caring and nurturing towards their young children, while also seeming important and dignified. The women above are seen from the side, or in profile. Profile portraits have often been used to communicate the authority of the person and make them easily recognisable, such as on Ancient Roman medallions.
In Britain, portraits of people such as royalty or leaders were commissioned to show the sitter in a flattering light, and display desirable qualities such as wealth, status in society or beauty. Even today, profile images of the Queen are seen on UK currency.

**Teacher tip**
*Look at some UK coins with the children so they are able to identify and understand the term ‘profile’.*

Eva, honoured the ordinary person by painting their portrait, giving them the same importance as those who could afford their own commissioned portrait. She painted these women in profile suggesting they, too, have authority and strength.

**Why do you think the artist may have been interested in mothers and children as a theme?**

She lost her own mother when she was 18 months old.
She spent time away from her parents during the war.
She did not have children of her own.

**Migration**

Eva captured everyday moments of the people she worked with and was surrounded by. She often painted the multicultural community that surrounded her.

After the Second World War, it was quickly recognised that the reconstruction of the British economy required a large proportion of immigrant labour, and people from the Caribbean in particular, many who had served in the British Army during the war, were encouraged to emigrate to support the needs of the labour market in postwar Britain.

After Partition in the Asian Subcontinent in 1947, the UK also saw an influx of people from India and Pakistan.

In addition, postwar immigration attracted workers and their families from Ireland and other former colonies of Britain. London’s non-White immigrant population increased rapidly in size. Many settled in the East End and became subjects of a lot of Eva’s paintings.
These were people who were not popular subject matter for portraiture at the time. Immigrants were largely ignored, dismissed or invisible to the established art world and perhaps society as a whole.

**Why do you think Eva chose people who had emigrated as subjects for her art?**

**What do you think it may have been like to be a newly arrived immigrant to the UK in the 1950s?**

**Teacher tip**
*Make a list of pro’s and cons of experiencing immigration in the 1950s.*
**Painting and drawing techniques.**

Have a look at some of Eva’s drawings and paintings to identify some of these techniques.

Name some different ways to use paint or pencil.

Pencil - pressing hard/soft/cross hatch/scribble/
Paint - applying the paint thickly/sparingly/straight from the tube/watered down/smooth finish/viewer able to see brush strokes/

**Palette**

The range of colours used in a painting - some artists like to limit the colours they use in their work.

**Do you think Eva did this?**
If so, think of some reasons why she may have done this and name the most popular colours she uses.

**Teacher tips**
*To create a mood, these were the only colours she could get hold of, the only colours that were available.*

Eva chose a limited palette and liked to usually stick to hues of ochre, especially for her works depicting characters in the East End and the workers of Lyons Coffee House.

**Were there other times when she chose a different palette?**
Have a look through the online collection at some of her other paintings.

**What types of materials did Eva paint on to?**

**Teacher tips**
*Paper was commonly used - why do you think she used paper instead of something more conventional such as canvas?*

**Reading a painting**

Choose a painting to look at (we suggest looking at: Couple with Infant / Black Man Seated / West Indian Porters).

Exercise - look at the painting for 30 seconds, cover it and recall what the children can remember.

Who can you see in the picture?
What is happening in the picture?
What kinds of things are the characters doing in the portraits?
What does this tell us about their lifestyles?
Where do you think the picture set - indoors/outdoors/urban/rural/which country
What clues in the picture are helping you make that decision?
What time of day/year/period of history is it?
Why are the characters behaving in this way?
What facial expressions can you see?
How does the painting make you feel?
Consider the title of painting - what clues does this give you?

**Teacher tip**
*If the title of the painting is very obvious, cover it and give the children time to decode the painting first.*
Activity ideas

Identity Activities

Making a portrait and self portrait - photography exercise

Eva’s drawings, paintings and prints tell us information about the sitter’s identity. If you were making a self portrait what would you need include to tell us about your identity?

- Are there objects or clothes that show information about you, or things that you like to do?
- Make a note of these objects or clothes, and what they say about you
- Where would you place these objects in a picture?
- Are you wearing the clothes or are they placed somewhere in the picture?
- Think about the background of your picture - are you in a setting that the viewer can see, or is it a plain background? If its plain, what colour is it and why?
- Ask your classmate to take a photo of you with your objects
- Think about your posture and how you pose for the picture (sitting, standing, crouching, jumping, doing an activity, looking at the camera or not)
- Think about how Eva often captured the characters in her pictures, using profile, perhaps experiment with a few different ways and compare the different images and how they may change the meaning to the viewer

This activity can also be done at home with a family member or friend using objects that the child thinks symbolise who they are as a person. If it’s an adult family member they can also think about what job do they do and what objects or clothes can depict this.

Pupils can also transpose the photographs into drawings or paintings, or import the photos into Photoshop and manipulate them, making adjustments according to their identities.

Identity box

- Ask each child to bring in an old shoe box
- Paint it a neutral colour
- Ask the children to bring a photograph of themselves and stick it in the box
- Ask the children to add to the box items that will build up information about their identity. These can be words, drawings, images cut out from magazines, 3D objects

Literacy-based activities

- Select one of Eva’s portraits and create a three line stanza. Include a line about the characters appearance, a line about the setting, a line about the characters personality/mood
- Create a story using three of Eva’s portraits. Start your story, “Hungry and tired, I arrived in London for the first time from....”
Drawing Activity

- In groups of three, attach a large piece of paper to the wall (large enough so you can draw a life-sized head on it)
- Place a chair sideways in front of the paper for child 1 to sit on
- Child 2 shines a torch so the profile of the student's head creates a silhouette or shadow onto the paper
- Child 3 carefully draws around the head and shoulders of child 1 with a black marker capturing their profile
- Each child takes it in turns to undertake one of the roles
- Then each child collages the inside of their profile using words, drawings, photos that build up a picture of their identity. Alternatively, they can attempt to fill in their outline with their features
Timeline

1930  10th February: born in Berlin
1939  Eva and her siblings arrive in the UK
1939  Eva’s parents emigrate to England and arrives in North West London
1939  3rd September: start of the Second World War
1941  Eva and her sister are evacuated to Hertfordshire
1945  2nd September: end of the Second World War (VE day 8 May)
1946  Begins her studies at St. Martin’s School of Art, London
1948-50  Spends her summers working and travelling in the USA
1951  Travels to Italy and Paris, France and paints the pilgrims, beggars and children
      Also begins work at Lyons Corner House near Piccadilly as a counter hand
1952  Moves from North West London to Whitechapel
1952-57  Exhibits regularly at East End Academy and the Whitechapel Art Gallery
1956  Leaves Lyons House and begins as a shiftworker at Tate and Lyle sugar refinery
1958  January: Travels via Paris, Italy and Greece to spend 8 months in Israel
1958  Returns from Israel via Paris and applies to train as a social worker at the London School of Economics
1959  Takes her own life aged 28
### Exhibition History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exhibition Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952-57</td>
<td>East End Academy, Whitechapel Art Gallery and Bethnal Green Museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Solo show, Ben Uri Art Society, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Solo show, Clare Hall, Cambridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Solo show, Central Library, Bedford</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Solo show, Margaret Fisher Gallery, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Kunst im Exil in Grossbritannien 1933-1945, Berlin</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Labour Intensive, the City Gallery, Leicester</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Solo show, Boundary Gallery, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Forced Journeys: Artists in Exile in Britain, c. 1933-45, Ben Uri Gallery and Museum,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>London</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>Refiguring the 50s: Joan Eardley, Sheila Fell, Eva Frankfurter, Josef Herman and L.S. Lowry, Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Group show including works by Frank Auerbach, ‘Dodo’ Bürgner, Hans Feibusch, Else Meidner and Hans Schleger, Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
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<tr>
<td>abstraction</td>
<td>freedom from representational qualities in art</td>
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<tr>
<td>air raids</td>
<td>the bombing of cities during WW2 by enemy aircrafts (Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td>anti-Semitism</td>
<td>hostility, prejudice, or discrimination against Jewish people</td>
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<tr>
<td>canvas</td>
<td>a strong cotton fabric artists commonly used to paint on</td>
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<tr>
<td>colonies</td>
<td>countries under the full or partial political control of another country</td>
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<tr>
<td>commissioned</td>
<td>to order the production of (something), in this context an art work</td>
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<tr>
<td>counter hand</td>
<td>a person who works behind a counter; assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>cross hatch</td>
<td>drawing: to shade with two or more sets of parallel lines that cross one another</td>
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<tr>
<td>emigrate</td>
<td>to leave one place or country, esp one’s native country, in order to settle in another</td>
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<tr>
<td>ethnicities</td>
<td>the state or fact of belonging to a particular ethnic group</td>
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<tr>
<td>evacuated</td>
<td>to be withdrawn from (a place of danger) to a place of greater safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>figurative</td>
<td>(in art) relating to the natural representation of the body, or the natural world</td>
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<tr>
<td>lithographs</td>
<td>a type of printing process</td>
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<tr>
<td>immigrants</td>
<td>people who go to live permanently in a foreign country</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kristallnacht</td>
<td>the term comes from the shards of broken glass that littered the streets after the windows of Jewish-owned stores, buildings, and synagogues were smashed in 1938</td>
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<tr>
<td>labour market</td>
<td>refers to the supply and demand for labour (work), it is a major component of any economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyons Corner House</td>
<td>British restaurant chain, food manufacturing, and hotel conglomerate founded in 1884</td>
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<tr>
<td>marginalised</td>
<td>a person or group of people treated as insignificant or peripheral</td>
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<tr>
<td>multicultural</td>
<td>relating to or containing several cultural or ethnic groups within a society</td>
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<tr>
<td>ochre</td>
<td>ochre is a natural pigment which ranges in colour from yellow to deep orange or brown</td>
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<tr>
<td>palette</td>
<td>referring to a selection of colors an artist chooses to use in a group of art works</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Glossary continued</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Partition</strong></td>
<td>refers to the dividing up of the British Indian Empire in 1947 into India and Pakistan</td>
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<td><strong>pilgrims</strong></td>
<td>people who journey to a sacred place for religious reasons</td>
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<td><strong>portriature</strong></td>
<td>a painting, (or other artwork) featuring a person's face and its expression, displaying personality, and the mood of the person</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>profile</strong></td>
<td>the outline of the human face, especially viewed from one side</td>
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<td><strong>rationing</strong></td>
<td>the controlled distribution of scarce resources, goods, or services, rationing also controls the size of the ration</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>refugee</strong></td>
<td>a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>silhouette</strong></td>
<td>the image of a person, animal, object or scene represented as a solid shape of a single colour, with its edges matching the outline of the subject</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>stanza</strong></td>
<td>an arrangement of a certain number of lines, sometimes having a fixed length, meter, or rhyme scheme, forming a division of a poem</td>
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<td><strong>transpose</strong></td>
<td>transfer to a different place or context</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>working-class</strong></td>
<td>people employed for wages, especially in manual-labour occupations and in skilled, industrial work</td>
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