

From relatively humble beginnings and early experience at sea with his cousin John Hawkins, crossing the Atlantic (including on slave trading voyages), Drake pursued an outstandingly successful career as a privateer. His voyage round the world was underwritten by Elizabeth I and involved a series of highly profitable raids on Spanish ships and ports. In the Armada campaign, Drake was a vice-admiral with his own force of 39 ships. After the defeat of the Armada, he commanded a number of expeditions against the Spanish, both in Europe and America although his joint leadership of the disastrous Portuguese expedition in 1589 brought him to court-martial and temporary disfavour until 1594. This portrait was painted around 1591 in this period of disgrace. It is possible it was an attempt to promote Drake's previous service to try and win back a place in the Queen's favour. Portraits like this were designed to communicate specific messages through the objects that appear in the image as props.

Drakes Coat of Arms – Drake was knighted and received his coat of arms as a reward for the circumnavigation...
What's the message?

Find this portrait in the Queen's House. What messages do you think were being given about Francis Drake by including these objects in the portrait?



Drake's Sword - His pose draws attention to the hilt of his sword with his arm resting on it...
What's the message?

The Globe - This globe sits next to Drake, with possible hints being made to a previous voyage...
What's the message?

The Jewel – The 'Drake Jewel' was presented to Drake by Elizabeth...
What's the message?

Overall, what message do you think this portrait was trying to give about Francis Drake?
What links can you see to the Circumnavigation what does it suggest about its significance?



Sir Francis Drake (©National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Caird Collection Object ID: BHC2662)

Creator: Gheeraerts, Marcus

Date made: 1591