



**Louisa Catherine Paris (1811 – 1875)**

**The old town of Eastbourne in the valley taken from the top of the Downs, F,R,E and myself spent the day on the Downs. 4th September. 1852. Taken from the Links Down. (1852)**

**Acquired 1960**

**Dimensions 29.5 x 37.8 cm**

**© Towner, Eastbourne**



## About the artist

Louisa Paris was a prolific Victorian watercolourist. Her works provide a fascinating account of the changing landscape whilst also being a personal reflection of Paris's subjective experience as a woman in that landscape.

Paris's father was a doctor, and Paris was the eldest of nine children. Painting was considered an important female accomplishment in Victorian Britain, but rather than painting domestic interiors, the usual subject of women painters, Paris keenly set about the landscape, finding painting to afford her a small degree of freedom in a society in which there was little in the way of opportunities for women.

Paris and her work have more than general historical interest, reflecting a personality that goes well beyond the Victorian amateur woman painter stereotype. Paris chose to give her paintings narrative descriptions rather than conventional titles, foregrounding her personal experience at the time of painting the work. These lines are often peppered with wit, hinting at a quirky character and a personal world in which the family was at the centre. As a woman, Paris's watercolours did not at the time command attention or respect. Women artists were generally considered to lack imagination or the capability to produce work of critical depth, and Paris's watercolours, despite the considerable qualities we can now recognise, were thus limited to providing pleasure to her family and friends.



## Understand & Evaluate

Composition: This painting is divided into different sections.

What are these sections called?

Is it divided equally?

What do you see in each of these sections?

Where do you think the artist is standing/sitting when she is painting this scene?

How does the artist convey distance in her painting? What colour does she use?

Look at all the detail in the foreground. What do you think is happening here?

What detail can you see in the middle ground?

Do you recognise this scene? Is it the same today?

The artist has given a descriptive title to her painting. Does this help you to set the scene?

Would it change the painting if there were no sheep or artist's items in the foreground?

Can you tell a story based on the scene that you see?

## Explore and create

Create a drawing that tells a story. When you are in the Downs, take a sheet of paper and fold it into sections (four or six). Write a sentence or word in each section that documents your experience and draw a simple sketch for each one. Back in class, choose one of these sketches and develop it into a drawing that tells a story. Write a narrative like a diary entry and illustrate your diary entry with different aspects of your experience of the Downs.

What clues could you use to show you in the landscape? Paris was quirky and witty in her narratives and chosen content. How can you make your landscape/view personal to you? What would be evidence of your visit?

The sun parasol and three windmills in the painting suggest the Downs and surrounding area can be windy. Notice the marks Paris uses in the sky to suggest the clouds are moving quickly overhead. When you are on the Downs, see if you can find any evidence in the trees and shrubs that grow to suggest wind? Think about different ways you can capture movement and wind in the landscape.



## Further links to the National Park – Louisa Catherine Paris: The old town of Eastbourne

Use the South Downs National Park Learning Zone to explore <http://learning.southdowns.gov.uk/>. All resources mentioned below can be found through the Learning Zone.

[Learning outside the Classroom](#) including links for health and safety and practical support in planning your work away from the classroom.

[About the National Park](#) Eastbourne is surrounded on one side by the Downland of the National Park. The South Downs National Park is the newest of the National Parks designated in 2009. It makes links to the geography curriculum in comparing and contrasting here and abroad. Why not look at Droxford Primary Schools or Rydon Community Colleges scheme of work to see how they do this and work with artists. If you are interested in this aspect of study please explore the John Muir Award in the South Downs National Park.

[Geology and landscape](#) why not investigate the properties and topography of chalk in science or geography. This painting is great for studying landscape and changing landscape features in geography and history. Many of the areas below as well as this one can be linked to soil science, through soil composition, as a growing medium or as a habitat, the alkaline properties of chalk and steep slopes impact heavily on what they are used for today. Use the Learning Zone to study the geology of the National Park.

[Farming and Land management](#) The artist has featured sheep. Knowing where your food comes from makes links to design and technology. Why not use the Why Farming Matters to the South Downs resource to look further at farming in the National Park. At a secondary level you might link to genetics and the breeds of sheep well suited to the downland.

[Habitats and wildlife](#) Compare grassland diversity on the chalk downland to that in your school grounds, linking to your science and geography curriculum. Chalk specific plants are a great way to give your students a sense of local identity and learn about how important the downland is to conservationists. Scrub bashing with pupils from your school is a great, practical way to demonstrate how the chalk downland is managed to control the succession of more invasive species such as hawthorn, blackthorn and silver birch. Use the Learning Zone to contact the education team for more information on volunteering for activities such as these.

[Culture and heritage](#) This painting originates from 1852, a time when women's roles were very different and their time would have been spent very differently from the women of today. Other famous women in the National Park in that century included Jane Austen (1775-1817) who did almost all her adult writing at Chawton House. Use the Learning Zone to explore other artists of the National Park. This picture also illustrates the social changes seen around Eastbourne in the last century including increasing urbanisation and the use of windmills, further links could be made here to science looking at energy and forces.

[Access and recreation](#) There are huge pressures put on this green space from recreational users. There are good links here to site management and impact assessments with older students. The bid for the Brighton and Hove Biosphere could make this a lead site for sustainable tourism. Why not use the Learning Zone to look at the 2012 visitor survey.

[Economy and industry](#) In recent years there has been growing interest in the value to businesses in having access to greenspaces to reduce sickness and increase productivity. The National Park plays this role for many businesses in and around Eastbourne.

