In the eighteenth century—before cameras, videos, TVs, or computers were invented—if people wanted to be remembered, they hired an artist to paint their portrait. By looking closely at these paintings, we can learn about what was important to the people in the portraits and how they wanted to be viewed. Find this family portrait by Henry Benbridge.

**Pose**

Sometimes people in portraits are portrayed naturally, as if the artist captured a moment in their everyday lives. Other times they are staged in a more formal way, usually sitting or standing.

How would you describe the poses of the people in this portrait?  

- natural  
- formal

**Setting**

Where does the portrait take place? What do the surroundings look like?

- indoors or outdoors
- simple or elegant
- formal or casual
**Clothes**

In addition to showing us what was fashionable at the time the painting was made, the clothes the people are wearing tell us about their place in society.

Circle the adjectives that you think best describe the dresses in this painting.

- fancy
- plain
- expensive
- ordinary
- special

**Expression**

The posture and facial expressions of the people can give us clues about their personalities and their moods as well as how they wanted the viewer to feel about them.

Circle the adjectives that you think best describe this family.

- friendly
- nervous
- happy
- scared
- sad
- serious
- fun-loving

If you were going to have your portrait painted, what would you wear? How would you pose? What kind of background would you choose? Would you smile?