

## *What kind of ruler was Oliver Cromwell?*

### Case study 2: Cromwell in the eyes of others – Source 1

#### Portrait of Oliver Cromwell, c.1655

(National Portrait Gallery, London: 5274)

#### What is this source?

Samuel Cooper painted this portrait of Oliver Cromwell.

Cooper painted many famous people and made several portraits of Cromwell. This little watercolour painting (called a miniature) measures 6 cm x 4.8 cm.

#### What's the background to this source?

Rulers often used portraits of themselves as a form of propaganda.

Propaganda is information (in words or pictures) that promotes some cause or viewpoint. For example, kings and queens had beautiful paintings done of them, dressed in wonderful clothes, showing their jewels or horses, with their most important courtiers surrounding them. The purpose of these pictures was to make the monarch appear strong, wise, rich, powerful and beautiful (even if they weren't)!

#### It's worth knowing that ...

Cromwell had a reputation for being uninterested in decoration and portraits used as propaganda.

One story says that he was content to be painted, as he looked, 'warts and all'. This may be where the saying 'warts and all' comes from. It means telling something exactly as it is and not changing any details.

#### Your turn: What can we learn from this source?

1. Would you say that this portrait was an example of propaganda?

2. Cromwell had a reputation for wanting people to take him as they found him, rather than trying to impress them. Does this source help us to decide whether that reputation was true?
3. What overall impression does this source give of Cromwell?
4. How does this image of Cromwell compare with other images? You can find a large collection by going to the National Portrait Gallery website and doing a search on Oliver Cromwell.



## Source 1

