

# Money, Power, Politics.



## Picture Resource

### Niels Moller Lund

#### *The Heart of the Empire*, 1904

*The Heart of the Empire* embodies all the optimism and pride of the young twentieth century and refers to the City of London as the centre of the world economy.

This view looks west across the thriving City from the roof of the Royal Exchange, with Mansion House on the left and part of the Bank of England visible in the bottom right corner.

Niels Moller Lund was born in Denmark in 1863, and died in London in 1916. He studied at the Academy Julian in Paris. *The Heart of the Empire* is his best known painting, and epitomises his impressionistic style, depicting English scenes, most often in London and the north of England.



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## Discussion points

- Consider the perspective from which the artwork is painted. How does this affect the viewer's perspective? *Surveying from on high, the viewer is put in a position of power, rising high above the City. It is also suggestive of a sense of calm, distinct from the hustle and bustle of the City below.*
- Consider the title of the artwork *The Heart of the Empire*. What does knowing the title of the artwork do to the viewer's perception of the painting? *Does it, for example, imply that Empire is either a good or a bad thing?* What alternative titles could you apply to the artwork? Would they change viewers' feelings about the painting? *For example, could a less romantic title be applied, which would move the painting from reverence or nostalgia into satire?*
- What words could you use to describe the colours in the painting? *Warm, golden, glowing, etc.*
- What affect does the choice of colour have on the viewer's feelings about the painting? *Could they have been chosen in order to instil positive feelings about the City and of Empire?*
- What tone of colours would you choose if you were to paint the City? Why?
- Do you think this is an objective or subjective painting? Do you think that the artist views the Empire as a good or a bad thing? Why? *Consider the dreamlike quality of the painting, in combination with the romantic title.*

## Activities

### Around the City

- Walk to the Bank of England, and view the buildings depicted in the painting. Make your own sketches of the buildings. Note the style of the buildings such as the Bank of England and the Royal Exchange. What similarities do they have? *These Georgian buildings are all built from Portland stone, a construction material which came to symbolise wealth, power and grandeur. The Corinthian columns on the Royal Exchange recall the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome. Why might the architects have chosen to do this?*

### In the classroom

- In 1904, the British Empire was at its height, however, just twenty years later it would begin to break up. Research more into the British Empire, then form a debate, posing advocates and critics of the Empire in opposition.

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**Niels Moller Lund, *The Heart of Empire***  
Oil on canvas, 1904. Guildhall Art Gallery