



**Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri)**  
**(1591–1666)**

*A landscape with a bridge and figures,*  
c.1625. Pen and ink  
The Royal Collection © 2005,  
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Guercino's landscapes belong to the tradition of Bolognese romanticism rather than Roman classicism in that there is no grand narrative present in his works, as we see in this drawing; rather they are simple and pleasant scenes from everyday life.

Guercino used the simplistic technique of leaving large areas of the paper bare to create light and space. The areas of untouched paper then have the effect of open space and light. This is definitely the case in this work as the large sky gives the landscape a sense of continuing on for miles into the very distant (and faint) horizon.

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Barbieri became known as Il Guercino, The Squinter, after a childhood accident left him with a squint. He was born in Cento, a town 15 miles north of Bologna, close to the works of Carracci and Guido Reni.

Guercino is revered as a draughtsman and his drawings are treasured for their vitality, freshness, and the dramatic effect of light and space.

His career took off when his early patron, Cardinal Alessandro Ludovisi, was elected as Pope Gregory XV. Guercino was summoned to Rome and immediately put to work to decorate a section of St Peter's. Unfortunately, the commission was not completed as the Pope died after only two years as pontiff. However, Guercino did manage to complete an altarpiece at St Peter's before he left Rome and returned to Cento.

## STUDENT FOCUS QUESTIONS

- How has Guercino created a sense of space in this landscape?
- How idealised do you think this scene is?
- Do you think that Guercino has successfully depicted the quality of light on water in this work?

## SUGGESTED RESOURCES

<http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/bio/g/guercino/biograph.html>  
<http://www.getty.edu/art/collections/bio/a892-1.html>  
<http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/guercino.html>