



Language and Culture Show and Tell: Danish Dr Anne Grydehøj



Worksheet

Below is the short Danish text from the video used to describe the portrait of Prince George of Denmark. Using the context along with your knowledge of English and other languages, try to find out as much about the Danish language as possible.

Prins George af Danmark

Her er et portræt.

Det er en illustration af en mand.

Portrættet har en oval form.

Mandens navn er George, og han er aristokrat.

George er også prins.

Han kommer fra Danmark.

Han er Dronning Annes husbond.

Han har langt hår.

Georges hår er en paryk.

Portrættet kommer fra universitetets kunstmuseum.

Portrættet er fra cirka 1700.



Portrait of George, Prince of Denmark, by John Smith, after Godfrey Kneller, mezzotint on paper, circa 1704-08 (UCL Art Museum, LDUCS-2041).

- a) How many different verbs can you detect in the text? What characterises the verbs in the present tense in Danish?

- b) What is the word for 'and' in Danish? _____

- c) Find the two letters in the text that do not exist in English. What sounds do these two letters correspond to (you can listen to the recording again)?

- d) Try to find the nouns in the text. Write a list.

- e) Some of the nouns are in indefinite forms (in English: *a man*) and some are in definite form (in English: *the man*). Can you figure out how Danish deals with indefinite and definite forms?

- f) What do you think 'også' means? _____

- g) How is the possessive form (in English: *the man's name* or *the name of the man*) of a noun created in Danish?

Key to the exercises

- a) There are three verbs in the text: **er** (is), **har** (has) and **kommer** (comes). They all end in 'r' (in fact all present-tense verbs in Danish end in '-r' and there is only one form of a verb in each tense, so the form of the verb in **han kommer** (he comes) would be the same as in **vi kommer** (we come), the form of the verb in **han er** (he is) would be the same in **vi er** (we are).
- b) The Danish word for 'and' is **og**.
- c) The two Danish letters in the text are: **æ** and **å**. The vowel **æ** is pronounced as deep English 'e', like in the name 'Ben'. The vowel **å** in the Danish word **hår** (hair) is pronounced like in the English 'saw'.
- d) The nouns in the text are: **et portræt (portrættet)**, **en illustration**, **en mand**, **en form**, **(et) navn**, **(en) aristocrat**, **(en) prins**, **(en dronning)**, **(en) husbond**, **(et) hår**, **en paryk**, **(et universitet) universitetets**, **(et) kunstmuseum**.
- e) Definiteness in Danish is created by adding a suffix to the noun: **en mand** (a man) becomes **manden** (the man). You will also have seen **et portræt** (a portrait) and **portrættet** (the portrait) in the text. You might have guessed that there are two genders in Danish, common gender using the article **en** (e.g. **en illustration**, **en form**, **en prins**), and neuter gender, using the article **et** (**et portræt**, **et universitet**). In the case of **portrættet**, the consonant (t) is doubled to keep the vowel (æ) short.
- f) **Også** means 'also'.
- g) Possessive nouns are created by adding an 's' to the noun. In the text, you will have seen **mandens (navn)** = 'the man's name', **Dronning Annes (husband)** = Queen Anne's (husband) and **universitetets (kunstmuseum)** = the University's art museum/the art museum of the university. Danish only uses the equivalent of the 'of' construction (the art museum of the university) in very rare cases, but there actually is one in the text: **Prins George af Danmark**.