

Kehinde Wiley Sends a Message

Lesson Objectives

- Explain how an artist uses artworks from the past to send messages about the present.
- Interpret messages sent and identify questions raised by some contemporary portraits.

Who Is Kehinde Wiley?

Kehinde Wiley and his twin brother were born in Los Angeles, California. Their mother is African American and their father is from Nigeria, a country in West Africa and the origin of the artist's name. In the local language Yoruba, Kehinde means "second born of twins." As a child, Wiley loved art, and his mother made sure he was able to attend art classes.

Early Years, Early Questions

As early as age eleven, Wiley was fascinated by European portrait paintings from the 1600s, 1700s, and 1800s. He spent hours studying art in museums and books, wondering about the people shown in the paintings. He was curious about their poses, especially those of the men with their fancy clothes, horses, and objects of power. He also noticed that all of the people in those portraits were white. He saw no Black or brown people at all, and he wondered why.



Kehinde Wiley



1-48 **Artist Kehinde Wiley painting in his studio.**

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