

## REIMAGINING HISTORICAL FIGURES THROUGH PORTRAIT ART

Grade Band: 6-8  
Content Focus: Visual Arts & Social Studies



### LEARNING DESCRIPTION

In this lesson, students will compare and contrast the artwork of Kehinde Wiley to the artwork that inspired it. Similar to Wiley, students will creatively reinterpret a historical figure from their unit of study within the framework of another portrait artist's work.

### LEARNING TARGETS

Essential Questions	"I Can" Statements
How is Kehinde Wiley's artwork similar and different to the artwork that inspired it?	I can compare and contrast Kehinde Wiley's artwork to the artwork that inspired it.
How does historical context impact dynamics of power?	I can create a unique work of art that reinterprets a historical figure from my unit of study within the framework of another portrait artist's work.
How does replacing a figure from a portrait with a new figure change the meaning of the artwork?	I can explain how historical context impacts dynamics of power.

I can explain how replacing a figure from a portrait with a new figure changes the meaning of the artwork.

## GEORGIA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards	Arts Standards
<p><b>Social Studies</b> <i>This lesson can be used to teach any social studies standard that deals with power dynamics between two people groups. Listed below are example standards.</i></p> <p><b>Grade 6</b> SS6H1 Explain conflict and change in Latin America. a. Describe the influence of African slavery on the development of the Americas. SS6H2 Describe Quebec's independence movement.</p> <p>SS6H3 Explain conflict and change in Europe. b. Explain the rise of Nazism including preexisting prejudices, the use of propaganda, and events which resulted in the Holocaust.</p> <p>SS6H4 Explain the impact of English colonization on current Aboriginal basic rights, health, literacy, and language.</p> <p><b>Grade 7</b> SS7H1 Analyze continuity and change in Africa. b. Explain how the Pan-African movement and nationalism led to independence in Kenya and Nigeria. c. Explain the creation and end of apartheid in South Africa and the roles of Nelson Mandela and F.W.de Klerk.</p> <p>SS7H3 Analyze continuity and change in Southern and Eastern Asia. b. Explain the historical factors contributing to the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948; include the Jewish religious connection to the land, antisemitism, the</p>	<p><b>Grade 6</b> VA6.CR.1 Visualize and generate ideas for creating works of art. VA6.CR.2 Choose from a range of materials and/or methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan and create works of art. VA6.CR.3 Engage in an array of processes, media, techniques, and/or technology through experimentation, practice, and persistence. VA6.CR.4 Incorporate formal and informal components to create works of art.</p> <p><b>Grade 7</b> VA7.CR.1 Visualize and generate ideas for creating works of art. VA7.CR.2 Choose from a range of materials and/or methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan and create works of art. VA7.CR.3 Engage in an array of processes, media, techniques, and/or technology through experimentation, practice, and persistence. VA7.CR.4 Incorporate formal and informal components to create works of art.</p> <p><b>Grade 8</b> VA8.CR.1 Visualize and generate ideas for creating works of art. VA8.CR.2 Choose from a range of materials and/or methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan and create works of art. VA8.CR.3 Engage in an array of processes, media, techniques, and/or technology through experimentation, practice, and persistence. VA8.CR.4 Incorporate formal and informal components to create works of art.</p>



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development of Zionism in Europe, and the aftermath of the Holocaust.

SS7H3 Analyze continuity and change in Southern and Eastern Asia.

a. Describe how nationalism led to independence in India. b. Describe the impact of Mohandas Gandhi's belief in non-violent protest. c. Explain the role of the United States in the rebuilding of Japan after WWII. d. Describe the impact of communism in China in terms of Mao Zedong, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and Tiananmen Square.

### **Grade 8**

SS8H1 Evaluate the impact of European exploration and settlement on American Indians in Georgia.

SS8H4 Explain significant factors that affected westward expansion in Georgia between 1789 and 1840.

e. Analyze how key people (John Ross, John Marshall, and Andrew Jackson) and events (Dahlonaga Gold Rush and Worcester v. Georgia) led to the removal of the Cherokees from Georgia known as the Trail of Tears.

SS8H6 Analyze the impact of Reconstruction on Georgia.

SS8H7 Evaluate key political, social, and economic changes that occurred in Georgia during the New South Era.

b. Analyze how rights were denied to African Americans or Blacks through Jim Crow laws, Plessy v. Ferguson, disenfranchisement, and racial violence, including the 1906 Atlanta Race Massacre. c. Explain the roles of Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. DuBois, and Alonzo Herndon in advancement of the rights of African Americans or Blacks in the New South Era. d. Examine antisemitism and the resistance to racial equality exemplified in the Leo Frank case.

SS8H11 Evaluate the role of Georgia in the modern civil rights movement.



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a. Explain Georgia’s response to Brown v. Board of Education including the 1956 flag and the Sibley Commission. b. Describe the role of individuals (Martin Luther King, Jr. and John Lewis), groups (SNCC and SCLC) and events (Albany Movement and March on Washington) in the Civil Rights Movement. c. Explain the resistance to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, emphasizing the role of Lester Maddox.

**ELA**

**Grade 6**

ELAGSE6W2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

**Grade 7**

ELAGSE7W2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

**Grade 8**

ELAGSE8W2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

**SOUTH CAROLINA STANDARDS**

Curriculum Standards	Arts Standards
<p><b>Social Studies</b>  <i>This lesson can be used to teach any social studies standard that deals with power dynamics between two people groups. Listed below are example standards.</i></p> <p><b>Grade 6</b>            Standard 3: Demonstrate an understanding of the development of the Atlantic World from the invention of the printing press to the Industrial Revolution (i.e., 1450–1760).</p>	<p><b>Artistic Processes: Creating-</b> I can make artwork using a variety of materials, techniques, and processes.            Anchor Standard 1: I can use the elements and principles of art to create artwork.            Anchor Standard 2: I can use different materials, techniques, and processes to make art.</p> <p><b>Artistic Processes: Responding-</b> I can evaluate and communicate about the meaning in my artwork and the artwork of others.</p>



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6.3.P Summarize the impact of the Transatlantic Slave Trade on ideological, political, and social systems in the Atlantic World.

6.3.CX Contextualize the experience of indigenous peoples due to expansion and the conflict that arose from it.

Standard 5: Demonstrate an understanding of the development of global interdependence from 1920 to the present.

6.5.CO Compare the global movements that resulted in the advancement or limitation of human rights during the 20th and 21st centuries.

6.5.CE Explain the impact of nationalism on global conflicts and genocides in the 20th and 21st centuries.

### Grade 8

Standard 1: Demonstrate an understanding of the development of South Carolina during the settlement and colonization of North America in the period of 1500– 1756.

8.1.CC Analyze the changes and continuities of the Native Americans' experiences prior to and as a result of settlement and colonization.

Standard 2: Demonstrate an understanding of how South Carolinians and Americans created a revolutionary form of government during the period of 1757– 1815.

8.2.CC Analyze the continuities and changes of how different groups immigrated to and migrated within South Carolina.

Standard 5: Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of world events on South Carolina and the United States from 1929 to present.

8.5.CX Analyze the correlation between the Modern Civil Rights Movement in South Carolina and the U.S.

### ELA

#### WRITING (W) - Meaning, Context, and Craft (MCC)

Standard 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the

Anchor Standard 5: I can interpret (read) and evaluate the meaning of an artwork.

**Artistic Processes: Connecting-** I can relate artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.

Anchor Standard 7: I can relate visual arts ideas to other arts disciplines, content areas, and careers.



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effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

## KEY VOCABULARY

Content Vocabulary	Arts Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <u>Napoleon Bonaparte</u> - A French military general who rose to prominence during the French Revolution and later became the Emperor of France. Napoleon is known for his strategic military prowess, leading France to numerous victories in battles across Europe.</li><li>● <u>Slavery</u> - A historical and social institution where individuals are treated as property and are forced to work without personal freedom or compensation</li><li>● <u>Colonization</u> - A historical process in which a powerful nation or group of people establishes control over a territory, often distant from their own, with the intention of exploiting its resources, economy, and people for monetary gain</li><li>● <u>Independence movement</u> - A collective effort by a group or community to assert and achieve political autonomy, sovereignty, and freedom from the control or rule of another political entity</li><li>● <u>Persecution</u> - The act of unfairly and systematically mistreating or harassing individuals or a group based on their beliefs, ethnicity, race, or other distinguishing characteristics</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <u>Portrait</u> - An artwork that is a representation of a person; it is a visual depiction that aims to capture the likeness, personality, and sometimes the mood or emotions of the individual being portrayed</li><li>● <u>Kehinde Wiley</u> - An African American contemporary portrait artist</li><li>● <u>Master Painters</u> - European painters who were considered the experts and authority on art at the time and depicted the height of civilization in the Western World; examples include Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Rembrandt</li><li>● <u>Composition</u> - How an artist uses the Elements of Art (line, shape, form, value, color, space, texture) to create an artwork</li></ul>

## MATERIALS

- White paper
- Pencils
- Markers, colored pencils, oil pastels, or paint



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## INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

### Opening/Activating Strategy

- Display [Kehinde Wiley's painting \*Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps\*, 2005](#).
- Ask students to work collaboratively to engage in the [See, Think, Wonder protocol](#).
  - First, students will identify what they see in the image. Emphasize that they should make objective observations about the sculpture (i.e. physical features, colors, textures, etc.).
  - Next, ask students to identify what they think about the image. Emphasize that students should be creating inferences using visual evidence from the artwork.
  - Finally, ask students what they wonder about the image.
- Facilitate a class-wide discussion around students' observations, inferences, and questions.

### Work Session

#### SESSION 1

- Display [Jacques-Louis David's painting \*Napoleon Crossing the Alps\*, 1801](#), and [Napoleon Leading the Army over the Alps by Kehinde Wiley](#), 2005, side by side.
- Using a Venn diagram, students should work collaboratively to compare and contrast the two artworks.
- Briefly discuss who Napoleon was, what he did, and what his goals were for context.
- Next, explain who Kehinde Wiley is.
  - Wiley is an African American contemporary portrait artist. His father is from Nigeria and his mother from the United States.
  - Wiley uses many European artworks from the 18th and 19th centuries painted by the European master painters and reimagines them with people of color, sometimes from pop culture, such as the hip hop artist, Ice T.
    - Ask students to discuss in groups why they think Wiley does this.
    - In whole-class discussion, help students understand the cause and effect relationship between European colonization and independence movements and civil rights movements.
      - For example, connect European colonization with slavery (such as in the Transatlantic Slave Trade or wiping out indigenous cultures and people such as with the Aborigines in Australia or the Native Americans in the Americas, or Apartheid in South Africa). Help students then connect this to independence movements and civil rights movements in various countries.
- Ask students how replacing a figure from a portrait with a new figure changes the meaning of the artwork.
- Provide students with options for other artworks of Kehinde Wiley to compare and contrast to the artwork that inspired it.
  - Students should use a graphic organizer such as a Venn diagram to identify similarities and differences.
  - Students should then write a comparison paragraph using their Venn diagram.
  - Suggestions for comparisons:
    - Wiley's [Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted \(2016\)](#) and the stain glass original



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- Wiley's [Prelude](#) and Casper David Friedrich's [Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog](#).
- Wiley's [Le Roi a la Chasse](#) and Anthony Van Dyck's [Charles I at the Hunt](#).

## SESSION 2

- Tell students that they will be reimagining a real or fictional historical figure from their unit of study by reinterpreting a portrait like Kehinde Wiley does in his artwork.
  - Explain to students that a portrait in art is a visual depiction of a person in art. All of the artworks students looked at previously in the lesson were examples of portraits.
  - A real historical figure could be someone like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. if students are studying the Civil Rights Movement. If students are studying the independence movement in India, students might select someone like Mohandas Gandhi. If students are creating a fictional person, such as an indigenous person in a colonized territory, that person should be someone who could realistically be from the historical context.
  - Students should first select a painting to use as a basis for their artwork.
    - Ideas include the [Mona Lisa by da Vinci](#), [Washington Crossing the Delaware by Emanuel Leutze](#), [Rembrandt's The Night Watch](#), [Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring](#), [Rembrandt's The Last Supper](#).
  - Next, students should create a rough sketch of their new artwork on blank white paper. Encourage students to think about how the artists of the artworks that they looked at used the whole space/canvas in their composition, paying attention to the positive space (subject/person) and negative space (background).
  - Once they've created a rough sketch, they should draw their final draft in pencil. Using colored pencils, markers, or another art material like oil pastels or paint, students should add color to their artwork.
  - Finally, students should write a paragraph that explains how they used the original artwork and reimagined it with a new historical figure. Students should explain who the historical figure is, the historical context, and how they reimagined the figure. Students should explain how replacing a figure from the artwork that they chose with a new figure changed the meaning of the artwork.

## Closing/Reflection

- In small groups of four to five, students should present their portraits to their classmates.
  - Students should explain who they depicted, the historical context, and how they used the original artwork as a basis for their artwork.
  - Students should also explain why they picked that artwork to reimagine and how replacing a figure from the artwork that they chose with a new figure changed the meaning of the artwork.

## ASSESSMENTS

### Formative

Teachers will assess students' understanding by observing whether students can compare and contrast two artworks, identify an important historical figure and explain why she or he was



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influential, and explain how replacing one figure with another figure can change the meaning of an artwork.

## Summative

### CHECKLIST

- Students can reimagine a real or fictional historical figure from their unit of study by creating a portrait of this person in the context of another painting.
- Students are able to explain who the historical figure is, the historical context, and how they reimagined the figure.

## DIFFERENTIATION

**Acceleration:** Students should research the original painting that they are using to reimagine their historical figure. Students should learn about the artist and the historical and social context for the artwork. Students should then evaluate how replacing the figure from the portrait with a new figure changes the meaning of the artwork. Students can create a presentation about the artwork in the medium of their choice—written form, PowerPoint, visual art, etc.

### Remediation:

- Allow students to compare and contrast two artworks using a Venn diagram or another type of graphic organizer as an assessment instead of a written paragraph.
- Allow students to work together to compare and contrast two artworks using a Venn diagram or another type of graphic organizer.
- Provide a graphic organizer/sentence starters for students to write their paragraphs.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Teacher resource: [National Gallery of Art - Portrait Gallery - Kehinde Wiley artist statement for the RECOGNIZE! collection](#)

*\*This integrated lesson provides differentiated ideas and activities for educators that are aligned to a sampling of standards. Standards referenced at the time of publishing may differ based on each state's adoption of new standards.*

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