Student Activity Guide

Secondary

Meet William Kentridge

Stories can be told in many ways. William Kentridge explores both personal and universal themes using drawing, printmaking, collage, sculpture, theatre, animation and film.

How do artists interpret history and the world around them in new ways?

Theme 1:
Ubu and the Procession

Until 1994 people in Kentridge’s home land of South Africa were treated unequally based on the colour of their skin. Many families were forced to leave their country.

Find the film Shadow Procession.
Where do you think the silhouette figures are going?

How do they look?

Why do you think they never arrive at their destination?

What words would you use to describe the mood of this work?

William Kentridge, Portage (detail), 2000; Collage on book pages, eighteen panels, each: 10 4/5 x 9 1/4 in. (27.5 x 23.5 cm); 10 4/5 x 168 1/8 in. (27.5 x 427 cm) overall; Collection of the artist, courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg; © 2010 William Kentridge; photo: John Hodgkiss, courtesy the artist
Theme 2: Soho and Felix

Think about the way Kentridge draws the characters of Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitelbaum. Notice the texture and thickness of the lines he uses.

Identify some of the differences between the way Soho and Felix are portrayed.

What does it show?

Soho and Felix represent two sides of the same person. Use the spaces below to sketch two opposing sides of yourself. What do they look like? What do they represent?
Theme 2:
Soho and Felix
(continued)

Find the film Tide Table
Think about the role that water plays in the film.
What happens when the water comes into contact with a person or an object?

What do you think might this symbolise?
Theme 3:  
The Artist in the Studio

The films in this section encourage us as the audience to question the way we understand reality.

Do you know how Kentridge performs his ‘magic’ in these films?

In what ways does he manipulate the camera to make us question what we see?

Self-portraits can sometimes reveal elements of the artist’s own character, self-esteem and mood.

What do you think Kentridge is saying about himself in these works?
Theme 4: 
The Magic Flute

The focus of this section is on three major works produced in connection with Kentridge’s 2005 production of Mozart’s The Magic Flute.

What is the place of music in each of these works?

What song would you choose as the soundtrack to your week so far?

Why would you make that choice?

How could you represent that choice visually as well as musically?
Theme 5: The Nose

Kentridge was able to explore his interest in opera when he became involved in creating and directing a production of Shostakovich’s 1928 opera *The Nose*.

How do you think the themes explored in Kentridge’s works *The Nose* relate to the system of apartheid in South Africa?

What other part of the body might get separated from its ‘owner’?

Explore this idea as a poem or an artwork below.