

# The portraits of the Windrush Generation

## Teacher notes, activities, and discussion points



## What are the portraits of the Windrush Generation?

These are the 10 portraits that King Charles asked to be made to celebrate **Windrush Day** (22 June) in 2023. The King asked 10 talented artists each to make a picture in their own artistic style to honour a person from what we now call the 'Windrush Generation'.

## Who are the Windrush Generation?

In 1948 over 800 British citizens from the Caribbean sailed from Jamaica to the UK on a ship called HMT *Empire Windrush* (HMT means His Majesties' Transport). They were the first of a whole generation of people who would follow in their footsteps, after being invited and encouraged to come to Britain by the British government.

The Second World War, which had ended only 3 years earlier (in 1945), had caused so much damage and destruction that Britain needed to be rebuilt. New houses were needed to replace those destroyed by bombs, the trains and buses needed to restart, new hospitals needed to open, and so much more.

This generation of Britons from the Caribbean played a huge part in making the United Kingdom the country it is today. Without their talents, skills and hard work this would not have been possible.

Some of the Windrush Generation had already been in Britain during the Second World War when they served in the armed forces. But for others this was their first time in a new and difficult land.

The Windrush generation showed courage, determination, resilience and pride, and has helped make this country a better place.

### **Why were these portraits made?**

King Charles III has described the Windrush Generation as ‘pioneer’s – and 2023 marked the 75 anniversary since HMT Windrush brought the first of these pioneers to Britain. The King asked for the portraits to be made in order to mark and celebrate this anniversary.

Writing in his foreword to a book accompanying the portraits, King Charles wrote:

*‘This year, as we honour the legacy and achievements of the Windrush Generation, I dearly hope that we can continue to embrace differences, listen to each other’s stories and learn from one another’s experiences.*

*...though we might all be different, every individual, no matter their background, has something unique to contribute to our society in a way that strengthens us all.’*

### **Which artists created the portraits of the Windrush Generation?**

The sitters and artists are:

Delisser Bernard by artist Honor Titus [Portrait of Delisser Bernard \(rct.uk\)](#)

Alford Gardner by artist Chloe Cox [Portrait of Alford Gardner \(rct.uk\)](#)

Linda Haye, OBE by artist Shannon Bono [Portrait of Linda Haye, OBE \(rct.uk\)](#)

Edna Henry by artist Amy Sherald [Portrait of Edna Henry \(rct.uk\)](#)

Carmen Esme Munroe, OBE by artist Sonia Boyce OBE, RA [Portrait of Carmen Esme Munroe, OBE \(rct.uk\)](#)

Gilda Oliver by artist Clifton Powell [Portrait of Gilda Oliver \(rct.uk\)](#)

Professor Sir Godfrey (Geoff) Palmer, OBE, CD by artist Derek Fordjour [Portrait of Professor Sir Godfrey \(Geoff\) Palmer, OBE, CD \(rct.uk\)](#)

Laceta Reid by artist Serge Attukwei Clottey [Portrait of Laceta Reid \(rct.uk\)](#)

John (Big John) Richards by artist Deanio X [Portrait of John \(Big John\) Richards \(rct.uk\)](#)

Jessie Stephens, MBE, SLPM by artist Sahara Longe [Portrait of Jessie Stephens, MBE, SLPM \(rct.uk\)](#)

Use the below activities and discussion points to think about the Windrush portraits as works of art which have an important part to play in telling an important story.

### **Activities**

1. In groups, give the pupils each a portrait from the online exhibition to look at. By looking at the portrait only, are there any details in the work which they think might be important in telling the story of the sitter? Pupils may wish to consider the following:

- Expression – does the sitter look happy, sad, excited, stern, relaxed
- What is the person wearing?
- What else is in the portrait- in the background, or perhaps something that they are holding

What makes you think this detail might be important- and what do you think it might tell you about the person in the portrait?

2. Now give each group the information about each portrait, included on the Royal Collection webpages about each artwork. This will reveal something about the artist's process, and the sitter's story.

- Does this new information align with what the pupils discussed in their groups before they knew the artist's intention- and the sitter's story?
- IF not, how does this change what they thought previously?
- If so, how does it build upon it?

Further information:

- Guidance notes on teaching the history of Windrush can be found via this link to the [Dept. of Education website](#).
- A series of Teaching Resources linked to Windrush can be found on the [British Library website](#).

