

COLLECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

Knowledge is Power by Edward V. Valentine, 1868-DRAFT



ERA

Reconstruction, Late 19th Century

THEMES

Racist Caricatures, Education

CITATION INFORMATION

Knowledge is Power sculpture, 1868, Edward V. Valentine, The Valentine Museum.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. How does art influence our thinking?
2. Describe this sculpture. What message is this popular sculpture by Edward Valentine conveying?
3. How did this piece of commercial art help support the Lost Cause myth?

CONTEXT

Before 1865, teaching Black children to read and write was illegal in much of the South. African Americans access to education was very limited. After the Civil War, Edward Valentine crafted *Knowledge is Power* that supported the Lost Cause myth that Black people were intellectually inferior and not worthy of publicly funded education. His original version of the piece (maquette) shows a focused student looking down, raising his arm; the final piece displays a boy sleeping in class. Valentine also considered other titles for the work like *The Little Truant*, *A Scholar at Sleep*, and *Learning Under Difficulties*.

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Knowledge is Power sculpture, 1868,
Edward V. Valentine,
The Valentine Museum.



QUESTION

What similarities and differences do you notice between the original clay model on the left and the finished piece on your right? What message does each communicate?

NOTE

The clay model (left) is much smaller than the finished piece (right) and is enlarged for comparison purposes here.