

Ecce Homo

Jusepe de Ribera, called Lo Spagnoletto

Oil on canvas

Spanish, 1591–1652

The Clues

In religious iconography the color red can symbolize either love or hate, depending on the context. Based on this symbolism, what does the red garment say about Jesus's motivation?

The Story

John narrates Pilate's presentation of Jesus to the crowd, made famous by Pilate's words, "Behold the Man," which in Latin is *Ecce Homo*. This precise moment in the story of Jesus's mocking is often presented by artists as a portrait, since the crowd turns their gaze from Pilate to the focus of their hatred. "Pilate came out again and said to them, 'Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.' Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Behold, the Man!'" (John 19:4–5, NASB).

The Picture Book

- In Jusepe de Ribera's compelling portrait, he poses the thematic question not to the angry mob, but to the viewer of the portrait: What will you do with Jesus?
- Jesus's confident gaze signifies his knowledge that the crown of thorns and reed scepter (given in mockery) are in reality emblems of his mission.
- The empty background, dramatically lit "tight shot," and direct eye contact strengthen the implied connection between Jesus and the viewer.