

## **A Philosopher lecturing on the Orrery (1766)**

Wright's painting is a celebration of scientific knowledge and the interpreter of this knowledge, the philosopher. The latter dominates the picture and explains the working of the sun and planets via an orrery, a mechanical representation of the solar system. The audience is transfixed by the demonstration, which may be showing the causes of eclipses. Light floods the scene, illuminating the philosopher and the faces of the observers. Frequently, this famous picture is interpreted as a visual expression of the Enlightenment, which Wright portrayed in its Midlands context. The painting was composed in 1766 towards the start of Wright's career and contrasts with the less celebratory imagery of his later years.

**Joseph Wright (1734-1797)**, Oil on Canvas, Derby Museum & Art Gallery.