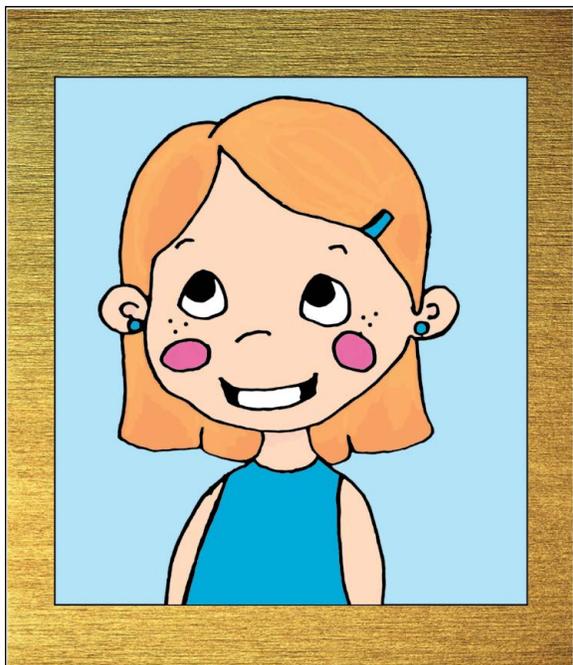


Bringing Portraits to Life

Lesson Plan



Kindergarten – 3rd Grade



Essential Questions

- How do I read or understand a portrait?
- How can acting help me to understand a portrait?
- How does an artist convey character and emotions through portraiture?
- What can the viewer learn through examining the setting and the subject's expression, posture, and clothing?
- How do I imagine the person in the painting would speak and experience the world?
- How do I recognize and express emotions?

Objectives

Students will act out the body posture and facial expressions in different portraits and use this to inform their understanding of the person being portrayed.

Students will view examples of portraits and discuss the setting or backdrop of each portrait, including what the setting might tell the viewer about the person in the portrait.

Students will work in a small group to imagine and describe using adjectives what the person in the portrait might experience and say.

Students will observe how the face changes when acting out different emotions and create drawings based on these observations.

Standards

Louisiana ELA Standards

- Anchor Standards SL 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually quantitatively, and orally.

Louisiana Art Standards

- Creative Expression Strand
- TH-CE-E1 Explore and express various emotions in interpersonal settings
- VA-CE-E1 Explore and identify imagery from a variety of sources and create visual representations.
- VA-CE-E2 Explore and discuss techniques and technologies for visual expression and communication.
- VA-CE-E6 Identify relationships among visual arts, other arts, and disciplines outside of the arts.

National Arts Standards

- Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artists ideas and work.



Key Terms

Portrait– an artwork created about a person (or sometimes animal) that tells us something about the person

Character– a person in a story, novel, or play

Emotion– a strong feeling

Setting– the time and place in which the action of a book, movie, or other artwork takes place

Subject– the person, object, or scene that is the focus of an artwork

Before Your Visit

Familiarize your students with portraits by looking at an example together. The portrait might be of a famous person connected with your social studies or science curriculum. Discuss the setting of the portrait, how the subject is dressed, what the subject is holding or doing, and why the students think the artist chose to portray the person that way. An extension of this would be to look at two portraits of the same person and compare similarities and differences. The National Portrait Gallery is a great resource for finding images to use in your classroom(see page 7 for a full list of resources).

Introduce the key terms **setting** and **character** by reading illustrated storybooks. Have students describe the setting and the main character. Discuss how the story might change with a different setting. Model and practice with students using descriptive adjectives to describe a character’s external features as well as feelings or actions. Ask students to track how the character’s emotions change throughout the story.

At the Museum

Students will look at a several different portraits in the Hilliard Museum’s fall 2016 exhibitions *Face to Face: A Survey of Portraiture by Louisiana Artists* and *Oliver Wasow: Hudson Valley Studio Portraits*. Through close observation and acting, students will learn to look for visual clues to inform their investigation of the portraits and their understanding of how artists portray a subject. These visual clues include the body posture and facial expressions of the person in the portrait and the setting or background of the portrait. These same clues can be used to investigate character and setting in literature and book illustrations.

In a hands-on art activity, students will look closely at their own facial expressions as they act out four different emotions. They will then create four self-portraits, each portraying a different emotion. Through this activity students learn to enliven their own artwork and deepen their understanding of how artists portray feeling and express identity.



After Your Visit

Practice looking at portraits or artworks in the classroom. Have students act or write out what they think will happen next based on the artwork. Students should be able to point out visual evidence in the artwork to explain their predictions.

When reading illustrated books, discuss how the illustrator has portrayed the characters. Examine body posture, facial expressions, and setting. Have students pose as the character or act out a scene. Discuss and write about what the character might be thinking, feeling, and sensing. Discuss the choices the artist made and how the illustrations reflect what the author has written.



Anticipatory Set

Face to Face Exhibition

In the gallery, have students sit on the floor facing you. Review museum behaviors.

Review what the words character and setting mean in a story.

Ask: “What is your favorite book? Who is the main character in the book? How would you describe that character? You could also ask about a movie or cartoon. Discuss different characters and descriptions.”

Ask: “Where does that book take place?” Explain that the **setting** is where a story takes place.

Say: “Today we are going to look at portraits. What is a portrait? (An image of a person or animal, though definitions might vary.) Just like a person in a story is called a character. A person in a painting is called the subject or sometimes the sitter. Portraits also have settings or backgrounds. Let’s look together at a portrait. Have students turn around and look at a portrait in the Face to Face exhibition. Try one of the Willie Birch portraits like a *Different Drummer*. Ask students to identify the subject and the setting of the portrait.”

Gallery Activity

Face to Face Exhibition

Say: “When you are reading a book you know how a character acts and feels through the words and illustrations. In a portrait the artist uses visual clues rather than words to describe the subject and the subject’s world. I often like to think of the subject as the character in a story and imagine what the subject is experiencing. Let’s imagine that we are the boy in the *Different Drummer* painting.”

Act: You should model for students kneeling and pretending to hold drumsticks. Say to students “If you can be quiet you can try this with me.” Have them try the pose and then return to sitting.

Pair/ Share: Ask them to share with a partner what they thought the boy might be seeing. Have a few partners share. Ask what he might be touching and hearing and have a few pairs share.

Ask: “What is an emotion?” See if they can give some examples (happy, sad, angry, proud, determined).

Ask: “How can we tell when someone else is happy or sad?” (Discuss facial expressions and body postures. You may need to act these out for kids or have them act out one or two emotions using only facial expressions and body posture.) Ask if they can tell from their experience of looking at the portrait and acting it out, what the boy might be feeling? Discuss different answers and ask students to support their answers from what they see in the painting.



Group Work: Divide students into smaller groups with a teacher or chaperone. Have the teacher or chaperone scribe for the group. The group will work together to act out and answer questions about a portrait. When the group completes their handout have them sit in front of their chosen portrait. Have groups share and describe what they saw in the portrait that was evidence for their answers. Students may mention other visual clues such as clothing or props.

Oliver Wasow Exhibition

Ask: “How are these portraits different from the ones they saw in *Face to Face*.” Students may notice that these portraits are photographs, or that they are different in size, or that the people are sitting.

Say: “We are going to look at two portraits of the same woman.” Have students compare the two portraits of Dana and discuss the similarities and differences in the settings. Have students imagine what it would feel like to be in each setting. Ask students about Dana’s body posture and facial expressions in each of the portraits. How are they similar and different? How did the differences in setting, posture, and clothing change how they would describe Dana?

Hands-On Art Activity

Town Building

Review: Ask students what a portrait is and what kinds of clues we can find in a portrait, such as setting, clothing, body posture, and facial expressions. Use a poster reproduction of a portrait to discuss each type of clue.

Explain: “You will be making portraits today that express different emotions.” Review what emotions are by acting out an emotion quietly using facial expressions and having the children guess what it is. Give them a chance to act out the emotion quietly using only their facial expressions.

At Tables: Have children fold a large piece of paper into four equal squares and draw an oval or outline of a face in each square. Make sure the face outline is big enough- demonstrate size of oval in relation to the square. (For small children have the oval already drawn.)

Act and Draw: Explain that they will act out the emotion you call out using only their face, not voice or body. Call out an emotion, such as happy, sad, angry, or surprised. Act out the emotion with the children, Have children look in their mirror and observe their own facial expression. Students should draw their expression paying close attention to mouth, eyes, and eyebrows. Do this four times, so that each of the squares is filled with a different kind of emotion.

Reflect and Critique: Display portraits on tables. Have students take a tour around to see all of the drawings. Discuss how to positively critique work. Model saying “I like how...”. Or “Tell me more about your drawing...” Discuss similarities and differences between the drawings. This can be done in the classroom, if there is not enough time at the museum.



Resources

The National Portrait Gallery <http://npg.si.edu/portraits>

Actor's Tool Box <https://educationcloset.com/2010/12/14/actors-toolbox-steps/>



Bringing Portraits to Life Handout

Look carefully at the portrait. Silently act out the body posture and expression of the subject(s) in the portrait. Imagine and describe what the subject or subjects of the portrait would:

Hear:

Touch:

See:

Smell:

What is the setting for the portrait?

Does the setting give you any clues about the subject?

If the subject were a character in a book what do you think would happen next?

