



Classroom Extension Activities

Identity & Self-portraiture: Secondary (6th-12th Grade)

In the classroom, students will extend their experience by practicing close viewing of works of art, exploring portraiture, and utilizing various media to create portraits of self, community, and characters.

Art Investigation

Before or after museum program

Whole class, 15+ minutes

Learning Target: Students analyze a portrait to gain insight about the person portrayed.

Standards:

Washington Visual Arts Standards

- Re8.1.6 Interpret art by distinguishing between relevant and non-relevant contextual information and analyzing subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.
- Re8.1.7 Interpret art by analyzing art-making approaches, the characteristics of form and structure, relevant contextual information, subject matter, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.
- Re8.1.8 Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art-making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.
- Re8.1.I Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.
- Re8.1.III Analyze differing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works in order to select and defend a plausible critical analysis.

Materials:

A portrait, projected where all students can see it. Recommended works of art can be found in TAM's [Teacher Resource: Portraits collection here](#).

Lesson Procedure:

Begin by activating students' prior knowledge about the elements of art and/or principles of design. You may wish to focus on a specific element or principle for the lesson, or study them holistically. If focusing on a specific element/principle, co-create a definition of it or revisit a previously-created definition.

Project the chosen work of art so all students can see it. First, allow students to quietly look at the image for at least 30 seconds. After 15 seconds or so, you may prompt them with instructions such as:

- Have your eyes start at the top of the picture and slowly work their way down to the bottom
- Have your eyes start at the left side of the picture and slowly work their way across
- Look carefully at what is in the corners of the picture
- Look carefully at what is in the center of the picture

Then, use Visual Thinking Strategies questions to help students analyze the image.

- Ask, "What do you notice?"
 - o Call on one student to point out something they notice in the art.
- Ask, "What do you see that makes you say that?"
 - o Ask that same student to describe why they said what they did. (For example, "It looks like clouds because the shapes are fluffy and layered.")
 - o Paraphrase what the student said – this is a good opportunity to incorporate target vocabulary, make connections with other learning or what other students said, and check for understanding.

- Ask, "What else can we find?"
 - o Call on another student to point out something they notice, and repeat the process, asking them to describe their reason.
- Repeat until at least 5 students have had the chance to share something they noticed.

If the conversation does not organically move there, after a few minutes focus students' attention to what we can learn about the character portrayed. You might use questions like:

- What is this person feeling?
- What is important to this person?
- What emotions are evoked by the [colors, symbols, background, etc.]? What does that tell us about the person?

For each question, ensure that students support their answer with evidence from the portrait by asking "What do you see that makes you say that?"

I Am Poem

After museum program

Whole class, 30+ minutes

Learning Target: Students write an autobiographical poem to supplement the ideas portrayed in their self-portrait.

Standards:

Materials:

Student artwork and planning sheets from museum program
“I Am” poem template (provided, separate document)

Lesson Procedure:

Distribute student artwork and completed planning sheets for students to use as a starting point. If needed, allow a few moments for students to review their work and recall the four important things they had identified about themselves on their planning sheets.

Students will be expanding on these four important things, revealing more about themselves with an “I Am” poem. Distribute and explain the template. Allow time for students to write their poems.

If desired, have students share their poems in small groups or with the whole class.

Variations:

1. Use another autobiographical poem template, such as “Where I’m From” (original [here](#), template [here](#)).
2. As a class or in small groups, read and analyze several autobiographical poems, such as George Ella Lyon’s “[Where I’m From](#),” Nazim Hikmet’s “[Autobiography](#),” excerpts from Allen Ginsberg’s “[Howl](#),” and Diane Wacoski’s “[Thanking my Mother for Piano Lessons](#).” Students can choose from the “I Am” or “Where I’m From” templates, or create their own poem using these as inspiration.
3. Write an “autobiographical” poem from the perspective of a character in a book, play, or story the class is reading.