



Objective: To teach children about the history of portraits in art and the different techniques used to create a portrait.

A) Introduction/Vocabulary

Today we are going to talk about portraits. **Portraits show the likeness of a person and can be a painting or drawing, sculpture or photograph.** Portrait drawing goes back all the way to the beginning of humanity. In ancient times, artists would produce images of their gods and kings. The Egyptians would paint portraits of important people on their tombs. These portraits were done in **profile, which is a side view of a face.** They would also try to show the person's character by painting symbols around the person's face.

Before photography was invented, having your portrait done was the only record for your ancestors. Important people such as kings and queens, conquerors and religious leaders paid artists to paint their portraits. This was a great way for artists to make a living, so all the important artists made portraits. These **realistic portraits not only showed what people looked like,** they were also full of clues about their lives. Rulers were shown with their crowns and robes; rich people were wearing expensive clothes and jewels; and soldiers wore their uniforms.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, artists began to explore different ways of using color, and portraits began to show more contrast between light and dark so that faces seemed to glow in the shadows or emerge from a mysterious background. Artists also began to experiment with their subjects' poses, painting them from different angles, instead of a formal pose. Religious figures were a popular theme during this period. These portraits were done in an idealized manner, which means the subjects did not look like everyday people; rather their features were perfect and their faces glowed to show that they were "god like."

The demand for portraits rose dramatically in the 18th and early 19th centuries as it became fashionable for rich people to have their portraits painted. These people often wanted the artist to make them look more attractive than they were in real life and many artists were not willing to do that. People also wanted to be painted with their possessions as a symbol of their wealth so artists were asked to include houses, jewels, animals and glamorous clothes.

The invention of photography in the mid 1800's gave people an easier way to make realistic portraits. Artists thought there was no point in copying photography and started thinking of new ways to create portraits by using different painting techniques. The modern artists, like Picasso, began experimenting with **abstract portraits. Abstract artists use geometric shapes and lines as well as bold colors.**



Artists also like to paint pictures of themselves. This is called a self portrait. Creating self portraits allowed the artists to practice the human face and form on a very available subject, themselves! It also was a way to create a visual history of their lives. Artists use self- portrayal for many reasons; for some, it is a means of studying character, for others, a demonstration of both technical and social status. The artist that painted the most self portraits was Rembrandt with over 100. Some artists like to secretly include portraits of themselves in their paintings like Alfred Hitchcock did in his movies.

Let's look at some art and talk about the ideas we have discussed.

C) Artwork

Title: Mona Lisa, 1503

Artist: Leonardo da Vinci,

Details: Painted Portrait

- The Mona Lisa is a portraits of the wife of a rick silk merchant.
- It took Leonardo four years to complete the printing.
- The portrait shows a young woman seated in a formal pose on a balcony high above a vast landscape that recedes into icy mountains, winding paths and a distant bridge. The blurred outlines, graceful figure and dramatic contrasts of light and dark give this painting an overall feeling of calm.
- Mona Lisa's mysterious smile is her most famous feature. What do you think she was thinking about?
- Leonardo da Vinci was one of the greatest painters in history and he was a genius with the use of color and perspective. In addition to painting, he was also a scientist and inventor of hundreds of inventions which were centuries ahead of his time. He was very famous and successful during his lifetime and was employed by the royal families and leaders of Italy.

Title: Self Portrait

Artist: Vincent van Gogh, 1889

Details: Painting

- van Gogh painted over 40 self portraits often wearing suits to show himself as a groomed gentleman.
- This self portrait was created with thick, bold swirling strokes of color. Until 1888, van Gogh's paintings featured dots and dashes, still showing his affection for pointillism. This self portrait shows his move away from pointillism to larger, swirling, brush strokes.
- He produced a lot of artwork in his lifetime, but he only sold one painting while he was alive. People didn't understand his work. Many years after his death, some of his paintings sold for over fifty million dollars each. He had many careers before becoming an artist; a pastor, an office worker and a teacher.



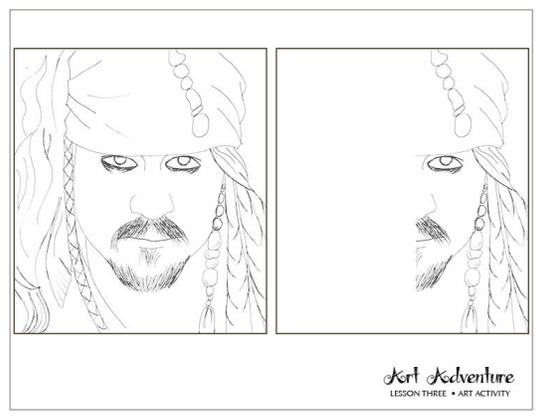
Reinforcement Activity

Lesson 3 - 4th Grade

Materials provided:
sheet of paper with Captain Jack Sparrow

Children provide: pencil

Give each student a sheet of paper with the drawing on it. Using their pencils, have the students create the half of Captain Jack Sparrow's face that has been erased. An example of what it looks like is on the left hand side of the paper.



Optional Activity:

Materials provided: black paper

Children provide: white crayons

Have the children pair off with the person across from them. The children will take turns posing for each other and creating silhouettes of each other. In addition, have the children draw symbols around the border of the page depicting their "subjects" life in order to show their character as they did in Egyptian times. For example, if the person likes to read, you could add a book or maybe include their pet. You will need to interview your subject so you will know what to include.



Additional Background Material:

This material is provided to give you, the discussion leader, additional information about the artists and paintings that may help you answer questions or generate additional discussion with the children if time permits. You are not expected or required to cover this information in the classroom.

Leonardo da Vinci was born on April 15, 1452 in Vinci, Italy (near Florence). His father was a wealthy notary; his mother a peasant woman. His father took custody of him and raised him. He eventually had 17 half sisters and brothers. He grew up surrounded by scholarly texts and high education, advancing rapidly socially and intellectually. His monumental talent became clear at the early age of 15, when his father sent him to apprentice at the famous workshop of painter and sculptor Andrea del Verrochio in Florence.

Leonardo was not only one of the smartest people ever and master artist of the High Renaissance period, he was also known for his handsome good looks, fine singing voice, strict vegetarian diet and love of animals. He is remembered not only for his colossal talent as a painter, but also as a celebrated sculptor, architect, engineer and scientist. The Mona Lisa, one of the world's most famous paintings, is believed to be a portrait of Monna ("Mrs.") Lisa (or Elisabetta) Gherardini del Giocondo. Some believe her smile is a symbol of her name as "gioconda" also means "cheerful." The original painting is at the Louvre in Paris. She was actually stolen from the Louvre in 1911, but found and returned in 1913. The recent books and movies (like "The Da Vinci Code"), have reinvigorated discussion about this enigmatic painting. One thing is certain, when this painting was created in the early 15th century, it represented a turning point in the history of portraiture.

Vincent van Gogh was born in the Netherlands on March 30, 1853. He pursued a number of careers and moved frequently before moving to France to devote himself to painting. Using himself as a readily available model, van Gogh followed in the footsteps of many other artists (like Albrecht, Rembrandt, and Gustave Courbet) and took a probing look at himself through his painting. Van Gogh created at least 24 self-portraits during this two-year period. They range from images of an uncertain artist portrayed in dark, somber colors, to brightly colored portrayals of confidence, to representations of ideas. Van Gogh is believed to have suffered from a mental illness, possibly bipolar disorder. In a dispute with a longtime, close friend, artist Paul Gauguin, van Gogh threatened Gauguin with a knife or razor blade, but turned it on himself later and cut off his left ear. All of his self-portraits from that moment on feature his head turned to the left, hiding his cut-off ear, showing only the right side of his face. Sadly, van Gogh committed suicide in July 1890. Several of van Gogh's paintings are among the most expensive in the world. His painting, Portrait of Doctor Gachet, sold for \$82.5 million in 1990.