



A module series introducing new ideas for the classroom

PORTRAITS AS A WINDOW INTO HISTORY

By Alicia Dixon and Healoha Johnston

In this lesson, written for Grades 5 and up, portraits are used as a way for students to explore identity. This lesson encourages students to look at a portrait of a historical figure, Queen Lili'uokalani of the Hawaiian Kingdom, and examine symbols. Students will then create their own self-portrait that incorporates personal symbols. They will also write an artist statement.

This lesson includes:

- A broad overview of the big idea and goals
- Detailed steps for the lesson
- Guiding questions for discussions with students
- Recommendations for art materials
- A close-looking video led by Healoha Johnston
- Worksheets for students

There is an accompanying Learning Lab collection where you can view examples of each lesson. Please visit smithsonianapa.org/learn/making-art/ to find the Learning Lab in the Portraits as a Window into History module.

Let's begin!

OVERVIEW	
BIG IDEA	Students will use portraiture to explore personal identity, understanding historical conflicts, and develop critical thinking skills. They will also understand that images link to an individual's legacy and will create a self-portrait incorporating symbols important to them.
GOALS	Students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider how a portrait can be used to influence the legacy of an individual• Identify symbols and explain their meaning and purpose in portraiture• Apply their knowledge to create a self portrait that integrates symbols
CREATION	A self portrait and corresponding artist's statement.

CONSTRAINTS: *This lessons' time, age range, and materials are listed here.*

TIME REQUIRED	2-3 lesson blocks (45 min. each)
BEST FOR AGES	Grade 5 and higher (See 'Adaptations' for ideas on how to use this lesson for younger and older students)
SUGGESTED MATERIALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video of Healoha Johnston analyzing a portrait of Queen Lili'uokalani• Portrait of Queen Lili'uokalani by A. Weger• Portrait of Queen Lili'uokalani by M. Dickson• A camera or webcam• Editing software• Presentation on elements of portraiture in the Learning Lab• Instruction for self-portrait and artist statement (Appendix A)• Brainstorming Worksheet for Self Portrait (Appendix B)
STANDARDS	<p>Common Core (Grades 6- 8) Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7)• Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.(CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7)• Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6- 8.2) <p>National Core Art Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• VA: Re7.1.6 Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal ways people live around the world and what they value.• VA:Cr3.1.7a Reflect on and explain important information about personal artwork in an artist statement or another format.
SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visual analysis, thinking• Reading portraiture• Understanding symbolism• Historical thinking (analyzing historical sources, creating and supporting a historical argument)
SOCIAL/ EMOTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring self-identity• Developing empathy by learning others' stories

IMPLEMENTATION

For this lesson, students will learn about an important figure in the history of the Hawaiian Kingdom, Queen Lili'uokalani. Students will hear from an expert on Queen Lili'uokalani's life and legacy, art historian and curator, Healoha Johnston. As students learn more about this historical figure, they will also learn how to read a portrait. Below are guiding questions to help students begin thinking about the importance of portraiture in history, and how they might begin to create their own self-portrait.

GUIDING QUESTIONS for DISCUSSION

- How do you “read” a portrait? How can historical images or documents help us understand history and act as historians?
- How do we determine what really happened in history? How can examining multiple documents and perspectives help us uncover the real story? What lesser known stories in history are important to learn in order to gain a wider understanding of an event, a place, and a historical figure?
- How can artists depict power in their work?
- If I could create an image of myself for future generations, how would I compose it? What would I want people to know about my story?

STEPS and GUIDELINES

Below are the specific steps and guidelines you can use with your students. For this lesson, we used three 45-minute time blocks over zoom. This lesson can be easily modified for in-person sessions as well.

DAY ONE

1. Use Zoom Out and Claim / Support Reason to analyze the portrait of Queen Lili'uokalani in the [Smithsonian Learning Lab](#):
 - a. Ask students to write down what they see in various parts of the image that have been enlarged.
 - b. Once the entire image has been revealed, ask students to make a claim about the sitter in the portrait. Ask them to use their observations from the zoom out activity to support their claim.
 - i. For example: *this person is a hard worker because they are wearing heavy, dirty, work boots.*
 - c. Ask students what questions they have about the image that might affect their claim. What additional sources would they need with this portrait in order to be confident in speaking about her?
2. Show students Healoha Johnston's video analyzing the portrait of Queen Lili'uokalani in the [Smithsonian Learning Lab](#).
3. After showing students the video, review what defines a portrait. A portrait is an image of a person that is created by an artist. Ask students:
 - a. What is a portrait, in their own words?
 - b. What truths and questions could be discovered in a portrait?
 - c. How can a portrait reflect the setting, family, or friends of the sitter?
 - d. Can a portrait tell us about the artist?
4. Review the value of a portrait as a primary source and portraiture's role in historical study.
5. Inform students that they will be creating their own self-portrait in order to gain a deeper understanding of how a person can make decisions for a portrait that represents themselves.
6. Challenge students to begin thinking about what intentional choices they will make in the creation of their portrait.

7. Introduce the elements of portraiture to students:
 - a. **Facial expression:** students can practice by making the face of a deep thinker, a person with a sense of humor, or a shy person.
 - b. **Pose:** students can practice by posing as a confident person, a shy person, or a laid-back person.
 - c. **Clothing:** students can look at the images in the Learning Lab to speculate what clothing reveals about identity.
 - d. **Additional Objects:** have students point to images in the portrait in order to make a claim about the identity of the sitter. Introduce the definition of symbolism and symbols and ask students to provide quick examples of symbols that could be used to represent things like wealth, education, and travel.
8. Exit Ticket: Ask students to name an object that could be used as a symbol and explain why and how they would use it as a symbol.

DAY TWO

1. Outline the portrait assignment, which can be shared with students in the “Self-Portrait: The Image and The Story worksheet” (this can be found in the Appendix)
 - a. **For students:** You will create a self-portrait using your webcam or phone camera. You need to make decisions about how you arrange the portrait as it is intended to show the world who you are.
2. Outline for students how to write an artist statement, which can also be shared in the same student worksheet:
 - a. **For students:** Write an artist statement to describe the choices you made in arranging your self-portrait. Make sure to include:
 - i. Your name, grade, and school.
 - ii. A description of what you created (a self-portrait photograph)
 - iii. The meaning and symbolism behind each of the elements of your self- portrait: pose or facial expression, clothing, and additional object(s).
 - iv. Describe the process of creating this image. What steps did you take? Was the process easy? What did you find difficult about the process?
 - v. After creating your own portrait, do you think the photograph captured who you are? Do you think portraits are a good way to analyze history? What are the advantages of using them as primary sources? What are the disadvantages?
3. Exit Ticket: Ask students to complete a brainstorming worksheet (also in the Appendix) to help them draft their ideas for their own portrait. This will also allow the teacher to observe if the students have grasped the objective of the project and assess whether or not they are ready to create their work.
 - a. **For students:** Complete this chart that will help you plan how you wish to capture yourself in a portrait. You may draw and/or write your ideas. Make sure to consider the following:
 - i. How will you pose? What will that pose symbolize about how you see yourself?
 - ii. What outfit will you wear? What does this say about how others see you?
 - iii. What additional object(s) will appear in your portrait? How do they symbolize what is important to you?

DAY THREE

At the beginning of this final session, give students time to complete their portraits and artist statements. Once students are ready to share their portraits and artist statements, ask students to show the class their work.

ADAPTATIONS

Below are ideas on how this lesson can be adapted for various age levels:

- Students can use magazines to create likeness of themselves instead of the photograph project.
- Younger students can use a fill in the blank artist statements to reflect on their choices for making their portrait.
- Younger students can pose so that the teacher takes their photo, but they make the choices about the shoot.
- Older students can consider the background or setting of a portrait and its impact on the message of the portrait.

Self-Portrait

The Image and the Story

Step 1: The Portrait

You will create a self-portrait using your webcam or phone camera. You need to make decisions about how you arrange the portrait as it is intended to show the world who you are.

Elements of Your Self-Portrait	Symbolism in Your Self-Portrait
Pose/Facial Expression	This should symbolize how you see yourself.
Clothing	This should symbolize how others see you or how you wish others would see you.
Additional Object	You will include an additional object that will symbolize what is important to you.

Step 2: The Artist Statement

Write an artist statement to describe the choices you made in arranging your self-portrait. Make sure to include:

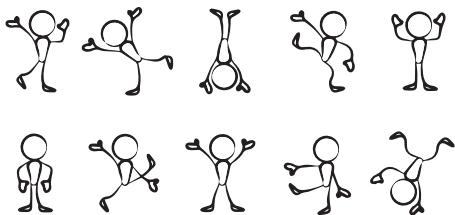
- Your name, grade, and school.
- A description of what you created (a self-portrait photograph)
- The meaning/ symbolism behind each of the elements of your self-portrait: pose/ facial expression, clothing, and additional object/s.
- Describe the process of creating this image. What steps did you take? Was the process easy? What did you find difficult about the process?
- After creating your own portrait, do you think the photograph captured who you are? Do you think portraits are a good way to analyze history? What are the advantages of using them as primary sources? What are the disadvantages?

Brainstorming for the Self-Portrait

Complete the chart below to plan how you wish to capture who you are in a portrait.
You may draw and/or write your ideas.

POSE or FACIAL EXPRESSION

- How will you pose?
- What will your facial expression be?
- What do these choices say about you?



CLOTHING

- What outfit will you be wearing?
- What does this say about how others see you?



ADDITIONAL OBJECT

- What additional object or objects will be in the portrait?
- How do they symbolize what is important to you?

