

Self-portrait on Paper

Related Subjects: Visual and Performing Arts
English-Language Arts

Grades: 3-5

Medium: Chalk pastel

Author: MCASD Office of Education

Time: 90 minute lesson

Summary:

In this lesson, students will be guided into creating their own self-portrait in steps using colored pastels. They will also use their self-portraits as a springboard to write a personal narrative.



Materials:

- Sketchbooks (or unlined paper)
- Pencils
- Rulers
- Chalk pastels
- Baby wipes (if no sink is available)
- Pre-made color wheel
- Color wheels
- Mirrors
- Lined paper for personal narrative
- Strong hairspray or fixative

Glossary:

- *Portrait* – a picture an artist makes of a person, usually portraying the face.
- *Primary colors* – the colors red, blue, and yellow that along with black and white make up all other colors. Primary colors cannot be made by mixing other colors.
- *Secondary colors* – when two primaries are mixed together to create a new color.
- *Self-portrait* – a portrait that an artist paints of himself or herself.

Preparation for Teachers:

- Prepare images of self portraits – transparencies, handouts, PowerPoint presentations, etc. For digital files of the museum image in this packet, email education@mcasd.org.
- Practice drawing a self-portrait to feel comfortable with the example.



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Pre-project class discussion:

- Begin by stating the objective of the lesson – creating a self-portrait using pencil and chalk.
- Show examples of self portraits. Ask questions to guide discussion: *Why do artists make portraits and self-portraits? What can we learn about the individuals depicted by studying self-portraits? What do you observe?*
- Begin talking about color: *What feelings do colors give us? Where do we see people using color to get our attention (TV, advertising, etc.)? What if you only had red, yellow and blue? Could you make other colors from these three? Briefly go over the color wheel.*

Project procedure:

- Distribute sketchbooks, chalk, rulers, pencils, and mirrors to students.
- On an overhead projector or chalk board, model basics of self-portraiture as students follow along. Remind them to work with their pencils lightly at first and that this is an interpretation of themselves; not even a photo looks EXACTLY like us.
 - Start near the top of your page. Draw an oval shape for the head, studying your own face in the mirror.
 - Next, lightly draw a vertical dashed line, from the top of the head down to the chin. This will cut the face into two equal parts.
 - Draw another dashed line, from the top of the head down to the chin. This will cut the face into two equal parts.
 - Draw another dashed line a little higher than the midpoint so it divides the face horizontally. Use this line to position the eyes. Study your eye shape in the mirror before you draw. Notice your eyelid and how it affects the shape. There should be an 'eye's width' between the two eyes to achieve correct proportion. Lightly draw the pupils and the eyebrows with pencil.
 - Half-way between the eyes and chin is the hardest part to draw for most people – the nose. An easy way to draw the nose is so simplify it. Lightly draw two vertical lines from the outside corners of your nose down. These are the sides of your nose. To make the outer lines of the nostrils, draw two parentheses and then very lightly draw the nostril holes. If colored in too darkly, they will remind you of a pig's nose. To finish the nose, join the two nostril holes by making a "u-shaped" line.
 - The mouth is connected to the nose and is located $\frac{1}{2}$ way between the nose and the chin. Study your mouth in the mirror and notice your upper lip and bottom lip. Be careful to allow enough space under your nose for your mouth.
 - Next, look at your ears. They extend all the way from your eyebrows to the bottom of your nose. Notice their shape in the mirror and draw them now.
 - Study your neck in the mirror. Begin by starting from your ears on each side and drawing a line down vertically, making sure it is nice and wide.
 - Lastly, look at your hair in the mirror. Notice how it begins more on top of your face than at the top line of your head. Draw the hair making sure you are also looking in your mirror. Finally, add glasses, earrings, and other details if you are wearing them. Add your shirt and shoulders below your neck.
- Remind students before they begin to color their drawings to fill the whole page with their self-portrait and background, making sure they mix colors. Also, have the students choose particular colors to help create a mood or feelings to represent themselves better. Do they want to use warm colors (reds, oranges, yellows), cool colors (blues, purples, greens), or a combination of both? Caution them: blending too much with their fingers will muddy their drawing.



Post-project class discussion:

- When finished, students will write a personal narrative about themselves on lined paper. (Some suggestions: *What have you experienced in your life? Talk about your place in your family. What are your likes and dislikes? When you drew your self-portrait did you sketch yourself as happy or as upset? Why?*). This can be an in-school assignment or given as homework.

Extensions:

- English-language arts: Students can make narrative presentations.

Teaching Tips:

- Sketchbooks can be made by using any higher quality white paper (about 20 sheets folded in half), three-hole punching it, and then binding it with yarn.
- Mirrors can be purchased at your local dollar store. Larger than palm-sized mirrors with built-in bases work well for younger students.

CA Content Standards:

Third Grade Visual Arts

2.1 Explore ideas for art in a personal sketchbook

Third Grade English-Language Arts

2.1 Write narratives

Fourth Grade Visual Arts

1.5 Describe and analyze the elements of art (color, shape/form, line, texture, space and value), emphasizing form, as they are used in works of art and found in the environment.

4.5 Describe how the individual experiences of an artist may influence the development of specific works of art

Fourth Grade English-Language Arts

2.1 Write narratives

Fifth Grade Visual Arts

4.4 Assess their own works of art, using specific criteria, and describe what changes they would make for improvement.



Bibliography/Webography

[National Portrait Gallery Online](http://www.npg.org.uk/index.php) -<http://www.npg.org.uk/index.php>

Search the collection for self-portraits that span the last 500 years. The E-learning component under the education section has lots of great information and classroom activities.

[Portrait for Kids, National Gallery of Art](http://georgewashington.si.edu/kids/portrait.html)—<http://georgewashington.si.edu/kids/portrait.html>

Follow the clues and help solve a make-believe mystery! Using your noggin and a special spyglass tool, you'll uncover hidden layers of the painting and learn fascinating facts about the portrait along the way, from the National Gallery of Art. Let the sleuthing begin!

Bell, Julian. *Five Hundred Self-Portraits*. London: Phaidon Press, 2000.

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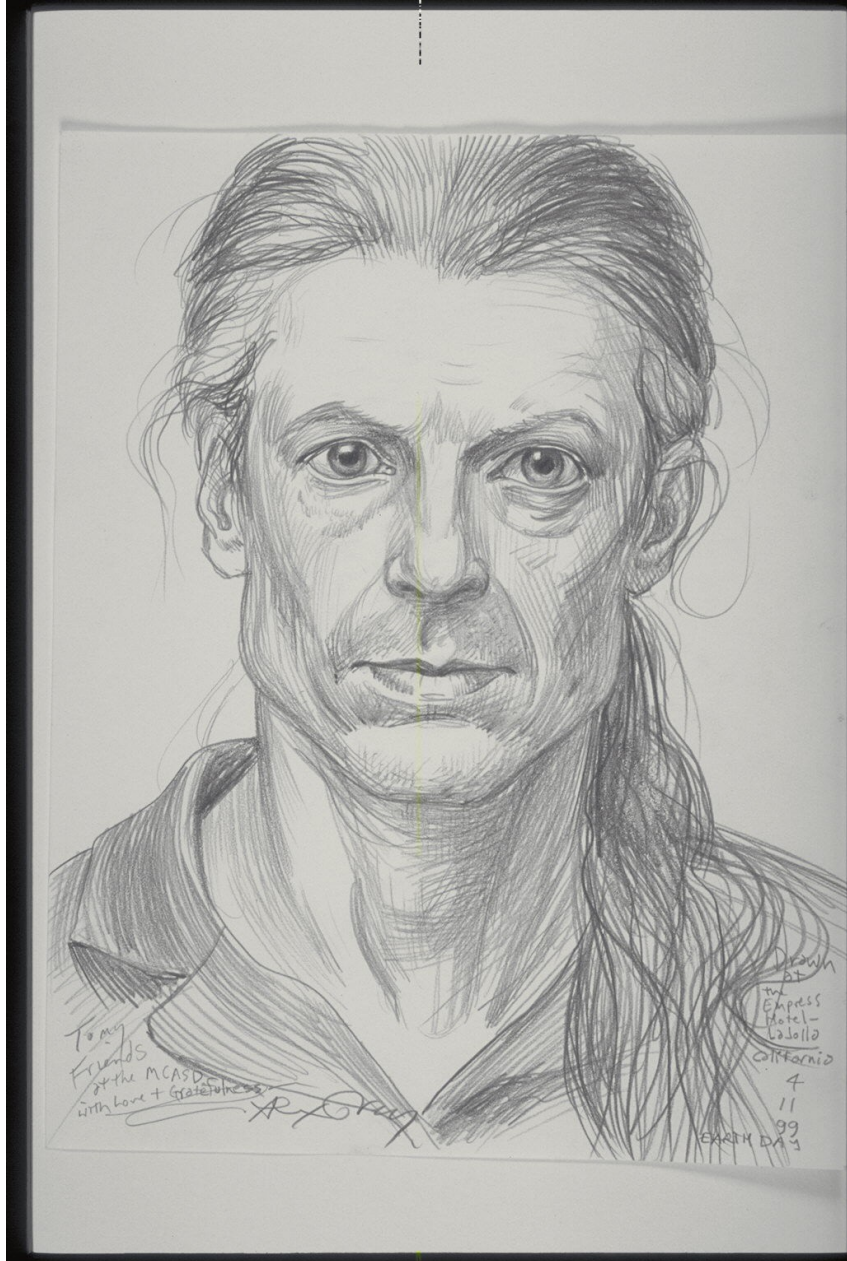
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Rohmer, Harriet (Ed.). *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-portraits by Fourteen Artists*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 1997.



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Alex Grey, *Untitled (Self-Portrait)*, 1999. Graphite on paper, gift of the artist.

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