

Activity: Life-Size Portraits

Students will examine the historical portraits of *Will Rogers*, *Sequoyah*, *Robert S. Kerr*, and *Jim Thorpe* and create a life-size portrait of a partner. Students will then discuss the visual art techniques used to communicate likeness and expression in a portrait.

Grades: May be adapted for: Upper Elementary (3-5), Middle School (6-8), High School (9-12)

Subjects: Visual Arts

Time Required: At least three class-periods

PASS Objectives Addressed:

Grade 4 – The Arts

Standard 1: Language of Visual Art – The student will identify visual art terms (e.g., architecture, contour, medium, mixed media, perspective, symbol).

1. Know how works of art are made with respect to the materials, media, techniques, and sources of ideas.
2. Describe and use the principles of design: rhythm, balance, contrast, movement, variety, center of interest (emphasis), and repetition in works of art.
3. Describe and use the elements of art: line, color, form, shape, texture, value (light and dark), and space in works of art.
4. Discuss observations of visual and expressive features seen in the environment (such as colors, textures, shapes).

Standard 2: Visual Art History and Culture – The student will recognize the development of visual art from an historical and cultural perspective.

3. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of several fields of art such as painting, sculpture, drawing, computer graphics, printmaking, architecture, and fiber arts.

Standard 3: Visual Art Expression – The student will observe, select, and utilize a variety of ideas and subject matter in creating original works of art.

1. Make original works of art using a variety of materials (media), and techniques (skills), and sources for ideas.
2. Use observation, memory and imagination in making original works of art.
3. Apply knowledge of a basic art vocabulary through experiences in making original works of art.

High School- The Arts

Standard 1: Language of Visual Art - The student will identify visual art terms (e.g., content, engraving, foreshortening, mosaic, perspective)

1. Identify and apply knowledge of the principles of design: rhythm, balance (symmetrical, asymmetrical, radial) contrast, movement, variety, center of interest (emphasis), and repetition in personal artwork, and the artwork of others.
2. Identify and apply the elements of art: line, color, form, shape, texture, value (light and dark), and space in works of art. Discriminate between types of shape (geometric and organic), colors (primary, secondary, complementary, intermediates, neutrals, tints, tones, shades, and values), lines (characteristics, quality), textures (tactile and visual), and space (background,

middleground, foreground, placement, one-, two-, and three-point perspective, overlap, negative, positive, size, color) in personal artwork, and the art work of others.

Standard 3: Visual Art Expression - The student will observe, select, and utilize a variety of ideas and subject matter in creating original works of art.

1. Create original two- and three-dimensional works of art from observation, memory and imagination using a variety of art media

3. Develop and apply skills and techniques using a variety of art media, and processes in making two- and three-dimensional works of art:

Drawing media: pencils, colored pencils, markers, chalks, crayons, oil-pastels. processes: sketching, contour line, hatching, crosshatching, stippling, rendering, shading.

Painting: media: tempera, watercolor, oil, and acrylic. processes: wet-on-wet, wet-on-dry, wash, resist, sponge..

Standard 4: Visual Art Appreciation - The student will appreciate visual art as a vehicle of human expression.

2. Demonstrate respect for their work and the work of others.

Materials

- Images of [*Will Rogers*](#), [*Sequoyah*](#), [*Robert S. Kerr*](#), and [*Jim Thorpe*](#)
- Butcher paper
- Broad tip markers
- Paint (tempera or acrylic may be appropriate)
- Paint brushes (various sizes)
- Mixing trays (paper plates)
- Access to water (for mixing paint and washing brushes)
- Water containers

Lesson Steps

1. Examine and discuss the educational resources for Will Rogers, Sequoyah, Robert S. Kerr, and Jim Thorpe. Be sure to include discussion on the 'Details' section as well as 'First Analysis and Criticism.'
2. Assign or allow the students to choose partners.
3. With butcher paper and a broad tip marker, have the students trace the outline of their partner's bodies onto the butcher paper while lying on the ground. Each student should have an outline of a partner's body.
4. The face:
 - a. With paint, instruct the students to fill in the face of their partner's outline. Their partner does not have to model for them, as Charles Banks Wilson did not have the subjects of the historical portraits model for him. Ask the students to think about their partner and consider the following when painting the face:
 - i. What expression does he/she usually have on their face?
 - ii. Do they smile a lot?
 - iii. Do they wear glasses?
 - iv. Do they have their ears pierced? What kind of jewelry do they usually wear?

- v. What color are their eyes?
 - vi. Is their skin tone light or dark?
 - b. Instruct the students in color mixing and brush techniques to achieve a likeness of their partner's face.
 - c. Charles Banks Wilson looked at hundreds of images of Will Rogers' face in order to achieve a likeness for him. He didn't base it on just one glance.
5. The hair:
 - a. Instruct the students to paint the hair color and style they most associate with their partner.
6. The clothes:
 - a. Maybe the partner has a favorite outfit or style of dress which expresses their personality. Have the students consider their partner's style when choosing the colors and designs of the clothes on their partner's body.
 - b. Although Sequoyah was only half-Cherokee, he was known to wear a traditional turban and Cherokee clothing. The outfit he is wearing in Banks' painting is probably not what he wore every day, but it establishes the man's likeness and represents his character.
7. The shoes:
 - a. Instruct the students to consider their partner's favorite activity when choosing what shoes to paint. Do they like to run? Maybe their partner is known for skating. If so, skates would accurately portray their personality.
 - b. Jim Thorpe was known for his Olympic achievements in track and field; therefore, Wilson painted Thorpe wearing track shoes which were true to date for the 1912 Olympics.
8. The setting:
 - a. Painting the setting for the partner's likeness is a good opportunity to get creative. In Banks' paintings, Will Rogers was depicted on a pastoral airstrip which represented his interest in aviation. Sequoyah was painted in front of his log cabin with much of the foliage of eastern Oklahoma where he lived. Kerr was of course in his office as he was known to work hard, and Thorpe was on the track at the Olympics.
 - b. Ask the students to think about the perfect setting for their partner to communicate who they are. Perhaps their partner loves to be outside; or maybe the opposite is true and they love to play video games in their bedroom. If so, what color are their walls? What kind of books do they have in their room?
 - c. This part of the activity might take some discussion between the partners.
9. Symbols:
 - a. Wilson included many symbols to capture the true characters of his subjects.
 - i. Notice Will Rogers had a newspaper in his pocket as he was known to follow current events to express his commentary in his own newspaper column.
 - ii. A Bible sits on Kerr's desk as he was known to refer to scripture when speechwriting.
 - b. Instruct their students to add any little details which may further capture their partner's likeness. Details may include their favorite band poster on the wall behind them, or their dream car on the street beside them.

10. Finishing touches:
 - a. The students should take a few extra minutes to make final details and bring the whole composition together.

11. Once the paintings are complete and dry, ignite a group discussion about each students painting.
 - a. Ask the other students to critique each other.
 - b. Helpful resources for analyzing and critiquing artwork can be found here:
 - i. [Teaching Students to Critique](#)
 - ii. [Art Critiques Made Easy](#)