

Students identify the unique qualities of their families' histories and current interests and beliefs.

Students create images that represent their families' characteristics. These trees become part of a class forest in which children recognize similarities among their families.

Interpersonal

Individual

Naturalist

Spatial

Extended family: people who have a close relationship to one another by birth, adoption, or other circumstances

Genealogy: the study of family history

Nuclear family: typically parents and their children

Visual Arts Standard #2

Uses knowledge of structures and functions

Social Studies Standard #4

Individual Development and Identity—experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

Health Education Standard #2

Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.

Background Information

People in cultures around the world have always been interested in *who* and *where* they came from. Family history was originally passed from generation to generation orally. The term *genealogy*, comes from two Greek words meaning family and science. Recording *family* history has become a *science* that requires much research and record keeping.

Many people make decorative family trees. Family trees designs were often decorated with angels, wreaths, banners, and pictures of family members. Family Bibles often contained smaller versions of family trees. Many women made embroidered and quilted versions of family trees.

Resources

Climbing Your Family Tree: Online and Off-Line Genealogy for Kids by Ira Wolfman

Updated version of the author's excellent *Do People Grow on Family Trees?* Companion Web site is a useful tool for computer-savvy students from 5th to 8th grade.

Through the Eyes of Your Ancestors: A Step-by-Step Guide to Uncovering Your Family's History by Maureen Taylor Loaded with inspiring historical photographs. Clear and helpful guide for upper-elementary and middle school students. Filled with practical forms and explanations of genealogical terms.

Who's Who in My Family? by Loreen Leddy

For 5- to 8-year-olds. A story of a classroom of animals sharing about their families. Illustrates the variety of different types of families and begins to explain how people are related within extended families.

Vocabulary List

Use this list to explore new vocabulary, create idea webs, or brainstorm related subjects.

Ancestor	Relative
Belief	Religion
Cousin	Sibling
Culture	Single
Custom	Step
Descendant	Study
Extended	Tradition
Family	Written
Father	Value
Forbearer	
Genealogical	
Genealogy	
Grandparent	
Heritage	
History	
Lineage	
Member	
Mother	
Nuclear	
Offspring	
Oral	
Parent	
Past	
Recorded	
Relation	



Artwork by students from
Kaukaul Elementary School
Holtzman, Pennsylvania
Teacher Mrs. Stephanie Lindquist



Gifted by students from
Saucer Valley Elementary School,
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.
Teacher: Mrs. Stephanie Laudenslager



Dream-Makers

Building fun and creativity into standards-based learning

Display simple family trees in a variety of formats.
Display sample of this art project to inspire children's creativity.

Read *Who's Who in My Family?* or similar book. Explain nuclear and extended families.

Discuss children's families: shared interests, ideas, traditions, and beliefs. Create a list of ways families are alike/different.

Look at trees. Describe the parts of a tree. What part unifies the tree? What tree parts extend outward? In what ways is an extended family like a tree?

Ask students to reflect on questions such as these. How is your family like your friends' families? How is it different? What holds your family together? What are the interests, traditions, beliefs, and values that your extended family shares?

Consider geography, immigration and migration patterns, and other influences on family formation and traditions.

Why are family histories often called family trees? Think about the parts of a tree and describe the purposes of each part. In what ways are the structures of trees and families similar?

Ask students to think about what defines a family. How has your family changed from when you were younger? What factors influence your family? What role does your family history play in your self-identity?

Explore the influences of immigration, migration, jobs, social changes, economics, and other issues on changes in family structures and relationships.

Will the concept of a family tree work structurally for your family? What if your tree is split? Or the branches tangled? Maybe an oak tree doesn't work but a bamboo patch does. Sketch the structure of your extended family. What shape does it have?

Crayola® Supplies

• Construction Paper™ Crayons • Markers • Model Magic® • School Glue • Scissors

Other Materials

• Cardboard • Chenille stems • Construction paper • Hole punch • Recycled cardboard tubes

Set-up/Tips

- Ask families to recycle cardboard tubes from gift wrap, plastic wrap, and paper towels.
- Suggest that students work together to hold pieces in place for each other while assembling their trees.



Bugar Family Bible History
Copy, 1928
Printed paper
10 1/2 x 18
Collection at Randy Seeger



Ruth Adams Family Tree
Copy, 1900
Xerox Unknown
Needlepoint on fabric
The Ruth Adams Collection
Historic Bethlehem Furnishings, Inc.
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Talented Talkers: Puppets With Speech Bubbles

5-5

Objectives

Students work cooperatively in small groups to write mini-play dialogs that expand their spoken and written vocabulary based on assigned fiction and non-fiction literary assignments.

Students understand the logic of thinking, writing, and performing actions in sequence in order to convey ideas effectively to others.

Students create hand puppets with dialog speech bubbles and perform mini-plays before an audience.

Students enrich their vocabulary and writing skills.

Multiple Intelligences

Bodily-kinesthetic

Linguistic

Intrapersonal

National Standards

Visual Arts Standard #6

Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

English Language Arts Standard #4

Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

English Language Arts Standard #11

Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

English Language Arts Standard #12

Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Grades 5-6

English Language Arts Standard #2

Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

English Language Arts Standard #3

Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

Background Information

Puppets are an old form of art and entertainment. Ancient puppets have been discovered in the Americas, the Czech Republic, and other countries around the world. Multiple cultures use puppets for rituals, ceremonies, processions, storytelling, children's toys, and entertainment. Some countries perform entire plays using puppets without any spoken words.

Puppets also play a valuable role in education. They are a nonthreatening vehicle for communication and provide opportunities for children to explore new ideas and vocabulary. When staff at the University of London and Manchester Metropolitan University conducted a joint study of puppetry in science classrooms, they discovered that the percentage of time children spent on conversation involving reasoning exceeded practical talk ("Please pass the scissors") when children used puppets to conduct their experiments. For more information, see www.puppetsproject.com/documents/puppets-t-earth-sci06.doc.

Resources

Matilda by Roald Dahl

From the terrible Trunchbull to gentle Miss Honey, strongly delineated characters make interesting puppets. Third and fourth grade students also will be inspired by Matilda's love of learning.

Puppets Around the World by Meryl Doney

Large color photographs and clear diagrams and directions. An excellent resource for all elementary school puppet makers.

The American Heritage Picture Word Book by the editors of the American Heritage Dictionaries

Introduction to vocabulary study. Centers on scenes of interest to young children: playground, ocean, outer space. Labeled objects, activities, and people fill each page.

The Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster

Fantasy adventure for older elementary students in which word play predominates. Fascinating, unusual characters provide rich material for puppet making.

Vocabulary List

Use this list to explore new vocabulary, create idea webs, or brainstorm related subjects.

Blocking
Characterization
Clarity
Costume
Dialog
Enunciation
Expressive
Facial features
Mobility
Performance
Precise
Pronunciation
Puppetry
Role
Sculpt
Set design
Vivid

Artwork by
students from
St. Theresa
Elementary School
Hellertown,
Pennsylvania





What Does It Mean?

Marionette: puppet manipulated from above by strings attached to its jointed limbs

Puppet: representation of a human, animal or other being, typically manipulated by the hand, rod, or wire

Artwork by students from
Mt. Prospect Elementary School
Basking Ridge, New Jersey
Teacher: Nancy Knulsen

	K-2	3-4	5-6
Suggested Preparation and Discussion	<p>Tailor this lesson to build on a classroom field experience such as a visit to a garden center, aquarium, or hardware store. Check with the site manager to see if children are allowed to draw on location.</p> <p>Design and display a vocabulary poster that contains specific words and definitions that relate to the visit. Leave space for additional words. For example, if the class visits a garden center, they might list lilies of the valley, purple iris, or boxwood hedge (rather than flowers and bushes). Point out how specific words help listeners see a vivid picture in their minds and imagine they can smell the fragrances.</p>	<p>Assemble fiction and non-fiction books into a library for children to look at and read. Include books with interesting characters and rich vocabulary. Schedule reading time, discussion time, script writing time, and performance time for the class so they can develop and perform mini-plays relative to assigned readings.</p> <p>Create sample puppets and speech bubbles. Explain how to develop a script that has a sequence of events and uses descriptive words. Create a sample script to read with students.</p> <p>Display various types of puppets.</p>	
	<p>Explain to students that they will create puppet characters and write a script about their field experience (K-2) or a story scene (3-6) to present to their classmates.</p> <p>Display examples of paper bag character puppets.</p>		
Crayola® Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colored Pencils Markers Model Magic® School Glue Scissors 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paint Brushes (optional) Watercolors (optional) 		



Dream-Makers®
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Talented Talkers: Puppets With Speech Bubbles


5-7

	K-2	3-4	5-6
Other Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oak tag • White paper • Construction paper • Decorative craft materials such as chenille stems or feathers • Modeling tools such as plastic dinner knives, craft sticks, and toothpicks • Paper lunch bags • Recycled newspaper • Water containers (optional) 		
Set-up/Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use masking tape loops to attach speech bubbles to puppet mouths. Tape can easily be removed to change bubbles during dialogue. • Cover painting surface with newspaper. • Ask families to help locate clothing for costumes and other props. 		
Process: Session 1 30-45 min. or more	<div> <div> <h3>Research dialogue</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask students to choose a real or imagined character from a school field experience. Suggest classmates, chaperones, a tour guide, or something they saw. 2. Students add words they heard during their trip to the class word poster. Select one word for creating a puppet with speech bubbles. 3. In small groups, students decide how their puppets will interact with each other using dialog. 4. Write dialog for puppets, using at least one specific, new vocabulary word per puppet. </div> <div> <h3>Write script</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teams of three or four students to select one or two interesting scenes from an assigned fiction or non-fiction reading. Determine how many and what kind of characters are needed to portray the scene. 2. Write a script with speaking roles for all characters in the scene. Include new vocabulary words for each character in the dialog. If needed, create a character to play the role of an on-stage narrator. 3. Roll drawing paper into very tight cylinders. Glue edges and apply pressure until cylinder is dry. 4. Cut out large speech bubbles from tag paper. Write dialogue on the bubbles. Decorate the borders of the bubbles. Glue speech bubbles to sticks. </div> </div>		
Process: Session 2 Grades K-6 30-45 min. or more	<h3>Make speech bubbles</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Cut oak tag speech bubbles large enough to contain each puppet's dialog. Write text on speech bubble. 		<h3>Make speech bubbles</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Shape and glue Ping-Pong ball size Model Magic® spheres to one end of the sticks.
Process: Session 3 30-40 min. or more	<h3>Create puppets</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Design puppet bodies on paper bags, using the bag bottom as the head and the fold as the mouth. Depict clothing, animal body parts and skin, and other details suitable for the character. 7. Decorate and cut construction paper pieces as needed for puppet features. For example, older students could wrap paper strips around pencil barrels to curl the paper. Use curled strips for hair, manes, beards, and other features. Glue pieces to the puppet. Air-dry the glue. 8. Shape Model Magic® facial features such as eyes, nose, and mouth or other details. Exaggerate features for easy on-stage visibility. Air-dry 24 hours. 		<h3>Design costumes</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Sketch costumes that correlate to the text in the speech bubbles. 7. Find clothing to wear for costumes as planned. 8. Collect various accessories such as hats and props that can be used to hallmark the characters.



Puppet Mask
Artist: Bill Skyns
Plaster of Paris, paint
20" x 24" x 18"
Collection of Cara and Bill Skyns

	K-2	3-4	5-6
Process: Session 4 30-45 min.	Paint facial features (optional) 9 Paint puppet's facial features with watercolors. Air-dry the paint.		Consider face make up 9 Draw self-portrait plans that include make-up features to match the characters.
Process: Session 5 30-45 min.	Assemble puppets 10 Use fine point markers to add details to facial features. Add chenille stems or other craft materials for decorative touches. Glue pieces in place. 11 Glue speech bubbles extending from mouths. Attach longer scripts to the backs of the puppets. Air-dry the glue.		Gather props 10 Collect essential props to help tell the story to the audience effectively.
Process: Session 6 30-45 min.	Rehearse performance 12 Practice performing with puppets or with their characters before classmates.		
Process: Session 7 30-45 min.	Perform plays 13. Perform for classmates or others.		Perform silent plays 11. Dress in costumes with makeup as planned. 12. Silently act the roles of characters before an audience. Hold the appropriate speech bubble stick to the mouth when the character delivers dialog.
Assessment	• Is puppet creatively designed and does it have "character"?	• Does the dialogue match the puppet? Are lines delivered smoothly and in character? • Have audience rate their understanding of the performance. Did the puppet dialogue relate to a scene from the assigned literature reading? Could audience identify characters from the dialog and puppet costume?	• Did students sequence the dialogue of the group of characters so that the silent story made sense? • Ask the audience if they could identify the scene from the assigned literature reading.
	• Does child manipulate puppet well, interacting naturally with other puppets? • Are speech bubbles filled with dialog? Does the dialogue incorporate new vocabulary in the script? Are spellings correct? • Ask students to reflect on this lesson and write a DREAM statement to summarize the most important things they learned.		
Extensions	Provide spelling assistance and perhaps computers to help students with special needs write their dialog. Make photographic scrapbooks or posters on various curriculum themes. Label with precise vocabulary.	Invite students with a special interest in theater to research one aspect of puppetry or playwriting and present their findings to the class. Shuffle student groupings and challenge groups to create original stories using the new mix of character and performers. Try making other types of puppets including marionettes, shadow puppets, and characters sculpted with Model Magic compound.	
	Attend a puppet show or invite a puppeteer to perform. Take a "backstage" tour. Encourage students or families with advanced mechanical or artistic skills to create a puppet theater.		



Stick Puppet
2004 Artist unknown
Folded and glued paper towels. String. Head:
5" x 6 1/2" x 2 1/2"
Viet Nam



Stick Puppet
 2004 Artist unknown
 Folded and glued pairs of sticks, string, beads
 5" x 6 1/2" x 2 1/2"
 Viet Nam
 Private Collection



Dream~Makers
 Building fun and creativity into standards-based learning

Illuminate Your Letters!

Students create illuminated letters modeled after medieval illuminated manuscripts.

Students (K-4) use the writing process to practice and legibly write letters to family or friends using their best penmanship.

Students (5-6) research and compare typefaces to use as the basis for inventing a new font.



Font: style of typeface or lettering

Illuminate: make resplendent by decorating letters, pages, paragraphs, or borders with colors and gold or silver as was done in the Middle Ages

Vellum: calfskin, lambskin, or other materials treated to use as writing surface. Manuscripts in the Middle Ages were often made using vellum pages with leather book covers and bindings.

Visual Arts Standard #3

Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

Visual Arts Standard #4

Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

English Language Arts Standard #4

Students adjust their use of spoken, written and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

English Language Arts Standard #5

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Background information

Letter writing has a long history. In medieval times commoners were often illiterate and hired scribes to write letters for them when necessary. Historically, letters offer a glimpse into the lives of ordinary people. For example, Duke University's Special Collections Library includes original letters and diaries written by women during the Civil War. Texts of some, including the diary of a 10-year-old girl, are available on line at library.duke.edu/specialcollections/bingham.

The National Postal Museum in Washington, D.C., also holds several collections of letters including more than 75 that are woven throughout the museum's galleries to personalize the exhibits. Today, e-mail is changing the art of letter writing yet again.

Resources

Catherine Called Birdy by Karen Cushman

Novel for older elementary/middle school students. Fictionalized journal of a young medieval girl. Each entry begins with an illuminated letter.

Dear Mr. Henshaw by Beverly Cleary

Through letters to a favorite author, a third-grade boy reflects on life and learns to deal with difficult family circumstances.

Gone Wild: An Endangered Animal Alphabet by David McLimans

A 2007 Caldecott Honor Book and fine example of graphic design. Focuses on both illuminated letters and endangered animals. Excellent inspiration for art students of any age.

Illuminate Letters by Stephan Oliver

Illustrated reference of materials and step-by-step illumination processes. A good teacher reference.

Masterpieces of Illuminated Letters and Borders

by W.P.Tymms and M.D.Wyatt

Numerous embellished letters and decorative designs from medieval manuscripts. Inspires students' illuminations.

The Illuminated Alphabet by Timothy Noad and Patricia Seligman

Step-by-step guide to create an illuminated manuscript. For teacher reference.

Vocabulary list

Use this list to explore new vocabulary, create idea webs, or brainstorm related subjects.

Letters	Print	Symbols
Alphabetical	Script	
Capital		
Letter writing	Greeting	Letterhead
Closing	Heading	Signature
Comma	Inside address	ZIP code
Correspondence		
Envelope		
Middle Ages		
Cloisters		
Gold leaf		
Illuminations		
Manuscript		
Medieval		
Monastery		
Monk		
Parchment		
Scribe		
Vellum		



*Illustration by Stephanie Oliver
Thomas Edison
Collection, Pennsylvania*

Ms. Annie Fannie
23 Lovely Blossom
Lane
Taipei, Taiwan
April 22nd, 2007

Dear Annie,



How are you? I hope you're doing fine in Taiwan. I am! We finished the NGA SX a couple of weeks ago. Boy, am I glad! Now I can relax.



Have you ever heard of Unicef? If you haven't, it's an organization which helps poor or needy people. Right now we're having something called the Choro-a-Thon, to raise money for Unicef. We have to do chores, sell things, etc. to earn money to donate. Amy sells candy, aum, and origami, and she raised more money than she made so far. Do you have ideas?



On spring break, I went to India, and it was a fun experience. I went to two different cities. There is lots of my family there. The fun part was going to an amusement park. There were many water rides and land rides. Some even went upside-down! There, the weather is always warm. Is it cold in Taiwan? It's milder in America, which is what I like.



See you in the summer! I can't wait until you visit!

Sincerely,

Prada
Sandra



Artwork by students from
Annie's 2nd/3rd/4th/5th/6th/7th/8th/9th/10th/11th/12th
Annie's 2nd/3rd/4th/5th/6th/7th/8th/9th/10th/11th/12th
Annie's 2nd/3rd/4th/5th/6th/7th/8th/9th/10th/11th/12th
Annie's 2nd/3rd/4th/5th/6th/7th/8th/9th/10th/11th/12th



Dream-Makers

Building fun and creativity into standards-based learning

Display as appropriate to students' ages and abilities:

- diagram of formal letter format
- illuminated letter styles from various historic periods
- alphabet books, especially those with illuminated letters
- collections of letters and stories told through letter writing
- sample art projects with illuminated letters

Examine alphabet books. Talk about personal initials. Strengthen phonemic awareness by making lists of words that start with the same letter/beginning sound. Make sound-letter associations.

Children draft short, friendly letters to a family member or friend. Check spelling. Use complete sentences that communicate a message. Use proper writing conventions.

Discuss the role monks and scribes played in the history of writing during medieval times. Talk about reasons for letter writing and the use of letterhead and illuminated stationery. Read selections from novels that reflect the medieval period and/or the use of letter writing to tell a story.

Review proper letter-writing format. Discuss differences between a business letter and a friendly letter. After reading selections from letter collections, each student drafts a friendly letter to a friend or family member with a particular purpose in mind. Do they wish to inform, persuade, or convey emotion?

Examine various styles of illuminated lettering and contemporary fonts found on computers. Research and discuss the history of fonts and typefaces.

Crayola® Supplies

- Crayons
- Markers
- Watercolor Colored Pencils
- Glue
- Scissors
- Tempera Paints (black and Premier™ gold)
- Paint Brushes

Other Materials

- Brown paper grocery bags
- Envelopes, #10 white
- Rulers
- Lined paper
- Paper towels
- White paper
- Postage stamps
- Recycled newspaper
- Water containers
- Paper towels
- Recycled newspaper
- Water containers

Set-up/Tips

- Cover painting surface with newspaper.

Process

Session 1
10-15 min

Create "antique" paper

1. Cut a 6-inch square from a brown grocery bag. Crumple it slightly. Dip it in water, squeeze out water, and lay flat.
2. Brush on black tempera. Leave paint on for 3 to 4 minutes. Rinse painted paper in clean water to remove surface paint. Leave paint in crumpled areas. Air-dry flat.

Create "vellum-like" papers

1. Stain several sheets of white drawing paper with thinned tempera paint. Tear the edges so the paper takes on an aged look. Flatten papers using recycled telephone books. Air-dry papers.

Research fonts and typefaces

1. Ask student to collect at least five completely distinct fonts. List similarities and differences.



Illuminated lettering
about a person
A 100
Collection of English words

Objectives

Students write one of their initials in bubble-style letters on the antique paper.

- Paint the letter with gold tempera. Air-dry flat.

Materials

antique paper
55-43 word

Prepare friendly letter

- Outline initials with dark crayon. Fill surrounding areas with shapes and patterns to create an illuminated design. Glue the illuminated letter to lined writing paper.
- Copy the friendly letter on the letterhead.

Students each select an illumination style. Outline an initial in that manner on the antique paper.

- Paint the interior of the letter in gold. Air-dry flat.

Complete letterhead

- Fill in the background with richly colored shapes, patterns, and images reminiscent of early illuminated texts.
- Glue the illuminated letter to paper to create unique letterhead.
- Copy friendly letters on letterhead, using proper format and correct spellings.

Assessment

Draw guidelines on several sheets of paper for use in developing a new upper- and lower-case typeface.

Invent a font

- On one sheet of guideline paper, invent a font that combines several features in the typefaces collected.
- Refine the font so it can be created in both upper and lower case.
- Create the entire upper- and lower-case alphabet in the new font.

Prepare envelopes

- Decorate envelopes to match the style of the letterhead.
- Fold letters and place in envelopes. Address, stamp, and mail letters.

Illuminate a font

- Choose at least one upper-case letter to illuminate. Dip water-color pencils in water and/or brush to achieve illuminated effects. Air-dry illuminations.

Assessment

- Is the illuminated letter easily recognizable? Does it represent the child's own name? Is the space around the letter filled with shapes and colors that create a pleasing design?
- Is the letter written in complete sentences? Are conventions of language appropriate for the ages and ability levels of the children?
- Does the illumination demonstrate an understanding of the concept of illuminated letters?
- Is the letter clearly recognizable? Has the area around it been completely filled with colors and designs reminiscent of medieval manuscripts?
- Does the written text convey a specific message using proper letter-writing format?
- Does the project reflect a familiarity with at least five contemporary fonts?
- Has attention been paid to uniform details in the development of both upper- and lower-case letters in the font or typeface?
- Is the work legible?
- Does the illuminated letter embellish the new font and still leave it recognizable?
- Are envelopes decorated in a manner consistent with the letterhead?

- Ask students to reflect on this lesson and write a DREAM statement to summarize the most important things they learned in the lesson.

Extensions

Use standard lettering rather than an embellished style for students who are just beginning to master letter formation. Outlining and coloring letters reinforces learning.

Some students with motor challenges may need to work with a scribe or computer to prepare the letterhead and/or write the letter.

Encourage interested students to make illuminated pages for alphabet books to share with younger children.

Suggest that students create their own letterhead or calling card logos on the computer. Embellish with markers.

Advanced students read excerpts from historic letters as an example of primary resource material. Compose imaginary letters to people who lived in the past.

Encourage cooperative editing, especially to assist students with special needs. Look up fonts on the computer and embellish them.

Share excerpts from *The Jolly Postman: Other People's Letters* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg to inspire creative writing.

Reflect on the letter-writing process and its results. What were the recipients' responses to getting the hand-made letters?

Organize a pen pal program.

Create a poster that lists classroom rules or notices using the new fonts.



Cameo Portraits

Grade Level – 6-8

Procedure:

1. Obtain black pieces of construction paper and white pieces of construction paper.
2. Obtain chalk for outlining on the black paper.
3. Obtain a light source to cast the shadows.
4. Before starting the art activity, have students create their autobiography alphabet poems. Each line of the poem should begin with a different letter of the alphabet. The first line begins with 'A' and says something about their earliest childhood memory. The next line begins with 'B' and is their next childhood memory. They work up to the current time in their life.

Explain to students they will be sharing these and need only write what they do not mind sharing with a class.

5. After the poems are written and the art materials are gathered, have the students work in pairs to outline each other's profile on the black construction paper.
6. They cut out their portraits and glue them on the white construction paper. They may bring from home pictures or other items they would like to place on the portrait area. Since these will be laminated, no 3-D objects may be placed on the paper.
7. After gluing the portrait on the white construction paper, they now transfer using colored marker or ink their autobiographical alphabet poem going around the outside of the portrait. This should be done neatly and clearly.

-OR-

Silhouette Collage

Stock up on old magazines. Invite students to search through the magazines for pictures, words, or anything else that might be used to describe them. Then use an overhead projector or another source of bright light to create a silhouette of each student's profile; have each student sit in front of the light source as you or another student traces the outline of the silhouette on a sheet of 11- by 17-inch paper taped to the wall. Have students cut out their silhouettes, then fill them with a collage of pictures and words that express their identity. Then give each student an opportunity to share his or her silhouette with the group and talk about why he or she chose some of the elements in the collage. Post the silhouettes to create a sense of "our homeroom."

National Gallery of Art

For more ideas or other units go to <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/education/teachers/lessons-activities.html>

Teachers ONLINE RESOURCES & LOANS

Lessons & Activities

Organized into thematic units, each grade-level-specific lesson plan focuses on a single work of art and can be executed within one to two class periods. These lessons meet National Art Education Association (NAEA) Visual Arts curriculum standards.

Who Am I?: Self-Portraits in Art & Writing

Grade Level: 5–8

Designed to help middle school students begin to answer the important question: "Who Am I?", these lessons use self-portraits from the National Gallery of Art's collection to inspire students to create their own self-portraits, poems, speeches, and letters. Lessons included in this unit are:

- Van Gogh's Self-Portraits
- Two Faces of Paul Gauguin
- A Look at Judith Leyster
- David Alfaro Siqueiros Speaks
- Andy Warhol/Digital Self-Portraits

Van Gogh's Self-Portraits

Grade Level: 5–8

Students will examine Vincent van Gogh's self-portraits and letters to better understand the artist's life story and personality. Then, they will paint two Van Gogh-style self-portraits to show two parts of their own personality and write a letter describing the one that reveals their "true character" best.

Materials

- Smart Board or computer with ability to project images from slideshow
- Student photograph (tell students several days before the lesson begins that they will need to bring in a photo of themselves)
- Photocopier
- Scissors
- Backing paper or cardboard
- Glue
- Tempera, poster, or oil paint/pastels
- Writing materials

Warm-up Question

Why do artists make self-portraits?

Background

Do you think "mad genius" when you hear the name Vincent van Gogh? You are not alone. Van Gogh's life was complicated by early failures, personal eccentricities, and an adult diagnosis of epilepsy. But he also succeeded with a daunting achievement—becoming a great artist. During his lifetime, Van Gogh was scarcely appreciated; he sold only one painting. A century after his death, however, Van Gogh's paintings of sunflowers, his textured landscapes, and his intense portraits and self-portraits—all expressive and emotive in color, with thick and energetic brushwork—are among the most recognized paintings on the planet.

Van Gogh painted this self-portrait shortly after suffering from a breakdown while at an asylum in Saint Remy. Although painting no fewer than 36 self-portraits in his brief lifetime of 37 years, he felt this particular one captured his "true character." In this portrait, he posed himself as the established painter he believed he had become, despite his lack of sales. He gave himself a serious expression, a three-quarter pose, and the props—brushes, palette, and easel—that Rembrandt and other great painters of the past had used in their own self-portraits. Van Gogh had seen such classic self-portraits in the Louvre in Paris. By linking himself to the great artists of the past, Van Gogh is expressing his wish to be taken seriously as an artist. He seems to show, however briefly, a new self-confidence.

Van Gogh painted another self-portrait soon after this one (see left). Van Gogh says he was calmer in the one with the light blue swirling background. Does that surprise you? If you thought the swirling background might suggest he was more upset or nervous, you're not alone. Van Gogh was making a comparison. The dark swirls of paint, his greenish skin tone, and burning gaze make the earlier portrait more agitated.

To better acquaint students with Van Gogh and his body of work, read the following excerpts from his letters and then present the slideshow, Van Gogh at the National Gallery of Art. While they are listening to the letters and viewing the works of art, have them jot down their ideas in response to these two questions: What are the most distinctive qualities of a Van Gogh work? How are elements of his biography reflected in his style of painting?

"To express the love of two lovers by a marriage of complementary colors, their mingling and opposition, the mysterious vibration of kindred tones. To express the thought of a brow by the radiance of a light one against a somber background . . ." —September 1888

"The best pictures, and from a technical point of view, the most complete, seen from nearby, are but patches of color side by side, and only make an effect at a certain distance." —November 1885

"Instead of trying to reproduce exactly what I have before my eyes, I use color more arbitrarily, in order to express myself, more forcefully." —August 1888

"It's . . . color that suggests ardor, temperament, any kind of emotion." —September 1888

"I should like to paint the portrait of an artist friend . . . Behind the head, instead of painting the ordinary wall of the mean room, I paint infinity, a plain background of the richest blue . . . and the bright head against the rich blue background gets a mysterious effect, like a star in the sky, in the depths of azure." —August 1888

"It's mental exercise to balance the six essential colors—red—blue—yellow—orange—violet—green—it takes work and dry calculation . . ." —July 1888

"So I have tried to express, as it were, the powers of darkness in a low public house, by soft . . . green and malachite, contrasting with yellow-green and harsh blue-greens, and all this in an atmosphere like a devil's furnace, of pale sulphur." —September 1888

"I am working on a portrait of mother because the black and white photograph annoys me so. That of mother . . . will be an ashen gray against a green background, the dress carmine . . . I don't know if it will be like her, but I want to give the impression of blonde coloring . . . it will again be in very thick impasto." —October 1888

Activity

Students will make two self-portraits in the guise of Van Gogh on separate days to show two different sides or moods of their personalities:

1. Students (or teacher) will make a light photocopy of their photograph (such as a school or sport picture). They may want to enlarge it in order to have plenty of space for "Van Gogh" brushwork.
2. Using one color in varying hues, students will paint the entire background paper using Van Gogh-like brushstrokes.
3. Next, students will cut out their photocopied portrait—both face and clothing—to make a silhouette. This cut-out will be glued onto the painted background.
4. Lastly, students will use a complementary color to their background to paint over their photo image using different types of brushwork in varying hues by adding white or black. For example, if their background is in yellows, their portrait should be painted with purples, reds for greens, oranges for blues, or vice versa.
5. On another day, students will create a second self-portrait following the same instructions, but change the colors and types of brushstrokes to show a different side of their personality.

Extension

Van Gogh wrote detailed letters (see more excerpts) analyzing his thinking about his work. He even wrote a letter to his brother, Theo, about the two self-portraits presented in the Guided Practice section.

"Theo:

They say—and I gladly believe it—that it is difficult to know yourself, but it isn't easy to paint oneself either. For the time being, I am working on two portraits of myself—since I have no other models—for it is high time for me to paint some figures. One of them I started the first day I got up; I was thin and pale like a ghost. It is dark blue-violet, the head whitish with yellow hair, in other words, an effect of color. But since then I have begun another one, three quarter length on a light background. You will see when you put up the portrait with the light background that I have just finished . . . that I look saner now, even much more so. I am inclined to think that the portrait will tell you how I am better than my letter and this will reassure you

*Ever yours,
Vincent."*

Students will write a letter to a friend about the self-portrait they feel captures their "true character" best. Prompt students to tell their friend why they based their self-portrait on that particular photograph and explain the reasons behind using specific colors and types of brushstrokes. Lastly, students will communicate what this portrait reveals about themselves and how it answers the question, "Who am I?"

Two Faces of Paul Gauguin

Grade Level: 5–8

Students will examine Paul Gauguin's self-portraits and letters to learn about the individual who created them and consider how first-person art forms (self-portraits, diaries, letters, journals) aid the process of self-discovery. Then, they will compare two of his self-portraits using a Venn diagram and produce their own symbolic self-portrait. (See attached portraits)

Materials

- Writing materials
- Scissors
- Magazines that can be cut up
- Backing paper or cardboard
- Glue
- Painting/drawing materials: colored pencils, markers, tempera, poster or oil paint or oil pastels
- Post-it notes

Warm-Up Question

How is this different from most self-portraits you've seen?

Background

For many, the "myth" of Paul Gauguin—the self-taught artist who abandoned his family to focus full-time on painting in distant places—can overwhelm his actual life story and contributions to art. Apart from his personal story, Gauguin's innovations—his bold style that expressed emotion through strong color, and his exotic subject matter—had a profound effect on the art of the twentieth century.

French artist Paul Gauguin attempted, through his art and his writing, to answer the question: How can I express my many different sides? He not only drew and painted self-portraits, but he also sculpted images of himself in wood, bronze, and ceramic. Altogether, he made more than 40 self-portraits. Throughout his life, he also wrote letters that give clues to his personality and beliefs.

Originally painted on a wooden door of an inn in northwestern France, this self-portrait is both startling and thought-provoking. Gauguin's friends called it an unkind character sketch—a caricature. Like a political cartoonist, Gauguin suggests what he looks like, showing only his head and one hand. He fills in the rest of the panel with symbols that appear to deal in opposites: good and evil, heaven and hell. He places expanses of flat, intense color—red and yellow—next to each other. He frames his floating head with stylized, arching green stems and square flowers. Is this the Garden of Eden . . . or . . . ? Is Gauguin telling us he is part angel, part devil? Perhaps he's showing himself as a sort of magician—an artist with tremendous creative power who can conjure identities through his artistry.

Guided Practice

Brainstorm with students to make a list of the different symbols—both objects and colors—in this painting. If they have an idea what they might symbolize, they should note it also; for example, snake=evil. Here are some they may come up with:

- *The snake, held between Gauguin's fingers, enticed the biblical character Eve to taste the forbidden apple from the Tree of Knowledge. From then on, Adam and Eve had knowledge of good and evil. The snake might symbolize evil and temptation, but might also represent knowledge.*
- *The halo above Gauguin's head makes us think of angels and Heaven. Halos signify divinity or saintliness.*
- *The apple is a symbol from the story of Adam and Eve. When Eve ate the apple from the Tree of Knowledge, it caused humankind's expulsion from the Garden of Eden.*
- *The brilliant red background might be a sign of the fires of Hell. It might also symbolize creative energy.*

(See Self-Portrait for Carrière)

Is this the same Gauguin? Gauguin painted this more conventional self-portrait (given to fellow artist, Eugène Carrière) around the same time. It focuses on the artist's head and shoulders—all connected together the way they should be! Gauguin wears a comfortable sweater and jacket and seems relaxed as he looks out at us, without the "evil eye" seen in the other painting. He places himself in a room with a pleasant view of soft mountains through the window—unlike the flat, confusing space of the first self-portrait.

While these two self-portraits differ in many ways, they both show the unusual way Gauguin used color to express emotion and capture the inner self.

Draw a Venn diagram on the board to help students compare and contrast these two self-portraits. List their observations of what is unique to one self-portrait in the left circle, and to the other one in the right circle. Then list the things they have in common in the center section.

Some additional discussion points to aid the comparison:

Questions for *Self-Portrait*:

- Where is this figure?
- Describe his mood. What do you base your response on?
- Talk about the use of color. List the prominent colors and the association they have for you.
- What can you infer about the artist just from looking at this work?
- Questions for *Self-Portrait for Carrière*:
- What/who is this? How do you know?
- Where is this person?
- How does he spend his time, based on what you see here?

- Describe his mood. Use visual elements to support your answer: colors, angle of pose, type of gaze, body language.
- What is his attitude (cocky, jaunty, self-satisfied, dreamy, cranky, self-assured, romantic)?
- What's happening beyond the window?
- Anything unusual about this work?

Activity

Students will think about the characteristics and qualities that make them "them." How can they be visually shown? Is it possible to create a self-portrait without even including their face or body? In what other ways can they represent who they are?

Using magazines, students will cut out pictures from magazines that represent or symbolize their personality, talents, tastes, and moods. For example, if they like photography, they might cut out a camera. To show musical talent, they might use instruments, lyrics, or musical notes. If they like to help others, they might include pictures of other people or a hand. Students should use their imagination: look for colors, patterns, places, foods, clothes, and other objects to show "them," without really showing "them"! They should think about some less obvious ways to symbolize some of their traits. For example, if they are wise, find a picture of an owl.

Once they have collected their symbols, they should arrange them on background paper or poster board. They may want to paint their background first. Additionally, they can use pencils, markers, or paints to create more symbols.

Extension

Once their self-portraits are complete, hang them around the classroom. Pass around post-it notes to students. Each student will select three works by others and write down one symbol and its meaning for each that they see in the portrait. Then, students will place their guess next to the work of art. Each artist will then stand next to their artwork and identify the symbols they included and how it reflects their personality to the class.

A Look at Judith Leyster

Grade Level: 5–8

Students will identify clues and adjectives to describe Judith Leyster's personality and then develop and refine her characterizations through poetry writing. Using Leyster's monogram as their inspiration, they will then shift the focus to themselves by creating their own monogram and then writing a self-reflective poem about themselves.

Materials

- Pen/pencil and paper
- Drawing materials for monogram creation
- Copies of the "Write an 'I Am' Poem" worksheet

Warm-up Questions

What can you tell about this woman? How do you want people to see you?

Background

For a woman living in the seventeenth century, Judith Leyster was remarkable. She was a successful artist, who liked to paint energetic scenes with one or two figures—sometimes children—engaged in merrymaking: music, dance, and games.

She worked for several years around Utrecht and Amsterdam in the Netherlands, before returning to Haarlem where she entered the painters' guild in 1633. She also had her own studio and taught several students. In 1636 Leyster married painter Jan Miense Molenaer; the couple had five children. Scholars believe that Leyster made few paintings after her marriage, though she may have collaborated with her husband.

Judith Leyster died in 1660. By the end of the 1800s her work was virtually unknown, often attributed to other artists. Now rediscovered, Leyster's reputation is secure as a highly skilled, successful female in a field dominated by men.

Guided Practice

Students may want to jot down notes during the discussion to help them with their poems in the activity section. In responding to the following questions, remind students to refer to specific details in the painting to support their answers.

- How old is she?
- What does she do?
- When did she live?
- Was it unusual for a woman to earn a living as a painter at that time? What does this tell you about Judith Leyster?
- How do you see Judith Leyster from looking carefully at her self-portrait? See the adjectives in bold below to help guide students:

Shy? Not Leyster. Try **self-confident** or **self-assured**. She looks us straight in the eye as she turns toward us, her elbow on the back of the chair—as if we've surprised her at her work. Although she is obviously busy, she welcomes us with a warm smile. Her self-confidence and pride in her work are clear. Leyster was neither rich nor poor: she was a hardworking professional artist. Here she shows herself **well-dressed**, seventeenth century-style (**not modern**), probably to show off her **success** to potential patrons. (Do you think she could really work in that stiff collar and keep those delicate cuffs clean?) **Happy?** She's smiling, something new for a portrait of a woman in the seventeenth century. Up to that time, artists had portrayed women with serious expressions. **Outspoken?** Absolutely. Some people even think the artist made this painting as an advertisement for her work. To the seventeenth-century viewer, it said: "I'm a highly skilled, talented, and successful painter, and I'm happy and ready to work for you." Was she **musical**? There is no record that Leyster herself was a musician . . . but she was obviously **artistic** and **creative**. The lively violin player on her easel is her way of showing off another painting type—besides portraiture—that interested her customers: scenes of people having fun, making merry. Pretty **clever**!

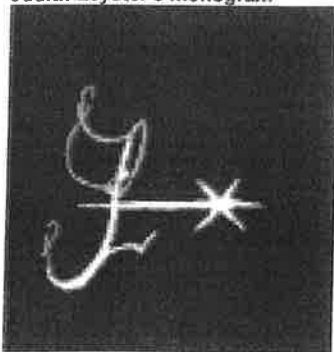
An artist who can wield eighteen brushes at once must be **skilled**. While she was not academically **educated** in today's sense, Leyster may have trained in the workshop of Frans Hals, the great Dutch portraitist.

Activity

An "I Am" poem is a way to study the subject of a self-portrait by putting yourself in the painter's head. Tell students to think about everything they've learned about Leyster from looking at her self-portrait and to reconsider the adjectives and phrases that best described her. Now, using their imaginations, students will pretend they are Judith Leyster to complete the "Write an 'I Am' Poem" worksheet. Then, have students print out their poems and post them for each other to read, or share them aloud in class.

Extension

Judith Leyster's monogram



Leyster had a clever way of signing her paintings. Leyster means "lode star" or "polestar" in Dutch, and she was described as a "leading star" in art. She used this play-on-words to create a special signature: a monogram of her initials with a shooting star.

Students will create their own special monogram to represent themselves, like Leyster's lone star signature. Then, using the "Write an 'I Am' Poem" worksheet students will write a self-reflective poem about themselves.

Your Turn: Write an "I Am" Poem

An "I Am" poem is a way to study the subject of a self-portrait by putting yourself in the artist's head. Or write one about your self-portrait by completing the poem below:

- I am...(your name) _____
- I am...(two special traits or physical characteristics) _____
- I wonder...(something to be curious about) _____
- I hear...(an imaginary sound) _____
- I see... (an imaginary sight) _____
- I want...(an actual desire) _____
- I am...(the first line of the poem repeated) _____
- I pretend...(something to imagine) _____
- I feel...(a feeling about something imaginary) _____
- I touch...(an imaginary touch) _____
- I worry...(something that is bothersome) _____
- I cry...(something that is very sad) _____
- I am... the first line of the poem repeated) _____
- I understand...(something that is positively true) _____
- I say...(something to believe in) _____
- I dream...(something to dream about) _____
- I try... (something to make an effort about) _____
- I hope...(something to hope for) _____
- I am...(the first line of the poem repeated) _____

David Alfaro Siqueiros Speaks

Grade Level: 5–8

Students will consider the social and political motivations of David Alfaro Siqueiros to help them analyze his self-portrait. With his writing as their guidance, students will write and deliver a persuasive speech and create a propaganda poster about a current issue they care about.

Materials

- Computers with internet access for student research
- Heavy paper or cardboard
- Markers
- Magazines and newspapers
- Scissors and glue

Warm-up Questions

David Alfaro Siqueiros wrote: “The artist must paint as he would speak. I don’t want people to speculate what I mean, I want them to understand.” What does this self-portrait say to you?

Background

Siqueiros was an outspoken Mexican painter and political activist during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. He focused on important issues in his society, taking up a written, visual, and verbal “call to arms” for art to be created for and about the indigenous people of Mexico. He believed art—especially large murals—had a public purpose and duty to alleviate the problems of his “*compadres*.”

Born in 1896 in Chihuahua, Mexico, to a bourgeois family, Siqueiros went to Mexico City as a teenager to study art and architecture. The year was 1910, the beginning of the Mexican Revolution. He became immediately involved in student strikes to fight for the rights of Mexican workers and the poor. At age 18, he joined the Mexican Revolutionary Army, and later, the Communist Party. Jailed and exiled from Mexico several times for his radical views and his harsh criticism of the Mexican government, he continued to fight for the rights he believed in for the rest of his life. Even so, the government commissioned large-scale murals by Siqueiros and his fellow muralists, Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, who shared his revolutionary outlook.

Rejecting traditional methods of fresco painting, Siqueiros is responsible for several technical innovations. He developed a method of direct painting with quick-drying, industrial materials and spray guns on cement. He also used *escultopintura*, a combination of sculpting and painting, in several of his works. The material used in this self-portrait is “pure Siqueiros.” It was a new type of plastic paint developed especially for him at the Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City. Similar to oil paint, it dried faster so that he could apply new layers quickly. The thick buildup of paint on his right sleeve—called *impasto*—is an abstract work of art in itself.

Siqueiros died in 1977, his revolutionary murals and writings secured his place in both the history of Mexico and the history of art.

Guided Practice

Although this self-portrait was not a mural, one can still sense the strength of his revolutionary resolve. In the upper right corner, an almost three-dimensional star zooms into space, propelled by the flames of a rocket. For Siqueiros, the star was a symbol of socialism. He includes it to reinforce his central belief: "The artist . . . must make up his mind to serve either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. I believe that painting and sculpture should serve the proletariat in their revolutionary class struggle." What indications do you see in this portrait that Siqueiros is serving the proletariat (the working or lower class in a society) rather than the bourgeoisie (people of the middle class, often concerned with material interests)?

What else does Siqueiros tell you about himself in this self-portrait? What are some words you would use to describe his pose and gaze? What about the proportions enhances certain features?

Siqueiros titled this work "Self-Portrait of the Coronelazo." A colonel in the Spanish Civil War, Siqueiros was called a "coronelazo" or "big shot" by his political opponents. By using the slang term in the title, he is "punching" back at his challengers, showing them through facial expression, gesture, and symbol, the power he and his art still wield. Siqueiros made his clenched fist as big as his head and positioned it to extend out of the painting—into the viewer's space. The gesture—a punch ready to explode—contains the passionate anger he felt toward his political opponents, reactionaries who were on the rise in Mexico in 1948 when he made the painting.

What do you note about the style of painting? Does it add to or take away from the personality he chooses to portray?

Siqueiros' features are recognizable, but he blurs things together. His ear turns into the brim of his hat. His eyes, hidden in shadow, become a line that extends into the background. It's almost as if his body is becoming one with the roughly painted surface—with his art—just as his passion for helping the people of Mexico merged with every part of his own life.

Activity

Students will deliver a short, persuasive speech inspired by the life and art of Siqueiros:

1. Students will take up a political or public issue they care about.
2. They will then conduct research to find out more about this issue.
3. To express their point of view and argue for political action, they will write a three-minute speech. Use the following statements by Siqueiros to assist students with crafting powerful language to try to convince their listeners to take up their cause:

With their admirable and extraordinary talent to create beauty, peculiar to themselves, the art of the Mexican people is the most wholesome spiritual expression in the world and this tradition is our greatest treasure. —From Siqueiros' Declaration of Social, Political and Aesthetic Principles, 1922

We repudiate so-called easel painting and every kind of art favored by the ultra-intellectual circles, because it is aristocratic and we praise monumental art in all its forms, because it is public property Art must no longer be the expression of individual satisfaction, but should aim to become a fighting, educative art for all. —From Siqueiros' Declaration of Social, Political and Aesthetic Principles, 1922

Portrait painting is also a good art form, though some would say it is not. . . . We must . . . advise the new Mexican painters to paint portraits as well. —From Siqueiros' explanatory leaflet for mural Plastic Exercise, 1933

The painters and sculptors of today cannot remain indifferent in the struggle to free humanity and art from oppression. —From Siqueiros' explanatory leaflet for mural Plastic Exercise, 1933

Mexico was the only modern country to . . . reconstruct the practice of mural painting in all its essential . . . fundamentals. This has had international repercussions. —Siqueiros' message sent from prison to the delegates of the General Assembly of the International Association of Art Critics, held in Mexico, 1962

1. Students may want to first practice giving their speech with a partner by using gestures, and speaking loudly and clearly.
2. Lastly, they will present their speech to the class.

Extension

Now that students have a cause they believe in and that is supported by research, they will create a propaganda poster to advertise their stance to a larger audience. On a heavy piece of paper or cardboard, students will use images and words cut out from magazines and newspaper and/or markers to outline their main arguments and invigorate others to join them in their cause.

Andy Warhol/Digital Self-Portraits

Grade Level: 5-8

Students will be introduced to the life and art of Andy Warhol as a way of considering photography as a self-portrait medium. After viewing and discussing other artists' photographic self-portraits, students will create their own digitally manipulated photographic self-portrait and then write a poem to describe the point of view taken in their digital work of art.

Materials

- Smart Board or computer with ability to project images from slideshow
- Student photograph
- Computers equipped with digital-imaging software such as Adobe Photoshop (or Adobe Photoshop Elements), Corel PaintShop, or other package capable of applying color and/or special effects
- Scanner
- Color printer
- Copies of the "Write an 'I Am' Poem" worksheet



Warm-Up Questions

How do you think this self-portrait was made? Why do you think he included four images of himself rather than one?

Background

Andy Warhol became fabulously famous for his 1960s pop art. He produced big, bold images of the popular, the famous, and the stuff of our consumer society. His multi-image portraits of famous people—Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Jacqueline Kennedy—and of common products—Campbell's soup cans, Brillo pad boxes, Coca Cola bottles—are among the most powerful icons of twentieth-century American art.

Andy Warhol was born Andrew Warhola, the son of Czechoslovakian immigrants, in 1928. He grew up poor (during the Depression) outside Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with his parents and two brothers. As a child, Warhol (he later dropped the final "a") recalled having a few friends but also feeling "left out." He suffered briefly from a nervous disorder that caused muscle spasms and kept him isolated. He liked spending time on his own, coloring, taking snapshots with a small camera, and even making films with a movie camera given to him by his mother.

After graduating in art from Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1949, he moved to New York City, where he would have quick success as a commercial artist. He designed window displays, illustrated magazine articles, and drew record album jackets. In the 1960s, Warhol decided to abandon commercial art to focus on making serious visual art. While he hand-painted his first works, he soon developed a silk-screen process that allowed his staff of assistants to mass-produce the startling images of consumer products and brilliant movie star portraits. These works took the art world and the public by storm. In this self-portrait, he used four photographic images of himself (with his trademark "shocked" hair) and silk-screened them, off-kilter, onto a 6-foot square canvas. The result is four big heads, set in supercharged pink and yellow against a glossy, dense black background. The effect is intense and unsettling.

Guided Practice

Warhol said he was "deeply superficial" (is that possible?) and that there was absolutely nothing behind his work. Do you think his statements fit with his self-portrait? Is it superficial?

Warhol wasn't the only artist nor the first to make unusual and thought-provoking self-portraits with photographic images. In preparation for the activity, view the slideshow below to see how two other artists—Ilse Bing and Lee Friedlander—manipulated photographs to say something about themselves. Have students identify how the following choices made by each artist express their unique self-image:

- Setting
- Poses
- Costumes and/or props
- Reflective surfaces
- Cropping
- Absence of the physical self
- Presence of other people

Activity

In this activity, students will start with a photo of themselves and then use imaging software to apply special effects and alterations:

1. To make a self-portrait, first upload their photograph into the computer. Here are a couple different ways:
If you are using a traditional photograph, you can scan it and save it as a file in the computer, or you can have the photo store where you have your film developed put your photos onto a CD.
If you have a digital camera, you can transfer your photos directly to the computer.
2. Once students have their photo entered into the computer, they can use digital-imaging software such as Adobe Photoshop (or Adobe Photoshop Elements), Corel PaintShop, or other package capable of applying color and/or special effects.
3. Start with the crop tool to eliminate any areas of the photo they don't want to keep. They can also play with the size and rotation of their image.
4. Next, have them experiment with paint tools, filters, color levels, and any other editing tools available. They could even add text and original graphics to their picture, or copy and paste multiple images of themselves.
5. As students manipulate their digital image, have them consider what they want to communicate about themselves. What will the viewer who examines their self-portrait learn about them?
6. Students should create two or three different variations of their picture.

Here's an example of a student's work of art:



Benjamin Kass,

Photograph by Al Garnache

Using a digital camera and special graphics-editing effects, Ben created his self-portrait. He gave some thought to the pose he wanted when he was photographed with a digital camera



Wolf by Day

by Benjamin Kass

Next, Ben manipulated his digital portrait with an image-editing program (such as Adobe Photoshop). He experimented with special-effects filters until he arrived at the color scheme he wanted. Using a smudge tool, Ben created a fierce appearance. To elongate the jaw, he used an oval select tool to isolate and copy the area around the mouth. He then pasted it to a new layer, so it could be worked on without affecting the rest of the picture. He stretched and smudged the mouth until the desired effect was achieved. Finally, he used the brush-tool to paint the eyes.



Wolf by Night

by Benjamin Kass

Ben continued to experiment with filters to change the color scheme. The finished product looks like a wolf-man from a 1950s horror film!

Extension

After printing out their finished self-portraits, have students compose a poem based on their digital self-portrait using the "Write an 'I Am' Poem" worksheet. Remind students that the thoughts expressed in their poems should be reflected in the image they created in their digital self-portraits.