
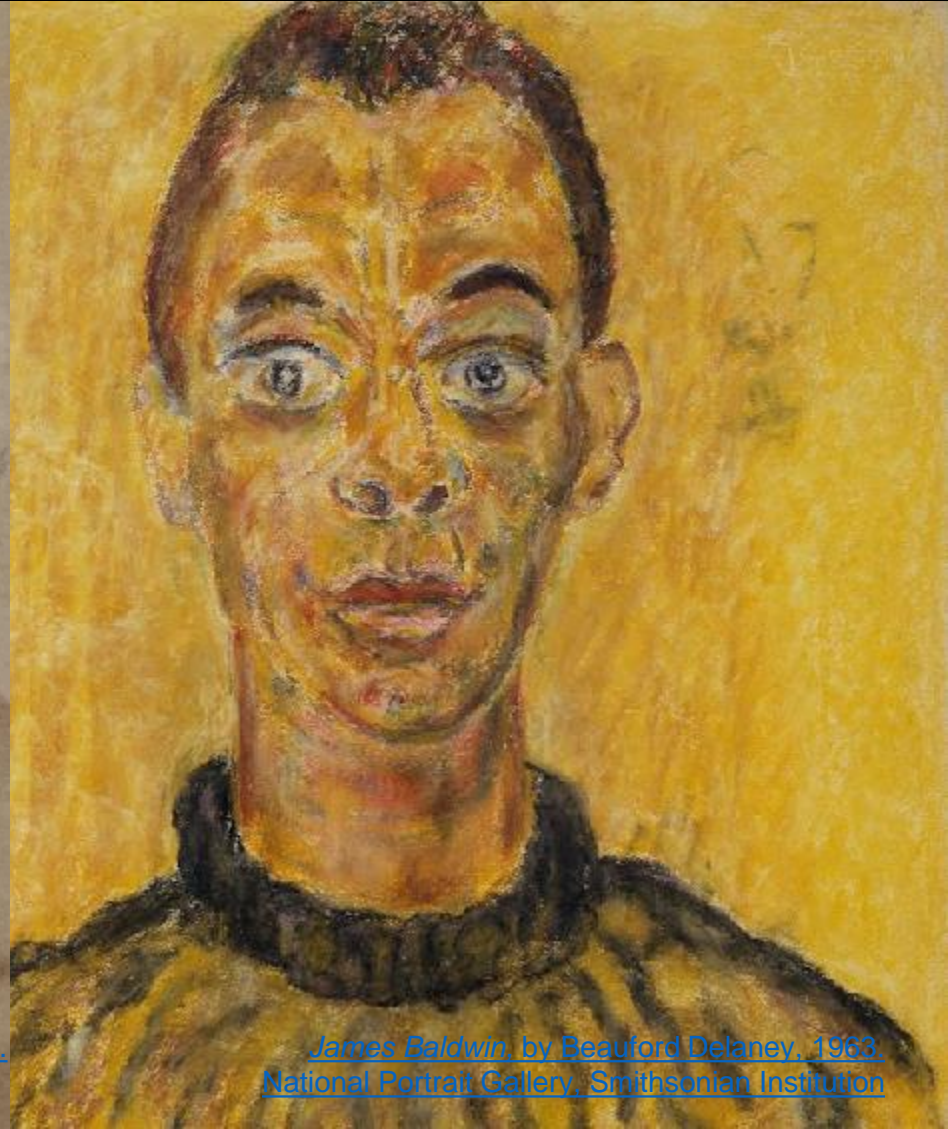
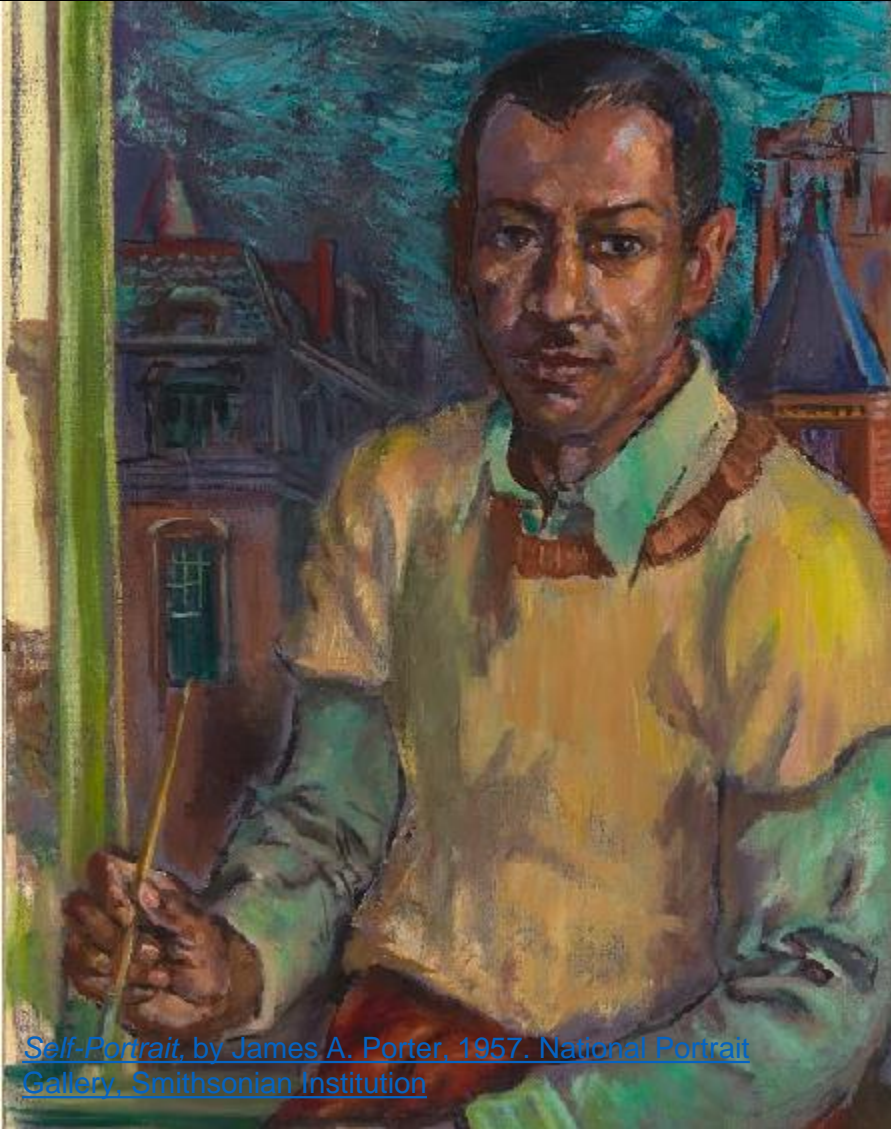


Google Arts & Culture
Learn Together: Individual Identity

National
Portrait
Gallery

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[*Self-Portrait*, by James A. Porter, 1957. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution](#)

[*Frederick Douglass*, by George Kendall Warren, 1876. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution](#)

[*James Baldwin*, by Beauford Delaney, 1963. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution](#)

Using the lesson plan and Google Arts & Culture resources

This lesson plan is designed to support you as you explore Google Arts & Culture Stories and exhibitions related to the lesson topic. The images you will see here are just a sample of the media—texts, images, audio, and video—available to you on the Google Arts & Culture website and app. As the lesson uses only resources found on GA&C, it cannot present every aspect of a given topic. A parent or teacher might be guiding you through the lesson, or you might choose to complete it on your own.

All you need to access the lesson is an internet connection and a web browser or the Google Arts & Culture app. You may want to take notes, either digitally or with paper and pen.

The lesson plan has an **introduction**, which will describe the topic and provide some background information that will help you understand what you are seeing, hearing, and reading. Then the lesson will take you on a journey from one **Story** to another, fill in some details along the way, and pose **questions** that will help you focus on important ideas. A **quiz** and a link for **exploring the topic further** are followed by **ideas for projects** related to the lesson topic that you can do at home or in the classroom.

As noted, the lesson plan includes **questions** about the main Stories, and there is also a **quiz**. You will want to write answers to the questions in a notebook or on a piece of paper. Then you can check all your answers when you've finished the lesson.

Resources on the Google Arts & Culture website include Themes, Stories, Museum Views, items, and images.

- ❖ **Themes** bring together Stories, exhibitions, collections, images, audio, and video files that relate to a topic.
- ❖ In a **Story**, clicking on the arrows on the right and left sides of a slide will move you forward and backward. Just keep clicking to keep moving forward. (Note that in some Stories, you scroll up and down.) Audio and videos on slides will play automatically. Clicking on an image title will take you to a page with more information about it.
- ❖ In **Museum Views**, you move through a 3D space. Click to move forward. Click, hold, and move the cursor left or right to turn.
- ❖ An **item** will take you to an individual **image**, where you can zoom in and sometimes read more about the image.



In this lesson, you will learn:

- ❖ How people express their identities through portraiture
- ❖ How art can capture a person's identity and personality, as well as their appearance.
- ❖ How representing different identities can lead to changes in society.

You will:

- ❖ Explore Stories and exhibitions about how people see themselves and how they portray themselves to others.
- ❖ Answer questions about what you have seen and read.

This lesson will take **30–45 minutes** to complete.



Learn Together: Individual Identity

Identity includes the beliefs, qualities, and personality traits that are essential to an individual. A person's identity is shaped by their surroundings, their past, their culture, and many other factors.

Most people hold a certain image of themselves in their minds. To them, this is their identity. But do other people see that same image? There is always some difference between how we see ourselves and how others see us. What is our true identity?

Both the public and the private senses of identity play a part in portraiture. The subject of a portrait makes choices to try to express how they would like to be seen. The portrait artist makes choices that express how they perceive the subject. And finally, viewers bring their own perspectives to interpret who they think the person in the portrait is.

As you view the exhibitions and Stories in this lesson, think about these questions:

- ❖ What choices do people make to try to convey their identity?
- ❖ What are the differences between how people portray themselves and how other people see them?
- ❖ What can a portrait reveal about an individual's identity?



Eye to I: Self-Portraits from 1900 to Today

Think about the last time you took a selfie. Did you just snap a quick photo, or did you take time to arrange your hair, your clothing, the camera angle, and the background? Did you take multiple photos until you got the image you wanted? Afterward, did you apply filters to change the colors, the mood, or even add elements? You were making choices to try to portray your own identity. Artists do the same thing through self-portraiture.

The self-portrait is a particular kind of portrait, one where the artist and the sitter are the same. Self-portraits give subjects a unique opportunity to portray themselves as they see themselves. Yet the viewer still brings their own interpretation.

Click [here](#) to learn about how and why artists make self-portraits.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What types of poses do artists adopt in self-portraits, and why?
2. How have self-portraits changed over time?
3. How can artists use self-portraits to express their individual identities?

To learn more about how artists express—and control—their identities through self-portraits, click [here](#).



Where There Is a Woman There Is Magic

Throughout much of U.S. history, women's stories were undermined, and their contributions were ignored. Artists often portrayed narrow versions of womanhood, such as wife, mother, or object of beauty. As women's rights have expanded, so has the representation of their identities in portraiture. This broader vision of women's identities—from artist to activist to engineer and beyond—deepens our understanding of this country's past and present.

Click [here](#) to view portraits of women who expressed their individual identities through their lives and in portraits.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What details in Madam C.J. Walker's portrait reflect her identity as a successful African American businesswoman?
2. Select a portrait from the exhibition. What details in the portrait help show the woman's contributions or accomplishments?
3. How can portraits of women and other stereotyped groups change society's understanding of those groups?

Conveying Complex Character: Gertrude Stein, by Jo Davidson

Can one piece of art ever really capture the full complexity of someone's individual identity? The art must communicate the person's likeness, but also the complex and ever-changing elements of their personality. What choices can a portrait artist and their subject make to convey this inner self?



Click [here](#) to learn about how sculptor Jo Davidson created a likeness of Gertrude Stein.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. What medium did Jo Davidson use for his portrait of Stein, and how did that influence the choices he made about how to convey her identity?
2. Why was it significant that the sculpture of Stein resembles a Buddha?
3. According to the expert in the video, how did Davidson depict Stein “both in whole and in part”?

Eye to I: Patricia Cronin Artist Interview

When someone chooses to share aspects of their identity that society rejects, they risk a backlash, but they also show others who identify with aspects of their identity that they are not alone. Portraits of people with marginalized identities can change how society sees these groups—more as individuals, and less as stereotypes.



Click [here](#) to learn how one artist used her craft to portray a relationship that society frowned upon.

Then come back to answer these questions:

1. How is *Memorial to a Marriage* a self-portrait?
2. According to the interview, what inspired Patricia Cronin to create *Memorial to a Marriage*?
3. How might *Memorial to a Marriage* expand our understanding of LGBTQ+ identities?

Quiz

Read the questions and write your answers in your notebook or on a piece of paper.

1. What objects do artists include in self-portraits, and what might those objects symbolize?
2. Why might some artists create self-portraits that are unrealistic, or not an exact likeness of themselves?
3. How have portraits of women changed since the middle of the twentieth century?
4. How do portraits of female athletes help challenge stereotypes about female identity?
5. What does the photograph of Davidson working on Stein's sculpture reveal?
6. Gertrude Stein was reportedly flattered by her sculpture's resemblance to the Buddha. What does this suggest to you about her identity?
7. What is the effect of Patricia Cronin's choice to use a nineteenth-century sculptural form for *Memorial to a Marriage*?
8. What does *Memorial to a Marriage* reveal about Patricia Cronin's identity?

Explore Further

This lesson has given you some vocabulary to talk about individual identity and how it is shown in portraiture. To learn more about portraiture and identity, click [here](#).

It's Your Turn!

In this lesson, you learned about how portraits express individual identity. Here are some ideas for projects that you can do at home or in the classroom.

- ❖ Create your own self-portrait using any medium you want—it can be a painting, a sculpture, a collage, a poem, or a photograph that helps you best express your identity.
- ❖ Study an artist's self-portrait that was not included in this lesson. Write about how the self-portrait shows aspects of the artist's identity that you might not otherwise have known about.

Sample Answers

Student answers will vary. The responses below are sample answers and are not meant to be the one conclusive answer. Use the rubric on page 13 for a guide on evaluating student interpretations of portraits.

Eye to I: Self-Portraits from 1900 to Today

1. *Before photography, artists used mirrors to create self-portraits, so they showed themselves standing or sitting up and looking directly at the viewer.*
2. *Before the twentieth century, many self-portraits were realistic paintings or drawings. Photography allowed artists to show an accurate likeness and from different poses or angles. In the twentieth century, self-portraits began to be less realistic to try to show the artist's inner self.*
3. *Artists can convey their likeness in a portrait, and they can express their inner identity using color, line, shape, or symbols.*

Where There Is a Woman There Is Magic

1. *In her portrait, Walker is dressed in expensive materials such as lace clothing and pearl jewelry, which reinforce her identity as a successful businesswoman.*
2. *Answers will vary. Sample answer: Alice Waters's portrait shows her outdoors, surrounded by edible plants, reflecting her role advocating for organic gardening and local produce.*
3. *Portrayals of individuals in marginalized groups encourage the viewer to see the subject as an individual with an identity separate from the stereotypes of the group.*

Conveying Complex Characters: Gertrude Stein, by Jo Davidson

1. *Davidson made the sculpture out of terracotta. He showed Stein's likeness entirely through shape, but without color or setting. He relies on pose, facial expression, and texture to express her identity.*
2. *The sculpture compares Stein to a wise thinker whose ideas are followed around the world.*
3. *Davidson's sculpture accurately shows Stein's physical appearance. It also uses the shape and symbolism of her pose to show that she was a powerful woman who sought to educate others, which was her vision of her identity.*

Eye to I: Patricia Cronin Artist Interview

1. *Memorial to a Marriage shows an image of Patricia Cronin and a relationship that is deeply important to her.*
2. *Patricia Cronin created the sculpture to push back against the illegality of same-sex marriage in the United States at the time the sculpture was made. It was a personal expression both of grief that her relationship was not legally acknowledged and an expression of her love for her partner.*
3. *Answers will vary. Sample answer: Memorial to a Marriage references nineteenth-century neoclassical sculpture, giving the image of Cronin and her partner a sense of seriousness and dignity at a time when same-sex relationships were not seen as fully valid.*

Sample Answers

Student answers will vary. The responses below are sample answers and are not meant to be the one conclusive answer. Use the rubric on page 13 for a guide on evaluating student interpretations of portraits.

Quiz

1. *Artists often include the tools of their medium, such as cameras or paintbrushes. They convey the sitter's identity as an artist.*
2. *In creating self-portraits, artists sometimes try to express their inner selves by modifying their appearance to express their inner identity.*
3. *Since the mid-twentieth century, women have had more freedom to hold different occupations and express their personalities, and portraits reflect this by showing women doing jobs or less traditionally "feminine" things.*
4. *Portraits of female athletes often show them being mentally and physically strong and active, which goes against the stereotype of women being weak or gentle.*
5. *The photograph shows Stein and Davidson working together, showing that Stein could have influenced Davidson's work.*
6. *Stein liked to think of herself as a leader in the arts and source of wisdom. She was also not afraid to portray herself as important.*
7. *The historical format helps show same-sex relationships in a traditional, formal way, in contrast to the fact that same-sex marriage was not legal at the time.*
8. *Memorial to a Marriage reveals the importance of Cronin's relationship and that she responded to discrimination by showing her and her wife's personal identities and their love.*

[New York, New York, by Tseng Kwong Chi, 1979.](#)
[National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution](#)



Rubric for evaluating student interpretations of portraits

	Strong Interpretation	Fair Interpretation	Needs Improvement
Answer includes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clearly stated inference, conclusion, interpretation, or supported opinion. • Accurate evidence using significant details from the image or text. • A logical relationship between the evidence and the conclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A stated interpretation or opinion. • Some evidence, or evidence that relies on less significant or more ambiguous details from the image or text. • Interpretations that rely on ideas or opinions not found in the image or text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple opinion or statement of fact about the image or text. • No evidence of inference, interpretation, or drawing conclusions. • No specific evidence from the text or image, or logical connection between the text or image and the idea.
Sample answer:	<p><i>I think the portrait of Henrietta Lacks is trying to communicate hope. The artist uses light, bright colors, which feel like a sunny day, and Henrietta is smiling, which makes her seem content.</i></p>	<p><i>The portrait of Henrietta Lacks is very hopeful. The bright colors and flowers are happy symbols.</i></p>	<p><i>I like the picture of Henrietta Lacks. I think she looks pretty.</i></p>