



Primary Self-Portraits

Nancy Walkup

Creating simple self-portraits is an engaging experience that helps students get acquainted with each other and feel part of a class or grade level at the same time. They are also fun to display in the classroom during an open house or other school family event. Usually, my kindergartners make torn paper portraits; first graders cut theirs out.

Motivation

I have a variety of prints of fine-art self-portraits that I share and discuss with students to introduce the lesson, focusing first on the subject's expressions. Then we talk about the shape of the head and the positioning of the nose, eyes, and mouth as students feel their own heads and faces.

Creating Self-Portraits

Next I encourage students to choose paper that matches their skin tone and guide them to draw a large oval on it for the face. They also draw a neck on the same paper. Kindergartners tear out their pieces. (Note: tracing the crayon lines with water first makes tearing easier.) First graders cut theirs



with scissors.

I let students choose colors for their background and they glue the faces and necks in place. They use the leftover face paper to draw noses and ears and then glue them in place.

After another discussion on showing expression, they draw eyes and mouths on scrap paper and glue them in place. Hair can

be added in strips or pieces (decorative scissors are good for this) and can be crimped, accordion-folded, or curled.

I provide assorted patterns of wallpaper and fabric scraps for students to use for clothes and hats. Students always have access to my scrap boxes and found objects such as buttons, ribbon, and other trim. They are free to add whatever they would like; decorated frames provide another possibility.

It always amazes me how individual these artworks are and how much

these simple self-portraits resemble students! This is a lesson I teach year after year. 🌀

Note: This lesson is adapted from "Picturing My Friends," Unit 2, Lesson 7 in *Explorations in Art, Grade 2* (Davis Publications, 2008).

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students explore and understand perspective content for works of art.

WEB LINK

www.artyfactory.com/portraits/drawing_techniques/proportions_of_a_head_1.htm

Objectives

Students will:

- identify and describe how shapes and lines can show facial expression in self-portraits.
- create a collage of a face with a definite expression.

Materials

- 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) construction paper in a variety of skin tones (for portraits)
- 9 x 12" construction paper in assorted colors (for backgrounds)
- 6 x 9" (15 x 23 cm) construction paper in hair colors
- assorted scraps of colored construction and other kinds of papers
- patterned wallpaper or fabric scraps
- crayons
- glue
- buttons and other found objects