

The study of society through portraiture
Suggested Grades: Pre-K through Grade 1
Lesson by: Meagan McCormick

(Be sure to contact the Castellani Art Museum for a copy of the teacher resource guide containing the images, activities, and additional information associated with this lesson plan.)

Disciplines: NYS Learning Standards

◆ Social Studies

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

Performance Indicator (4): The skills of historical analysis include the ability to: explain the significance of historical evidence; weigh the importance, reliability, and validity of evidence; understand the concept multiple causation; understand the importance of changing and competing interpretations of different historical developments.

Standard 2: World History

Performance Indicator (2): Establishing timeframes, exploring different periodizations, examining themes across time and within cultures, and focusing on important turning points in world history that help organize the study of world cultures and civilizations.

Standard 4: Economics

Performance Indicator (1): The study of economics requires an understanding of major economic concepts and systems, the principles of economic decision making, and the interdependence of economies and economic systems throughout the world.

◆ English Language Arts (ELA)

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Performance Indicator (2): Speaking and writing for critical analysis and evaluation requires presenting opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues clearly, logically, and persuasively with reference to specific criteria on which the opinion or judgment is based.

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Performance Indicator (1): Oral communication in formal and informal settings requires the ability to talk with people of different ages, genders, and cultures, to adapt presentations to different audiences, and to reflect on how talk varies in different situations.

◆ The Arts- Visual Arts

Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts

Performance Indicator (1): Students will make works of art that explore different kinds of subject matter, topics, themes, and metaphors. Students will understand and use sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive images to communicate their own ideas in works of art. Students will use a variety of art materials processes, mediums, and techniques, and use appropriate technologies for creating and exhibiting visual art works.

Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources

Performance Indicator (2): Students will know and use a variety of visual arts materials, techniques, and processes. Students will know about resources and opportunities for participation in visual arts in the community (exhibitions, libraries, museums, galleries) and use appropriate materials (art reproductions, slides, print materials, electronic media). Students will be aware of vocational options available in the visual arts.

Standard 3: Responding to and analyzing Works of Art

Performance Indicator (3): Students will reflect on, interpret, and evaluate works of art, using the language of art criticism. Students will analyze the visual art characteristics of the natural and built environment and explain the social, cultural, psychological, and environmental dimensions of the visual arts. Students will compare the way in which a variety of ideas, themes, and concepts are expressed in other disciplines.

Descriptive Title: The study of society through portraiture

Context (Rationale):

This lesson is important to teach young students how people lived in the past by studying the portrait of a young girl who lived many years ago. Her clothing and general appearance helps to define her lifestyle and family background. Did all young children dress in the same way? What possible reasons could explain differences in the way children were dressed? Are these reasons valid today? Students should develop an appreciation for past customs and traditions and how they may still impact on today's society.

Performance Task:

The student will be able to –

- Identify the painting as representing the past or present day
- Describe how the young girl is dressed in the painting
- Understand that not everyone dressed the same way
- List similarities and differences of dress styles of past and present
- Create own present-day portrait of a young child

Art Resources:

- Portrait of Kathleen Palmer, artist unknown, Castellani Art Museum
- Touch and Feel Box (contents represent textures in painting)
- Additional photographic images of young children past and present

Art Materials:

- White Drawing Paper
- Reproduction of Portrait of Kathleen Palmer
- Pencil
- Eraser
- Crayons
- Lined paper
- Glue Sticks

Motivation:

The teacher will motivate the students by asking them if they think how people dress is important and can tell us anything about how they live and work. I will then ask them if they know what a portrait is and if they have ever had their portrait taken. I will then tell them that we are going to look at a portrait painting and try to learn as much as possible about the subject and the time it was painted.

Presentation:

1. Once the children arrive at the museum the teacher will bring them into the gallery and have them sit in front of the portrait.
2. The teacher will ask them if they have any idea what type of painting it is.
3. After a short description of what a portrait is the teacher will then ask them to describe the specifics of the painting.
4. The teacher will ask the children to recall if they have ever been in a portrait.
6. Next the teacher will ask the students when they think the portrait was painted. What makes them think that way?
7. The teacher will then ask the students to look at the portrait's details including what the little girl is wearing, her pose, and her surroundings.
8. The teacher will ask the students to describe the expression on the girl's face?
9. The teacher will ask them if they think all little girls dressed that way. Why might some dress differently?
10. Next the teacher will give a brief description of children's clothing in the 1850's.
11. The teacher will then turn their attention to the touch and feel box where they will take turns identifying the contents which include a feather, piece of satin, lace, straw, cotton, and doll hair.
12. The teacher will then ask the children to look at each other and see how they are dressed.
13. The teacher will then tell the students that they will create their own portrait of a young person living today, posing them anyway they want but keeping in mind to dress them in the appropriate outfit.
14. Next the teacher will ask the students to describe their portrait and its meaning.

Assessment Tools and Evidence:

- **Tools:** At the end of the session the teacher will ask students to volunteer to share their portrait and story with the class. The teacher will then ask them questions about portraits and what we can learn from them.
- **Evidence:** The evidence of whether or not the students understood the concept of what a portrait is and how it can tell a story will be determined by their individual portraits and the stories they create.
- **Teacher Reflection/Follow Up:** Did the students understand the concept of a portrait and how it can tell a story? Do they understand that people dress differently for a variety of reasons? The teacher will make decisions based on their drawings and responses as well as feedback from their classroom teacher.