

“Selfies” (Exactly where I want to be!)

Creating self-portraits is a snap with this easy technique

(art + literature)

The 2013 word of the year, according to the Oxford Dictionary, was “selfie.” This word was officially added to the dictionary and describes a photo someone takes of herself or himself to share with others through social media networks.

Often, a selfie is taken to share an experience in a specific location, and the background is just as important as the person in the photo.

In this lesson plan, selfies take a step back and become self-portraits, providing an easy way for students to see the proportions of their faces and the placement of their features. By tracing lines onto clear film, then sanding the film to accept opaque media on the back side, a close likeness can be achieved. This likeness is then layered over a background of the student’s choosing — a location he or she would find most intriguing for taking a selfie. These self-portraits may go to the moon, the bottom of the ocean, or anywhere else the imagination goes!

GRADES K-8 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Students will need head-and-shoulders images of themselves. School photos are perfect, or take actual “selfies” with a phone, camera, or tablet. If taking a photo, have the student stand in front of a white wall or a piece of blank posterboard. Make a photocopy that fills an 8-1/2" x 11" piece of paper.



Materials (required)

Clear Acetate Sheets, .005", 9" x 12", 25-sheet pad (55501-1305); need one sheet per student

Sharpie[®] Fine-Point Marker, Black (21316-2001); need one per student

3M[®] Sandpaper, fine grit 9" x 11" sheet (34916-1505); share one across class

Kool Tak[™] Strips, package of 60 (24443-1060); need one package

Opaque Color Medium; recommend:

Lyra[™] Opaque Watercolor Pens, set of 24 (01751-1024)

Sargent Art[®] Oil Pastels, set of 25 (21989-1025)

Strathmore[®] 200 Series Student Watercolor Paper, 90 lb, 9" x 12", 15-sheet pad (10135-1003); share two pads across class

Value Pre-Cut Mats, 12" x 16", package of 50 (17205-1006); share one across class

Elmer's[®] Glue-All[®], 4 oz (23887-1004); share one bottle among six students

Unfinished Country Beads, assortment of approximately 250 (60711-0000); share one across class

All-Purpose Chipboard, 14 ply, 28" x 44" (13115-2226); share one sheet among five students

Optional Materials:

Self Portrait Mirror, 8-1/2" x 11" (22810-0851)



Preparation, continued

2. Cut chipboard into 12" x 16" pieces.
3. Make a temporary "sander" that students can use easily. Find an 8 oz jar with a flat lid, attach high-tack, double-sided tape to the lid, and attach a piece of sandpaper that has been cut slightly larger than the lid.

Process

1. Tape a sheet of acetate to the photocopy, positioning the face off to one side of the page.
2. With a permanent marker, trace the contours and features of the face. Don't try to draw every hair and eyelash — try to keep it simple, using as few lines as possible.

As an option, the acetate may be taped to a mirror and the lines of the face traced while looking through the film into the reflection.

3. Turn the image over and use a "sander" (see Preparation, Step 2) to roughen the film just behind the portrait. Leave the rest of the film smooth. Rub the sander from all directions and in circles to scratch the area as much as possible.
4. Color the portrait on the sanded area using opaque mediums such as oil pastels, tempera paints, opaque watercolors, or acrylics. All areas of the portrait must be filled with opaque color — white areas such as teeth and eyes should not be left clear. Lighter colors should be applied first.
5. On watercolor paper, create a background image. Ask students to think of a place they would like to go to take a "selfie" to share with people, and draw or paint that image on the paper. Use the portrait as reference to determine how much of the image the face will cover. Glue that image to a 12" x 16" piece of cardboard, posterboard, or other rigid surface.
6. Glue four or more macrame beads of the same size around the edges of the background image.
7. Tape the acetate on the back side of a pre-cut mat. Place glue on the top of the beads, position the back side of the mat over the beads and press gently in place.

Options

- Create text to go with the selfie. Explain where it was "taken" and why that location was chosen.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

K-4 • Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

5-8 • Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks.

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

K-4 • Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum.

5-8 • Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.



Step 1: Trace a face onto acetate with a permanent marker, then turn it over and sand the back side.



Step 2: Using opaque drawing or painting media, color the portrait on the back side. Create a background image of an imaginary location.



Step 3: Place the portrait in a mat and use macrame beads to suspend it over the background.

