

Classroom Application: Planning Your Self-Portrait

A self-portrait is a visual expression by you about you. What is it that you want to communicate? Start by thinking about yourself. Use these questions to guide your planning.

1. Where do you live? What about this place is special to you? What objects, colors, or background might you use to express your connection to a place?
2. What cultural groups are you part of? Think about a sports team, music group, school club, hobby, religious group, ethnic group, family, or the community where you live. What about one or more of your cultural groups is important to you? How could you express this? What objects, clothes, jewelry, colors, or background might help express this? How can you share them with others without words?
3. What emotions or personality traits do you want to show? What facial expressions will convey these? What body posture (sitting, standing, hunched over, standing tall, head turned sideways, back facing camera, etc.) will show this emotion or trait?
4. Think about what you want viewers to understand about you when they look at your portrait. How do you want them to read your portrait? What do you want them to “get” about you? What emotion do you want people to feel? What attitude do you want them to see? What clues about your life do you want to give viewers?
5. Where would you like to be located within the frame of the picture? From which angle do you want the viewer to see you? (From above often conveys smallness or vulnerability; from below often conveys largeness or power; straight on might convey openness.)

Straight on, at eye level

From above

From below

From the side

6. Lighting affects the mood of a portrait. What mood do you want to express? What would you like the lighting to be?

Mostly dark with a little light

Equal amounts of light and dark

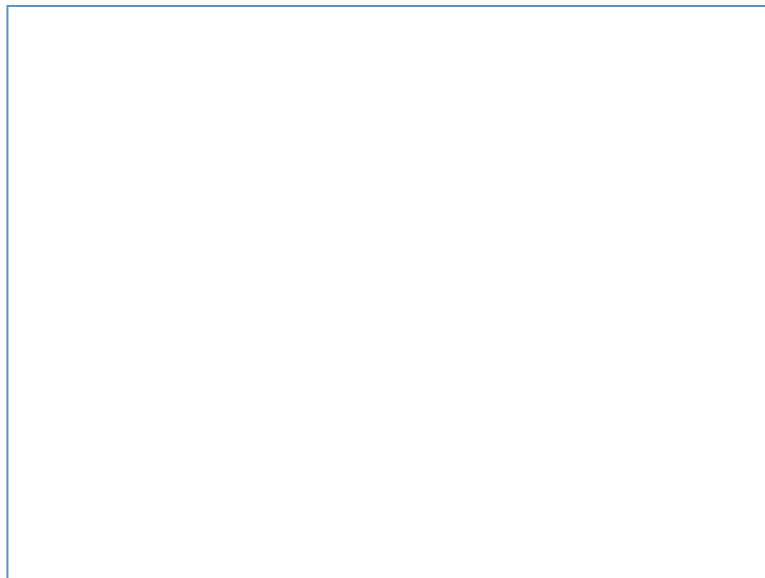
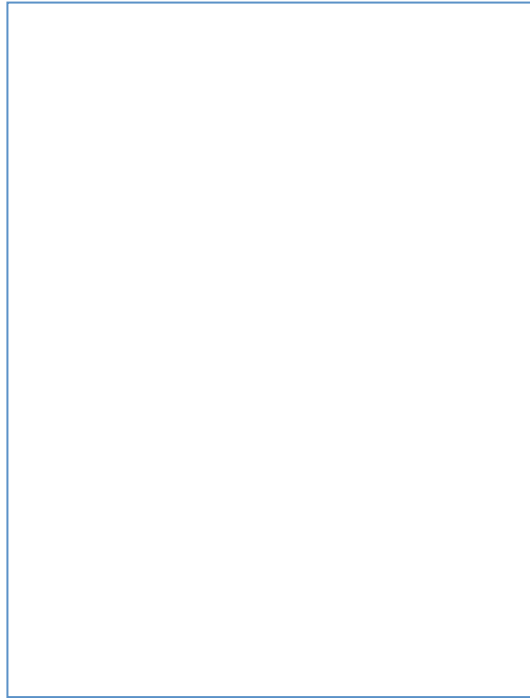
Lots of light with a little dark

Lots of light

7. What artifacts might help convey meaning in your portrait? Make a list of props (objects, photos, fabric, furniture, etc.) that you want in your portrait.
8. How will you dress? How will you wear your hair? Make a list of the clothes and jewelry you want to wear.

Adapt these questions to suit your students and your curriculum. Conveying self-identity through a photograph, sketch, painting, or collage enriches an array of disciplines and assignments. Introduce self-portraits with a discussion of the students' portraits in the article by Lisa Falk and how your students would represent themselves.

9. Will the picture include all of you or be a close-up? Which shape best fits the placement of yourself in the photograph--vertical or horizontal? Try sketching how you want your portrait to look.



10. What title would you give your self-portrait?

This portrait planning worksheet is by Lisa Falk, based on a worksheet by Josh Schacher/Voices Program, 2014.