

Clues to Looking at Art

Portraits:

A **portrait** is a painting, photograph, sculpture, or other artistic representation of a person, in which the face and its expression is predominant. The intent is to display the likeness, personality, and even the mood of the person. For this reason, in photography, a portrait is generally not a snapshot, but a composed image of a person in a still position. A portrait often shows a person looking directly at the painter or photographer, in order to most successfully engage the subject with the viewer.

Portraits are painted to show how people look and what they are like. Often artists are hired to paint someone's portrait, but sometimes they paint their friends, family, or themselves.

Find different kinds of portraits:

Children

Self-portraits

One person

Groups of people

People looking directly at you

Can you find other groupings?

Choose a portrait that you like very much. Imagine that you are that person.

1. What clothes would you choose to wear?
2. Are these formal or everyday clothes?
3. How do they feel?
4. Are you a rich person?
5. As you stand or sit for the portrait, are you relaxed or are you posing?
6. Think of a reason why you might have decided to have your portrait painted or why the artist might have asked to paint it.

Clues:

A portrait contains clues that help you get to know the people and imagine their lives and personalities. What people are wearing (clothes), what they are doing (pose), where they are (setting), and the look on their faces (expression) are all clues.

Activity:

Look for portraits of people in the museum. Look for clues: clothes, pose, setting, expression, and objects. Choose the portrait that tells you the most about a person. Choose the portrait that tells you the least.

After answering these questions, what similar questions come to mind that can be answered by works in this category?

PORTRAITS/PERSONALITY/CHARACTER

Portraits reveal personality by:

- colors used
- materials
- poses
- style
- brush stroke
- facial expressions
- movement
- other objects in picture

- What we like/don't like
- How we behave/interact
- What we think/say

The Portrait in Words:

- Uniqueness
- Appearance
- future
- Personality
- Interests
- Family
- Environment
- Culture