Portraiture Now: Communities
Compiled by the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Target Grade Level: 3–8 in visual arts and English language arts classes

Objectives
After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:
- Identify and analyze key components of a portrait.
- Explore the definition of "community" and its relevance in their own lives.

Portraits:
Please visit "Portraiture Now: Communities" at http://npg.si.edu/exhibit/communities/.

Browse the National Portrait Gallery's collection online at
http://npgportraits.si.edu/emuseumnpg/code/emuseum.asp?page=search_advanced_NPG&module=NPG&profile=NPG.

Materials
- *"Reading" Portraiture Guide for Educators* found at
  http://www.npg.si.edu/docs/reading.pdf
- Marian Anderson Personal Meaning Map
- Who Formed Your Community? worksheet
- ***Supply students with paper and art materials when necessary.**

Background Information for Teachers
Introductory Label Text for "Portraiture Now: Communities"
How do we define community today? Through more electronic networking capabilities, our connections with family, friends, and acquaintances are increasingly widespread. And yet we are still drawn to the idea of small communities and the face-to-face interactions they promote. Each of the three painters selected for "Portraiture Now: Communities" has explored this concept through a series of related portraits of friends, townspeople, or families.

Rose Frantzen has portrayed 180 people from her hometown of Maquoketa, Iowa. Her one-foot-square oil paintings were created with a quick wet-into-wet technique. Jim Torok creates meticulously rendered small-scale portraits, which can take a year to complete. Chosen for this exhibition are his portraits of friends and fellow artists from New York City, as well as a series of paintings documenting three generations of a single Colorado family. Rebecca Westcott, until her accidental death in 2004, painted subtle full-length images of her peers—often Philadelphia artists in their twenties—that merge expressive style and a love for the handmade with a gritty street-art vibe. Seen together, the paintings by these three artists suggest the enduring power of personal communities.

Perhaps more than anything, the concept of community reflects bonds forged through time and connections that go beyond clothing and physical appearance. The casual clothing worn by the subjects in these portraits not only suggests contemporary trends, which are changeable, but reflects each artist's desire to meet his or her subject on a level ground. The consistent frontal pose in these portraits also indicates the openness of these encounters. In this sense, personal community is inherently democratic.

Likewise, the opportunity to devote time and attention to composing a subject's likeness also permits a sense of intimacy between artist and subject. As Frantzen has observed, spending four or five hours with each sitter made her realize how intensely she saw each face, and how rarely we pay close attention, even to our friends and families. Idiosyncrasies can become strengths. Westcott's interest in the "imperfections" of her subjects enhances her closeness to the figures she chooses to portray. Her calligraphic markings and inscriptions and her use of humble, readily available materials, such as foamboard, also suggest the power of the personal. For Torok, the discoveries made through the process of creating a likeness are part of portraiture's appeal. By painting twenty-three members of a single family, he created a record of three generations; in doing so, he also confronted the larger issue of family resemblance. What are the traits that unite a family and other group relationships? This question is central to the idea of communities.

Through a collaborative creative process and the resulting portraits, these artists nurture and record the intensity of the visual, tactile, emotional, intellectual, and even genetic connections through which community is forged. These connections, in turn, shape both individuals and their appearance.

Lesson Procedures
Pre-Visit Activity
Warm-Up

Students will complete a Personal Meaning Map related to a portrait of Marian Anderson or of the teacher's choosing. Personal Meaning Maps typically have one image (in this case, a portrait) in the center of a page as well as a line for the student's name. The directions instruct the students to "Write or draw anything that comes to mind when you see the image below." It is important not to give out any more information and to do this "warm-up" before students undertake the program.

Following the warm-up:
- Introduce the mission of the National Portrait Gallery.
- Define portrait, sitter, and symbol with students.
- Discuss the media used to create portraits:
    - Paintings: oil, acrylic
    - Sculpture: marble, bronze
    - Prints and drawings: etching, ink on paper
    - Photographs: daguerreotype, albumen silver print
    - Mixed media: collage
    - Video
- Practice "reading" a portrait with the students. Be sure it is NOT the portrait used for the Personal Meaning Map activity. Analyze the portrait by using the *"Reading" Portraiture Guide for Educators* to formulate questions. This can be done as a class, in small groups, or individually.
- Discuss the notion of community. What does community mean to the students? Brainstorm about the various types of communities to which the students belong.
- If students will visit the National Portrait Gallery (or another museum) as part of the lesson, the teacher should go over museum manners.

Museum Visit (or Online Activity)
Visit the "Portraiture Now: Communities" exhibition, either at the National Portrait Gallery or on the Portrait Gallery's Web site at http://npg.si.edu/exhibit/communities/.
- Review the definition of community again with the students.
- Ask your students to spend time looking at portraits by each of the three artists whose work hangs in this exhibition. Have the students think about what sort of community the artist is representing in his or her set of portraits. Discuss as a class or in small groups.
- If students are visiting the National Portrait Gallery in person, have them observe portraits of individuals from history who have been part of the District of Columbia community. Examples include:
    - Marian Anderson
    - Charles Drew
    - Abraham Lincoln
    - Duke Ellington
    - Mary McLeod Bethune
    - Frederick Douglass

- If students are visiting their local museum, find portraits of individuals from history that are part of their community.
- If visiting the National Portrait Gallery's Web site, browse the NPG's "Collections Search" to find relevant individuals: http://npgportraits.si.edu/emuseumnpg/code/emuseum.asp?page=search_advanced_NPG&module=NPG&profile=NPG.

Post-Visit Activity
Warm-Up
- Give the students back their Personal Meaning Maps, with a different writing implement than what they used the first time (or a different color one, i.e., a blue pen instead of black, or a pencil instead of pen) and ask them to add or change anything on the paper.

Create an Accordion Book
(Use the "Who Formed Your Community?" worksheet as a guide to complete pages 1 and 2 of the accordion book)

Students will create an 11-x-17-inch accordion book that represents a story about a historical individual and the community in which he or she lived or was involved. There are four pages in the accordion book.
- Page 1: Students will choose a sitter from history with ties to their community to highlight for the accordion book project. They will research that individual and create a portrait of them while including symbols that represent that person's life and contribution.
- Page 2: Students will write a short biography about their individual.
- Page 3: Have students research their community and find images of the community at the time their historical individual lived as well as contemporary images of the community.
- Page 4: Ask students to research the architecture of their community and find pictures of some interesting buildings there, or ask them to draw imaginary buildings that they think could have existed in their community .

National Standards in Visual Arts

NA-VA.K-4.2 USING KNOWLEDGE OF STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS
Achievement Standard:
- Students know the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas.
- Students describe how different expressive features and organizational principles cause different responses.
- Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas.

NA-VA.K-4.3 CHOOSING AND EVALUATING A RANGE OF SUBJECT MATTER, SYMBOLS, AND IDEAS
Achievement Standard:
- Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art.
- Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

NA-VA.K-4.6 MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS AND OTHER DISCIPLINES
Achievement Standard:
- Students understand and use similarities and differences between characteristics of the visual arts and other arts disciplines.
- Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum.

NA-VA.5-8.2 USING KNOWLEDGE OF STRUCTURES AND FUNCTIONS
Achievement Standard:
- Students generalize about the effects of visual structures and functions and reflect upon these effects in their own work.
- Students employ organizational structures and analyze what makes them effective or ineffective in the communication of ideas.
- Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas.

NA-VA.5-8.3 CHOOSING AND EVALUATING A RANGE OF SUBJECT MATTER, SYMBOLS, AND IDEAS
Achievement Standard:
- Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks.
- Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks.

NA-VA.5-8.6 MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS AND OTHER DISCIPLINES
Achievement Standard:
- Students compare the characteristics of works in two or more art forms that share similar subject matter, historical periods, or cultural context.

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

National Standards in English Language Arts
NL-ENG.K-12.4 COMMUNICATION SKILLS
Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

NL-ENG.K-12.5 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

NL-ENG.K-12.8 DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS
Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

NL-ENG.K-12.12 APPLYING LANGUAGE SKILLS
Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Key Terms
Artist: A person who produces works in any of the arts that are primarily subject to aesthetic criteria. A person who practices one of the fine arts, such as a painter or sculptor
Community: A social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage. A social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests. A group that is perceived or perceives itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists
Portrait: A likeness of a person, especially one showing the face, that is created by an artist
Sitter: A person who poses or models, as for a portrait
Symbol: Something representing something else by association; objects, characters, or another concrete representation of an abstract idea, concept, or event

Portraiture Now: Communities
Who Formed Your Community?

LEARNING ABOUT YOUR INDIVIDUAL
 Choose an interesting and influential person with ties to the city you live in.
- Discover three facts about this individual (read a book, an article, or go online)
- What is your chosen individual's contribution? Consider:
  - Did this person make changes in laws or government policies? Why did they do that?
  - Did this person change their neighborhood or a part of your city? In what way?
  - Did this person create or design something that will benefit other people and the culture of your city? Why was this an improvement?
- Visit the National Portrait Gallery's Web site, npg.si.edu, to discover the portraits the Portrait Gallery owns of your individual.

LEARNING ABOUT PORTRAITS
- What is a portrait?
- What is the difference between a portrait and a biography?
- What are the ways in which artists create portraits? What media are used?

CREATING YOUR OWN PORTRAIT
1. When you have found three good facts about your individual, plan how you will incorporate these facts visually around the image you create of your important person. Consider:
   a. Where you will place objects/symbols (special tools, books, or instruments, etc.) in or near the person's hands
   b. What the setting of your portrait will look like
   c. How you will show laws or attitudes being changed; how you will show music, drama, or cultural change
   d. What style of clothing your person will be wearing

2. Make two different sketches. What looks best to you? Talk with an art partner and compare sketches. Make sure your partner understands what your portrait is about. Do you understand what your partner is trying to portray?

3. Faces are symmetrical. How far down to the eyes come in a head? How far down does is the tip of the nose? The lips? This is part of making a face in "proportion." Use the head as a measurement. How many heads wide are shoulders?

4. Decide the style you'd like to use for your portrait. Do you like collages? Cartoons? Realism? Impressionism? Cubism? Does your teacher want you to use a particular style?

5. Choose color and line to affect the mood of your portrait: Cool? Warm? Jagged? Soft? What style did you like best when you looked online at the Portrait Gallery?

6. Make final changes to your portrait.