

Young Portrait Explorers: Angela Davis



Learning Objective: Learn about Angela Davis, her role as an activist, and how photographers use camera angles to tell us about the sitter.

Portrait Discussion:

Spend 30 seconds letting your eyes wander from top to bottom and all through the center of the photo.

Pose: Notice Angela Davis' posture in front of the microphone. How would you describe her pose? Try standing like Angela Davis—shoulders back, head up, eyes looking straight out. How do you feel in this stance?

Action: What is Angela Davis doing in this photo?

In this photograph Angela Davis is speaking in front of hundreds of people. Imagine you could hear her voice. What would it sound like? Would it be loud or soft? How would you feel speaking in front of a group that large?

Facial Expression: Look at her facial expression. What emotions do you see in her face? How do you think she feels as she speaks to the crowd?

Angles: Notice the **angle** (where the photographer stands in relation to the sitter) of the photo. Where is the photographer standing in relation to Angela Davis? *The **photographer** (or person who captures images with a camera) sits below her, to the side, and points his camera up at her. She stands tall and seems powerful as she speaks.*

Historical Context: *Angela Davis is a teacher, public speaker, and activist. An **activist** is a leader who fights for things to be fair and equal for everyone.*

In this photo, Angela Davis is speaking out in front of a large group of people. She thought the police had treated her friend unfairly, and she wanted everyone to know about it.

What words do you think she might use when she spoke out for fairness on behalf of her friend?

Related Children's Books:

A is for Activist by Innosanto Nagara

Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History by Vashti Harrison

Rad American Women A-Z by Karen Schatz

Activity: Be the Photographer:

Materials:

Two or more people

Camera or smartphone

Instruction:

One person is the photographer and one or more people are the **sitters** (people in the portrait).

Photographer instructs the sitter(s) on where to sit or stand. The photographer takes photos from the following angles:

- In front and behind
- Above and below
- To the side



Angela Davis by Stephen Shames, gelatin silver print, 1969. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. © 1969 Stephen Shames

Find the portrait on our website, here: npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.2001.55