

Young Portrait Explorers: Michelle Obama



Learning Objective: Learn how First Lady Michelle Obama helped her **community** (a group of people that live together or share something in common). Then design a self-portrait that shows how you help your community.

Portrait Discussion:

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

Facial Expression: Which emotions do you see in Michelle Obama's face? Her eyes look forward, and her mouth is closed. Does she appear serious? Do you think she is listening to you?

Pose: How does Michelle Obama pose for this portrait? She is seated with her legs crossed. One arm rests on her lap while the other is tucked under her chin. Can you try sitting this way? How do you feel in this pose? Do you feel confident? Or smart? *From an early age, Michelle Obama remembers thinking that "being smart is cooler than anything in the world."*

Clothing: What is Michelle Obama wearing in this portrait? If you were to trace your fingers around the outline of her dress, what shape would you discover? A triangle or a circle? What colors and shapes do you see in her dress? This dress is special to Michelle Obama because it was designed by Michelle Smith, who shares her belief in helping women and girls.

Historical Context:

Michelle Obama was the first lady of the United States. Her husband, Barack Obama, was the nation's forty-fourth president. She wanted all children to have healthy bodies, so she started the "Let's Move!" project to encourage exercise. By planting a garden on the White House lawn, she showed all of us that we can grow and eat healthy foods. Michelle Obama also stood up for and listened to communities that were not being treated fairly, especially women and people of color. Artist Amy Sberald, who painted this portrait, said, "We see our best selves in her."

Related Children's Book:

Michelle by Deborah Hopkinson

Parker Looks Up: An Extraordinary Moment by Parker and Jessica Curry

Activity: Draw Your Best Self

Materials:

Paper

Pencil

Markers/crayons/colored pencils

Instruction:

Michelle Obama helped her community as first lady of the United States. What are some ways that you help your community? Have you ever shared or donated your toys? Or comforted your friends when they feel sad? Have you planted a flower or a tree?

Draw a self-portrait that shows how you help your community. Share it with family and friends!



Michelle LaVaughn Robinson Obama (2018) by Amy Sherald. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. The National Portrait Gallery is grateful to the following lead donors for their support of the Obama portraits: Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg; Judith Kern and Kent Whealy; Tommie L. Pegues and Donald A. Capoccia.

Find the portrait on our website, here: https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.2018.15