

# Young Portrait Explorers:

## Selena



**Learning Objective:** Learn about award-winning musician and “Queen of Tejano,” Selena.

### **Portrait Discussion:**

Spend 30 seconds letting your eyes wander from the top of the photograph to the bottom.

**Pose:** How would you describe Selena’s pose? She is facing the camera with one hand on her hip and one leg slightly in front of the other. Can you pose like Selena? How do you feel with your hand on your hip? Do you feel confident? Selena was known for her self-confidence on stage. She posed for this photograph in 1994, a year before she won a **Grammy Award** (a well-known award for excellence in music). Selena loved creating and performing her own music, and popularized **Tejano music**, which blends American pop, rock and country music with music from Mexico. It is common to find lyrics in Spanish mixed with rhythms from country music or vice versa.

**Facial Expression:** Take a look at Selena’s facial expression. Can you make the same one? Her mouth is closed, and her eyes are looking directly at us, the viewers. How would you describe her expression? Do you think it is confident like her pose or does it express something else, like friendliness?

**Clothing:** In this **monotone** (or single-color) photograph, what details from her clothing stand out to you? Even though her clothes are dark, like the background, the details stand out. We can see the metallic embroidery on her jacket; it goes from the top of her shoulder all the way down her leg. How would you describe the lines of this design? Are they straight lines or swirls? Do you like to wear clothes with designs? Selena was known for her fashion and even had her own clothing line. But she was even more famous for her music and dance moves. Do you think she danced in these clothes? What kind of clothes do you like to dance in?

**Texture** (the physical feel or look of something): While there might not be many colors in this photograph, there are a lot of different textures. If you could feel Selena’s jacket or pants, do you think they would feel soft or silky? What about the designs on her jacket? These designs are **embroidered** meaning they were sewn on with a needle and thread and often feel like they sit on top of the clothing. The craft of embroidery has a rich history in Mexico. What do you think the metal chain belt across her stomach might feel like? Would it feel cold? What else can you spot that is made of metal? Sometimes metal can look shiny. Do you see Selena’s belt buckle or the buttons on the sleeve of her jacket? How do you think her top might feel? It’s amazing how all of these textures make this photograph come alive!

**Historical Context:** Born in Lake Jackson, Texas, Selena grew up in a musical family; her father was a former musician. When she was 10, she became the lead singer in her family’s band. She spoke English and Spanish in her Mexican American family. At an early age, Selena’s musical talent and beauty made her very popular in Mexico and the United States. She became known as the “Queen of Tejano,” winning a Grammy Award at the age of 23. She was also the first female Tejano artist to ‘**go gold**,’ or to sell 500,000 copies of her **album** (or collection of songs), *Ven Conmigo*.

### **Related Children’s Books:**

*Queen of Tejano Music: Selena* by Silvia López

*The Life of- La Vida De Selena* by Patty Rodriguez

### **Activity: Design Your Own Album Cover**

**Materials:** Construction paper & markers / colored pencils

**Instructions:** An **album cover**, like a book cover, is the outer covering of an album or a collection of songs. It often has a picture or an image that tells people about

the artist or their songs. Selena sold half a million copies of one album! If you were a famous singer or musician, what kind of music would you sing? Tejano? Pop? Rap? How would you design your album cover? Cut the paper into a square to serve as the album cover background. Design your cover. Will you put a self-portrait on the front? What colors will you use?



*Selena* by Al Rendon, gelatin silver print, 1993. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of Alfred and Elizabeth Rendon. ©1993 Al Rendon

Find the portrait on our website, here: [https://npg.si.edu/object/npg\\_NPG.2007.193](https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.2007.193)