



Nicolas de Largillierre (French, 1656-1746), *Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland* (detail), about 1715. Oil on canvas, 57 1/2 x 45 1/2 inches. Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 54-35. | Jeff Sonhouse (American, born 1968), *Return to Sender* (detail), 2018. Oil paint and matchsticks on panel board, 96 x 59 1/2 x 1/4 inches. Lent by William and Christena Gautreaux, 158.2018.

CURRICULUM AREAS ADDRESSED IN THIS TOUR:

Visual Arts Standards (KS and MO)

- Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

History, Government, and Social Studies Standards (KS)

- The student will analyze context and draw conclusions of how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups.
- The student will investigate and connect how societies are shaped by the identities, beliefs, and practices of individuals and groups with contemporary issues.

Social Studies Grade Level Expectations (MO)

- Explain connections between historical context and peoples' perspectives at the time in history.
- Assess changing ideas of class, ethnicity, race, gender, and age to affect a person's roles in society and social institutions.

English Language Arts Standards (KS)

- Initiate and participate in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

English Language Arts Grade Level Expectations (MO)

- Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives including those presented in diverse media.

TOUR DESCRIPTION:

During this tour, students will explore the art of portraiture and consider its role in revealing, concealing, and complicating identity. Historical and contemporary portraits will serve as a springboard for examining the concept of identity and its relevance in our lives. When available, works featured in relevant special exhibitions will complement the portraits that students examine.

TOUR OBJECTIVES:

Learners will:

- Analyze portraits and consider what is and is not revealed about the subject and/or artist.
- Recognize aspects of identity in works of art and apply that understanding to their own identities.
- Consider some of the people (artist, subject, patron) and factors (intended message, function) involved in determining how identity is

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To schedule a tour visit:
nelson-atkins.org/learn

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Portraits in Our Lives

During their tour, students will explore portraits from a variety of times and places. As a group, discuss the role that portraits play in students' lives today. Where do they see pictures of people on a day-to-day basis? What kind of information can they ascertain about people by looking at their portraits? What information is *not* obvious from an image alone? Who is usually responsible for creating those images — the person being shown, an artist, a friend, or someone else? You could even have students keep a log of all the portraits they encounter during a week, looking for any patterns or trends that emerge.

What is Identity?

Encourage students to consider the meaning of identity and how it plays out in their own lives. Can they think of different components that make up a person's identity? Use an identity web template, such as the one created by Facing History & Ourselves ([facinghistory.org/resource-library/identity-chart-template](https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/identity-chart-template)), to help students articulate the various aspects of their own identities.

Reading a Portrait

Practice analyzing a portrait to see what you can discover about the sitter's identity. Select a portrait from the online collection of the Nelson-Atkins (some examples can be viewed at: [artnelson-atkins.org/favorites/6156/portraits/objects](https://www.artnelson-atkins.org/favorites/6156/portraits/objects)) and ask students to examine the sitter's pose, facial expression, clothing, setting, and accessories — what might those details reveal about this person's identity? What questions do students still have about this individual?

AFTER YOUR VISIT

Showing Identity in Portraiture

Challenge students to create original portraits, either of themselves or someone else, that communicate various aspects of the sitter's identity. How might they give visual form to qualities or characteristics that are not immediately visible in a person's appearance?

Comparing Portraits

Have students search for portraits of a well-known individual from the past or from today. After they select 2-3 images of the same person, students can compare and contrast the portraits. What sense of the sitter's identity, personality, or status do they get from each one? Ask students to consider *why*, *when*, and *by whom* each portrait was created, along with where it was originally shared or published. How might those factors have influenced the choices made by the artist and/or the sitter? Portrait sets at the Nelson-Atkins include:

- Abraham Lincoln
 - Mathew B. Brady (American, 1823-1896), *Abraham Lincoln*, 1863. [2005.27.271](#).
 - Henry Wolf (American, American, 1852-1916), *Abraham Lincoln*, 1912. [32-74/21](#).
 - Paul Manship (American, 1885-1966), *Head of Abe Lincoln, the Hosier Youth*, about 1932. [46-7](#).
- Frederick Douglass
 - Unknown artist, *Profile portrait of Frederick Douglass*, about 1858. [2005.27.42](#).
 - George Kendall Warren (American, 1824-1884), *Frederick Douglass*, about 1870. [2005.27.272](#).
- Georgia O'Keeffe
 - Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864-1946), *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait*, 1918. [2005.27.4388](#).
 - Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864-1946), *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Portrait*, 1933. [2005.27.312](#).
 - Yousuf Karsh (Canadian, born Turkey, 1908-2002), *Georgia O'Keeffe with Skull*, 1956. [69-11/3](#).

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Reading Portraiture: A Guide for Educators

learninglab.si.edu/collections/reading-portraiture-a-guide-for-educators/AkwthxLAbBPpTY8r

A rich collection of digital learning resources produced by the National Portrait Gallery.

Art Explainer: Expressing Identity through Portraiture

npg.org.uk/schools-hub/art-explainer-expressing-identity-through-portraiture

A short video from the National Portrait Gallery (U.K.) that illustrates how portraits can be used to express a sitter's identity.

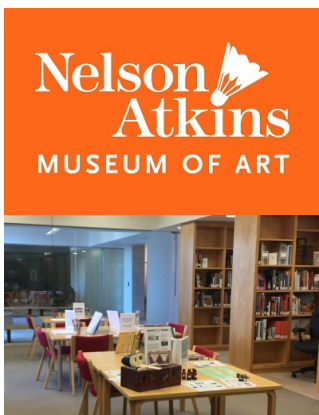
Beyond the Face: New Perspectives on Portraiture

National Portrait Gallery, 2018

Illustrations and essays that explore how portraits can reveal, conceal, and complicate aspects of identity and historical context. Available in the ERC.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS RELATED TO PORTRAITS & IDENTITY

Commission	To formally choose, ask, and pay for an artist to create a work of art.
Expression	A look on someone's face that may convey an emotion or mood.
Guise	A form or style of dress, or an external appearance meant to conceal something's true nature.
Identity	Who someone is. Identities are made up of who we are, the way we think about ourselves, and how we view the world. They comprise the various characteristics we use to categorize and define ourselves and the various characteristics that are constructed by those around us.
Likeness	A visual representation of someone's appearance.
Patron	Someone who pays for a work of art to be created.
Persona	The image or personality that an individual presents in public or in a specific setting.
Portrait	An artistic representation of a person.
Pose	A particular way of standing or holding one's body.
Setting	The place or type of environment shown in a work of art.
Sitter	The person shown in a portrait.
Subject	The main thing shown in a work of art.



The Educator Resource Center can help you expand your pre- and post-visit activities to connect students' museum experience with your classroom curriculum. The ERC offers:

- Curriculum consultations
- Circulating resources (books, posters, etc.)
- Art Connection Kits (artifact trunks with hands-on materials)
- Professional development workshops

Visit [**nelson-atkins.org/learn/educator-resources**](https://nelson-atkins.org/learn/educator-resources) for more information.