

Express Yourself

Portraits and Identity

Name _____



When someone takes a picture of you, what do you want them to see? Before photography was invented in the mid-1800s, people paid artists to paint or sculpt their portraits. Portraits were made for many reasons—for example, as family heirlooms, or as a way to show off one's wealth. Some portraits at the Getty Museum include objects that are meant to send a message about the identity of the sitter.

Your teacher or chaperone will direct you to look at one work of art in this gallery.

Look closely at the portrait and ...

Spend a moment quietly looking at the portrait. Look for details, such as the objects surrounding the sitter, how the sitter is dressed, and how he or she is posed. Discuss the following with a partner, and share your findings with the rest of the group.

1. Describe the sitter's facial expression. _____

2. Describe the sitter's hands. Do the hands tell you anything about the personality of the sitter? _____

3. Describe the sitter's pose. What does the pose tell you about the personality of the sitter? _____

4. What is the person wearing? What do the clothes tell you about the sitter? _____

5. Describe the setting. Do the objects in the work of art tell us more about the sitter? _____



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6. Think about all the observations you noted on the previous page. What do you know about this person after looking at his or her portrait? How do you know? _____

7. Based on your observations, how do you think the sitter wanted to be remembered? _____

8. Imagine that you have the opportunity to display a portrait of yourself in an important location. Where will it be displayed? in a home? at school? in a museum? What will your portrait look like? What would you wear? How would you gesture and pose? What would be in your surroundings? **Draw or write** your ideas below.