



Looking at People in

Portraits



Where to Look

Start on the Upper Level of the South Pavilion.

Things to Explore

A portrait is a painting, sculpture, photograph, or other work of art that has a person as its main subject. Portrait artists can simply give you the details of the physical appearance of the person in the portrait, but they might also try to tell you more complicated things—such as what they do (farmer, soldier, artist, etc.) and what they are like. Portraits are powerful because they connect us directly with their subjects, bringing us face to face with another person. The more carefully you look at someone's portrait here in the Museum, the more you may find out about them.

Things to Look For

Look for two different kinds of portraits. First, find a portrait of someone who looks interesting, someone you think you would like to meet. Then, choose another portrait of someone you really would *not* want to meet.

Questions to Answer

1. Who or what are the people in each of the two portraits looking at? You? Something outside the picture?
2. How would you describe the expression on each person's face?
3. Are they standing or sitting? How would you describe their poses?
4. What are they wearing? Are there any other things included in each portrait besides the person? Are they holding something? What's in the background?
5. Who do you think these portraits were made for? The person in the portrait? Friends? Family?
6. If you could have your portrait painted, would you choose one of the artists who made these portraits? What would you wear, and how would you pose? Would you smile and look friendly, or would you want to seem cool and aloof?





Things to Draw and Write

1. Make a sketch of the person you don't want to meet, or describe in words the way that person looks.

Title _____

Artist's Name _____

Medium and Year _____

2. Pretend you are interviewing the person you think looks interesting. Make a list of questions you would ask them about their life and the times they live in. Then, imagining what they might say, write answers to your own questions.