



We are living through history right now, and future generations will want to know: “What was life like during the COVID-19 pandemic?” Maine libraries are creating an online, living time capsule of the pandemic, and we want your thoughts and experiences to be included!

Parents and educators, check out these lesson plans for ideas on how to involve your students in learning about primary sources and documenting their experiences for the future. The materials you and your students create today will become the historical record of tomorrow.

Lesson	Exploring Portraits: Pictures That Tell a Story
Subject	Reading, Speaking and Listening, Visual Arts, Visual Literacy
Grade Level	All ages
Learning Results	<p>English Language Arts--Reading--Standard 11</p> <p>English Language Arts--Speaking & Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration--Standard 1</p> <p>English Language Arts--Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas--Standard 3</p> <p>Visual & Performing Arts--Visual Arts--A1 Artist's Purpose, A2 Elements of Art and Principles of Design</p> <p>Visual & Performing Arts--Visual Arts--B1 Media Skills, B3 Making Meaning, B4 Exhibition</p>
Objectives	<p>Identify and describe the elements of a portrait</p> <p>Interpret multiple stories expressed in a portrait</p> <p>Create and share an original portrait</p>
Definitions	<p>Portrait: a representation of a particular individual</p> <p>Representation: the visual portrayal of someone or something</p> <p>Subject: the visual or narrative focus of a work of art</p>
Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Example portraits (printed or viewed)• Portrait Analysis Worksheet• Digital tools or art supplies to create an original portrait

Modifications

Words can also be used to create a picture of a person. Students can write a portrait poem representing themselves or someone else.

- Example: [I Am \(Was\) a Helper](#), Biddeford COVID-19 Community Archive

Resources

MoMA Learning: [Glossary of Art Terms](#)

National Portrait Gallery: ["Reading Portraiture" Guide for Educators](#)

Introduction

What can a portrait tell us about a person, their experiences, and the world they live in? In this lesson, students will learn strategies for engaging with a portrait by identifying its elements and uncovering its layers of meaning. Students will then create an original portrait or self-portrait using the medium of their choice and present their artwork and the story it tells.

Step 1: Analyzing a Portrait

Have students work in pairs or small groups. Students should choose a contemporary portrait to work with:

- Portrait 1 - Photograph: [Helping the Community with Much Needed Face Masks](#), from Ogunquit Memorial Library's COVID-19 Archive
- Portrait 2 - Digital Art: [Barbijo](#), from the COA COVID-19 Community Archive Project

Ask students to identify and describe elements of the portrait using the Portrait Analysis Worksheet. (Some elements may not be found.)

- **Clothing:** What is the subject wearing?
- **Pose:** Describe the subject's body position (standing, sitting, relaxed, active)?
- **Gaze:** Where is the subject looking?
- **Expression:** What emotions does the subject's facial expression communicate?
- **Setting:** Describe the setting or background.
- **Objects:** What objects do you see? Why do you think they were included?
- **Colors:** What colors stand out? How do they make you feel?
- **Does anything else catch your eye?**

As a class, talk about the results. Why do students think the artist made these choices? What might they tell us about the subject, the purpose of the portrait, and the time and place it was created?

Help students uncover additional layers of meaning by using the [Unveiling Stories](#) exercise developed by the National Portrait Gallery. Discuss these questions:

- **What is the visible story** or overarching theme of the image?
- **What is the human story** or the person-centered experience in this image?
- **What is the world story?** What global issues of today can we connect to this image?
- **What is the untold story?** What are the important absences of the story? What could be happening beyond the frame of this portrait?

Step 2: Creating a Portrait

Have your students create an original portrait or self-portrait in a medium of their choice, incorporating the elements identified in Step 1 (clothing, pose, gaze, expression, setting, objects, and colors).

Students should consider who they want to represent (themselves, a friend or family member, or a public figure) and what aspects of this person they want to portray.

Students can create a photograph, drawing, collage, digital artwork, etc.! Ask students to title and date their portrait, and provide a descriptive caption.

Assessment Activity

Have students present their portraits to the class, identifying the elements they have included and describing the stories their portraits tell. Invite students to submit their portraits to a Maine Contemporary Archives project to share with your community! (Use [this list](#) to find a participating library near you.) Each project has its own Terms and Conditions for contributions, get in touch if you have any questions.

Portrait 1: Photograph



Title	Helping the Community with Much Needed Face Masks
Date	April 1, 2020
Artist	[Unknown]
Description	Judith Woodbury sewing face masks for friends and relatives. Contributed to Ogunquit Memorial Library's COVID-19 Archive.

Portrait 2: Digital Art



Title

Barbijo

Date

May 6, 2020

Artist

Stephanie Guarachi

Description

Illustration titled “Barbijo,” which is Spanish for surgical mask. Submitted by a College of the Atlantic student to the COA COVID-19 Community Archive Project.

Portrait Analysis Worksheet

Clothing What is the subject wearing?	
Pose Describe the subject's body position (standing, sitting, relaxed, active)?	
Gaze Where is the subject looking?	
Expression What emotions does the subject's facial expression communicate?	
Setting Describe the setting or background.	
Objects What objects do you see? Why do you think they are included?	
Colors What colors stand out? How do they make you feel?	
Does anything else catch your eye?	