

## Cézanne and the Modern: Masterpieces of European Art from the Pearlman Collection

**Lesson Plan:** Abstract Portraiture; Developing Artistic Individuality

**Background:** Grades 6-8

**Time frame:** Two 45-minute sessions

### Essential Questions:

- What is the difference between realistic and abstract art?
- What is a portrait and why do artists create them?
- How is the painting *Jean Cocteau* by Amedeo Modigliani abstract?
- What methods do artists use to show their individual styles?

### Objective:

Through observing Amedeo Modigliani's painting *Jean Cocteau*, students will understand how abstract portraits focus on the artist's interpretation of the subject rather than a realistic rendering. Students will then apply this knowledge to their own abstract blind contour portrait of another student in the class, fostering their own artistic style by using the elements of art to further develop the portrait.

### Terms:

- Realistic: Artwork that seeks to represent the subject matter how it appears in real-life
- Abstract: Artwork that does not attempt to represent reality exactly but seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, forms, colors, and textures
- Portrait: A painting, drawing, photograph, or engraving of a person, especially one depicting only the face or head and shoulders
- Blind Contour Drawing: A method of drawing widely used by art teachers, where an artist draws the contour of a subject without looking at the paper
- Foreground: The part of a view that is nearest to the observer in a work of art
- Background: The area or scenery behind the main object in a work of art
- Commission: The hiring and payment for the creation of a piece, often on behalf of another

### Materials:

Watercolor paper 18" x 12" – one per student  
Copy Paper 8.5" x 11" – one sheet per student  
Pencil – one per student  
Sharpie – one per student (neutral color)  
Watercolor Paint – one set per student  
Paintbrush - one per student  
Cup of water – one per student  
Paper Towel – one per student to dry brush on/test colors  
Various line-making materials – accessible to all students

**Lesson:**

Day 1:

1. Define realistic and abstract. (Slide 1 on PowerPoint)
2. Define portrait and explain why artists create portraits. (Slide 2)
3. Show the painting *Jean Cocteau* by Amedeo Modigliani, and ask students inference questions about the piece's style and its subject. (Slide 3)
4. Compare the photo of Jean Cocteau with his portrait and explain why Modigliani painted him. (Slide 4)
  - a. Quote by Jean Cocteau "It does not look like me, but it does look like Modigliani, which is better."
5. Tell students they will be making their own abstracted portraits of the student sitting across from them.
  - a. Just like Modigliani's *Jean Cocteau* their portraits do not have to look exactly like the subject, the focus is on each student artist's individual artistic style.
6. Explain what a blind contour drawing is, and show examples you have done. (Slide 5)
7. Emphasize to students that they only have two minutes to draw the whole face and shoulders, so focus on big shapes. (Slide 6 –Photo Examples)
8. Each student uses a pencil to draw their peer for two minutes on a regular piece of copy paper.
9. Once the time is up, have students critique their work and identify any visual problems
  - a. Is the whole head on the page? Is it too small? Scrunched together? Can you see all the features?
10. Students draw a second blind contour portrait with Sharpie on the larger watercolor paper.

Day 2:

1. Students analyze their finished line drawing and fix any visual problems.

2. Students craft a new identity for their portrait, and develop their portrait further using the elements of art to reinforce their subject's new identity.
  - a. Who is this person? What do they do? What are they feeling? Why?
  - b. Explain how different colors have different meanings. (Slide 7)
    - i. Fill in shapes with watercolor.
    - ii. Emphasize areas with thicker lines.
  - c. Don't forget about the role of the background to show emotion, too.
3. Have students sign and title their work based off the identity they chose.
4. Have each student present their piece to the class/write down:
  - a. The title, a few words about who they are showing in their portrait, and which are the dominant elements of art they used to tell the story of their portrait.
5. Let students walk around the class and view all the different portraits. (Or hang on wall)
6. Discuss a few of the different artistic styles of students in the class.
  - a. Which elements are shown here?
  - b. What do you think this portrait says about this person?

**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed on their ability to:

- Describe and analyze an abstract portrait.
- Use the elements of art as symbols to show their portrait's identity.

**Possible Modifications/Extensions:**

- Can be adjusted to incorporate specific portraits of historic figures, or time periods.
  - *American Encounters* Exhibition (on view at the High from September 28, 2014 – January 18, 2015), for example
- Students could write a story about the person in their portrait and then modify the art piece to fit their story, using similes to show symbolism.
- Create an "open-mind portrait" of the selected character, in which students draw pictures that represent the character's thoughts or character traits within the outline.

**Standards:**

Grade 6

VA6MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA6MC.2 Identifies and works to solve visual problems through creative thinking, planning, and/or experimenting with art materials, tools and techniques.

VA6MC.3 Interprets how artists communicate meaning in their work.

VA6MC.4 Engages in dialogue about his or her artwork and the artwork of others

VA6CU.2 Investigates and discovers personal relationship to community, culture, and the world through making and studying art.

VA6PR.1 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes.

VA6PR.2 Creates artwork reflecting a range of concepts, ideas, and subject matter.

VA6PR.3 Incorporates an understanding of the language of art (elements and principles of design) to develop and organize own ideas, resolve specific visual arts problems, and create works of art.

VA6AR.2 Critiques personal artworks as well as artwork of others using visual and verbal approaches.

VA6PR.4 Plans and participates in appropriate exhibition(s) of artworks.

### Grade 7

VA7MC.1 Identifies and works to solve problems through creative thinking, planning, and/or experimenting with art methods and materials.

VA7MC.2 Identifies and works to solve problems through creative thinking, planning, and/or experimenting with art methods and materials.

VA7MC.3 Interprets how artists create and communicate meaning in and through their work.

VA7MC.4 Participates in dialogue about his or her artwork and the artwork of others.

VA7CU.1 Discovers how the creative process relates to art history.

VA7PR.1 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes with care and craftsmanship.

VA7PR.3 Uses the elements and principles of design along with a variety of media, techniques and skills to produce two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art

VA7AR.2 Critiques personal artworks as well as artwork of others using visual the and verbal approaches.

VA7C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.

### Grade 8

VA8MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA8MC.3 Demonstrates how artists create and communicate meaning in artworks.

VA8MC.4 Participates in aesthetic dialogue about his or her artwork and artwork of others.

VA8PR.2 Creates artwork reflecting a range of concepts, ideas, subject matter.

VA8AR.1 Critiques personal artworks as well as artwork of others using visual and verbal approaches.

VA8C.1 Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.