Teacher Resource

Portrait Artist

EPISODE 32
10 November 2026

KEY LEARNING
Students will explore and discuss different portraits; identify the techniques artists use and create their own portrait to represent someone special to them.

CURRICULUM
Visual Arts – Year 5 & 6
Explore ways that visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials are combined to communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning in visual arts across cultures, times, places and/or other contexts

Experiment with, document and reflect on ways to use a range of visual conventions, visual arts processes, and materials.

Use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to plan and create artworks that communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning.

Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. What TV show did Jazz recently win?
2. What famous Aussie did Jazz paint a portrait of?
3. Which gallery is Jazz's portrait hanging in?
4. What other art prize did Jazz win recently?
5. What advice does Jazz give about becoming an artist?

Activity: Class Discussion

Discuss the BTN Portrait Artist story in pairs or small groups using the following questions to guide discussion. Record the main points of your discussion.

- What is a portrait?
- What is a self portrait
- Why do we create portraits?
- What can portraits tell us about a person?
- What makes a portrait interesting?
- What different techniques can be used to create portraits? Give examples.



- What skills do you think a portrait artist needs?
- Do you think a portrait needs to look exactly like the person? Why or why not?
- If you could paint a portrait of anyone in the world, who would you choose and why?
- What questions do you have about the BTN story?

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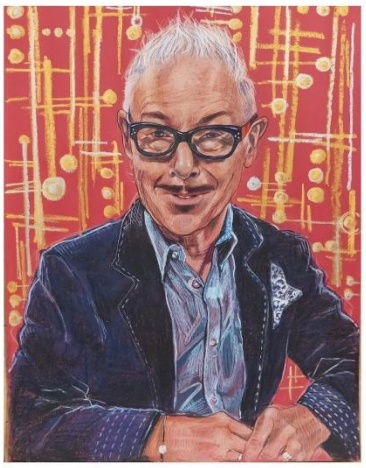
Activity: Jazz's Portraits

Students choose one of Jazz's portraits below and respond to the following:

- What do you notice first when you look at the portrait?
- What colours, lines or techniques has Jazz used?
- What do you think the portrait communicates about the subject?
- What questions would you ask Jazz about her artwork?
- How does the portrait make you feel? What do you like about it?



Casey Donovan



Kirk Pengilly



Justine Clarke

Activity: Exploring Famous Portraits

Portraits can tell us stories about people, their lives and the time in which they lived. Artists use different colours, techniques and styles to represent their subjects and communicate ideas. Students explore the selection of famous portraits below and respond to the artworks like an art critic.

Look closely

Choose three famous portraits to investigate. Observe each artwork carefully and consider the choices the artist has made.

Respond to the portraits

Students record their observations for each portrait.

- What do you notice first?
- What colours, shapes, lines or techniques has the artist used?
- What do you think the portrait tells us about the person?
- What mood or feeling does the artwork create?
- What questions would you like to ask the artist?
- What makes this portrait interesting or memorable?

Become an art critic

Students choose their favourite portrait and write a short review. Include:

- The title of the portrait and the artist's name.
- What you notice about the artwork.
- What you think the artist is communicating.
- Your opinion of the portrait, supported by reasons.

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René Magritte Son of Man



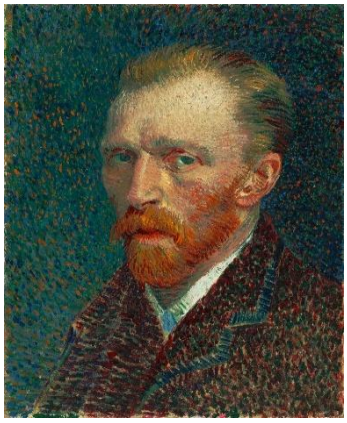
Johannes Vermeer, Girl with a Pearl Earring



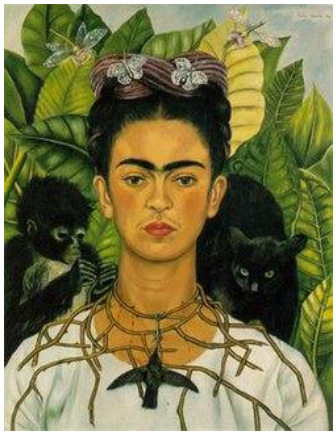
Andy Warhol, Shot Light Blue, Orange, Sage Blue, Red



Leonardo da Vinci, Mona Lisa



Vincent van Gogh, Self-portrait



Frida Kahlo, Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird

Activity: Create a portrait

Create a portrait.

Students will create a portrait of a person who is special to them, using the following as a guide.

- Choose someone who is special to you.
- Write 2-3 sentences explaining who the person is and why you chose them.
- What technique/s will you use to create your portrait? Think about colours to reflect mood or feelings.
- Organise a live sitting with your subject, where you and your subject are together, and you are working on their portrait. Complete your portrait using photographs of your subject as a reference. Give your portrait a title. Write an artist's statement about your portrait.

Reflection

- What did you notice about your subject that you had not noticed before?
- Which techniques did you use?
- What part of your portrait are you most proud of?
- What was challenging?
- If you could create the portrait again, what would you change?

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Activity: Virtual Excursion

The National Portrait Gallery offers a variety of 45-minute virtual excursions that can be delivered to your students in real time. All sessions are free! Find out more here.



Useful Websites

- Young Archie 2023 – BTN
- Centenarian Art – BTN
- Young Archie 2021 – BTN
- History of Portraits – BTN

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