

**Lesson Title: Black History Month in Portraiture**

**Your name: Rachel Vredenburg**

**Number of Students: 20**

**Grade Level: 5th**

**Length of each class period: 40 minutes, 3 days**

## **LESSON Rationale**

This lesson ties into Black History Month by incorporating the history and cultural significance of portraiture applied to significant figures in black history. By studying historical figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, as well as contemporary figures such as Michael B. Jordan and Simone Biles, students will understand that drawing these figures creates an inspirational image for both the artist and viewers. Students will use crayon transfer technique as well as colored pencil shading to create inspirational posters of these famous figures including their image along with an associative word that create personal meaning between each historical figure and the student. They will use choice-based learning to create their own personalized color scheme applied to one of seven different historical figures and create their own posters over the course of three class periods. By learning about portraiture and creating their own examples, students will reinforce the importance of the information they learned during class as well as in other classes such as social studies. It is important to share relevant artists that are influential to modern portraiture such as Kehinde Wiley, Amy Sherald, and Shepherd Fairey. By connecting to these contemporary artists, students will have a better understanding of how portraiture creates meaning and purpose outside of the classroom.

The big idea of this lesson is Inspiration. Specifically, students will study the inspiring context of African American portraiture to elevate the significance of figures in history. By focusing on the cultural purpose of these portraits and the personal connection formed through creation and literary association, they can discover their own artistic power. Students will then be excited to make their own version inspired by their own interests and colors. This encourages an individual approach to artmaking and creativity among students despite using some of the same historical figures.

### **PROCESS**

Crayon transfer and colored pencil shading mounted on a professional background.

### **Black History Icons to Transfer**

Martin Luther King Jr.

Barak Obama

Michelle Obama

Simone Biles

Rosa Parks

Michael Jordan

Mae Jemison

### **ARTISTS:**

**Shepard Fairey:** Born February 15, 1970 in Charleston, South Carolina, Fairey is an urban graffiti artist. Inspired by Obama's campaign speech in 2007, he stated that "I knew my biggest challenge was to portray Obama as both an exciting progressive and a mainstream patriot with vision. I decided to make a portrait of Obama largely because I felt his power and sincerity as a speaker would create a positive association with his likeness" (Scott, 2017). "Originally he had used the word "progress" as a caption, but when the image began going viral, the campaign requested that he change it to "hope" and adopted it as an official image" (The Art Story, 2020)..

**Kehinde Wiley:** Born in 1977, Kehinde Wiley is a contemporary artist working in painting. "He holds a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute, an MFA from Yale University, and honorary doctorates from the Rhode Island School of Design and San Francisco Art Institute" (Wiley 2024). According to Wiley (2024), he seeks to "challenge and reorient art-historical narratives, awakening complex issues that many would prefer remain muted." This is especially evident in that he portrays his black subjects with the photorealistic quality associated with the Renaissance and other historically celebrated eras in painting.

**Amy Sberald:** She was born in Born on August 30 in Columbus, GA. She earned her bachelor's degree in 1997 at Clark-Atlanta University and eventually earned her MFA the Maryland Institute College of Art (National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2025). She "challenges the concept of color-as-race by favoring grayscale for skin tones and creates finely rendered backgrounds that provide few context clues and ask viewers to focus instead on the inner lives of the individuals depicted" (Stewart, 2025). "Sberald received first prize in the 2016 Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition for the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. Sberald painted the official portrait of former First Lady Michelle Obama for the National Portrait Gallery in 2018" (National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2025).

### **BIG IDEA(s): Inspiration**

#### **LEARNER OBJECTIVES:**

Students will celebrate the cultural significance of Black history

Students will use crayons to transfer an image and colored pencils to shade.

Students will understand the historical significance of portraiture.

Students will use light source to determine shaded areas

Students will use a ruler to create a border

Students will incorporate text that relates to their subject.

### **3 National Standards for Visual Arts (VAS) (list numbers and full description for each standard) [National Visual Arts Standards At-A-Glance • National Art Education Association \(arteducators.org\)](#)**

VA:Cr2.1.5a: Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

VA:Cr2.2.5a: Demonstrate quality craftsmanship through care for and use of materials, tools, and equipment.

VA:Re9.1.5a: Recognize differences in criteria used to evaluate works of art depending on styles, genres, and media as well as historical and cultural contexts

### **3 VA State Standards of Learning (SOL) in the arts: [Visual Arts | Virginia Department of Education](#)**

5.1 The student will apply creative thinking to artmaking. a) Express personal ideas, images, and themes through artistic choices of media, techniques, and subject matter. b) Demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness in solving art challenges.

5.6 The student will explore and examine cultural and historical influences of art. b) Examine the influence of historic events on works of art.

5.7 The student will describe how artists contribute to society.

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## **MATERIALS NEEDED FOR UNIT**

A. **Art Supplies:** 20 pieces of 9x12" paper, 15 boxes of crayons. 8 baskets for holding crayons, 20 pencils per class, 8 baskets worth of colored pencils (approximately 10 boxes originally), 8 pencil sharpeners for each table, painters tape (a couple rolls). Larve 12x18" sheets of construction paper.

B. **Additional Materials:**

[PowerPoint Presentation](#)

[Artist Interview](#) Stop at 3:50

## **VOCABULARY/DEFINITIONS:**

**Minimal:** Inspired by something real, but stylized

**Contrast:** Lightness and darkness of a picture

**Value:** The lightness or darkness of a color used in shading.

**Color:** Hues chosen to convey a certain mood or idea.

**Transfer:** Means of copying an image.

**Meaning:** The message art provides to viewers

**Purpose:** the intended task or context of a work of art. **le. Presidential portrait.**

## **MOTIVATING STUDENTS: PERSONAL and SOCIAL RELEVANCE**

Students will be excited to learn about portraiture as it is often seen as the pinnacle of art when one is young. Further, they will tie into the themes of Art history that they are already familiar with, which creates a sense of inspiration. Students will also be motivated by the choices available, such as the different historical figures, personalized color schemes, and intentionally minimal style required of this project. This will prevent them from being too intimidated to draw a person. The technique is fun and requires more observational skills than technical drawing.

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## **UNIT PROCEDURES**

A. **Teacher/Classroom Prep:**

Teacher will print out copies of each historical figure; prepare a PowerPoint presentation on portraiture; prepare pre-cut paper; assemble baskets of pencils, colored pencils, and crayons; prepare colored construction paper and glue for backing.

**B. Pre-assessment:**

Students will participate in the class discussion of historical and contemporary portraiture, listen to the video and discuss some ideas as to what they will do for their own drawings regarding color choices and word choice to describe their figures.

**C. Behavioral Expectations:**

Students are expected to sit in their assigned seats, listen while the teacher is talking, and participate in any class discussion.

**D. Organizer:**

The teacher will create a PowerPoint to share important ideas and vocabulary with students. The teacher will conduct different demonstrations at each stage of the projects so that student may follow along and build certain skills such as shading, measuring, tracing and, and transfer methods.

**E. Extension Activity:**

Students may complete an artists themed worksheet afterwards, but they will likely need 3 full days to complete this project.

## **UNIT SEQUENCE (scripting and timing).**

### **3 days/classes:**

#### **Teacher Actions**

#### **DAY 1 5th grade (8:15-8:55)**

8:15 Teacher will greet students and invite them to take their art seats

8:17-8:25 Teacher will present the PowerPoint, introducing portraiture, its historical significance, and some of the contemporary artists that are significant. Teacher will pay special attention to stylistic markers pertinent to the lesson such as color, literacy, and the meaning behind each work.

8:26-8:30: The teacher will pass out the base sketchbook paper and demonstrate how to assemble the transfer paper with tape so that students may create their design on paper first. Teacher will ask students to write their names on the back it. Teacher might color along with students under the document camera to explain the shading.

8:30-8:35: Teacher will call individual tables to come up to the counter and select their figures on a behavioral basis.

8:35-8:50 Teacher will walk around and answer any questions students have about

#### **Expected Learner Actions**

#### **DAY 1 3rd grade (10:15-10:55)**

8:15 Students will say hello to Mrs. V and Mrs. T as they enter the classroom and find their art seats.

8:17-8:25 Students will listen to the PowerPoint presentation and participate in the discussion of Portraiture as it relates to Black History Month.

8:26-8:30: Students will write their names on their sketchbook paper as they receive them. Students will keep their listening ears open while Mrs. V demonstrates the transfer method to students.

8:30-8:35 Students will exhibit art room behavior and wait to be called to pick their printed figures.

8:50 Students will ask questions like “do I need to use those same colors?” “No, this is a personalized artwork, use colors that provide meaning” “Like inspired by Red White and Blue for president Obama’s portrait?” “Yes! That is exactly right.”

8:50- Students will clean up their spaces including putting all crayons back at the front of

their crayon transfers. Students will also brainstorm what colors they want to use with crayons. Those who finish early may begin shading with their colored pencils.

8:50- Teacher will announce cleanup and call each table to use walking feet and put away their crayons/materials.

8:52- Teacher will call 2 students volunteers to collect drawings for next time.

8:55: Homeroom teacher will pick students up and teacher will say goodbye to them as they leave.

## **DAY 2**

8:15: Teacher will greet students as they arrive and ask them to please find their art chairs.

8:17-8:20: Teacher will recap the previous day by asking students who we talked about last class? What is the significance of portraits? How did they create meaning?

8:20-8:24 Teacher will pass back their papers so that they may continue shading their portraits immediately.

8:25-8:50: Teacher will walk around and encourage students as they spend time on their shading. Teacher will help individual students that may have trouble seeing the effects of the light source. Teacher will ask reinforcing questions like "what side is the light coming from? Remember the lightest colors will go there." Teacher will encourage students to pick their word and begin writing it on the page to color next time.

8:50 Teacher will announce cleanup, student helpers will collect all projects and turn them into Ms. V.

8:54: Teacher will call students by table to line up.

8:55: The homeroom teacher picks up students and the teacher says goodbye as they leave.

## **DAY 3**

8:15: Teacher will greet students as they arrive and ask them to please find their art chairs.

8:17-8:20: Teacher will recap the previous day by asking students who we talked about last class? What are some significant aspects of our projects? Who would like to provide an example of their historical figure and the word they chose to represent them? Teacher will remind them that it is their last workday and she will be leaving after this week.

8:20 Teacher will pass back papers as quickly as possible to maximize worktime.

the room and returning all pencils and erasers to the table baskets.

8:52- Students will turn in all papers to the class helpers and line up.

8:55: Homeroom teacher will pick students up and they will say goodbye to Mrs. T and Ms. V as they leave.

## **DAY 2**

8:15: Students will say good morning as they come in and find their art chairs.

8:17-8:20: Students will listen to the recap and answer questions they remember from last time such as "We talked about African American portraiture!" and "They were for elevating and individual!" and "Sometimes they were created for presidents and the paintings were huge!"

8:20-8:24 Students will excitedly gather their colors from last time so that they may make as much progress today as possible.

8:25-8:50: Students will ask for help if needed and begin thinking about what word best describes their chosen historical figure. They will keep this literary element school appropriate.

8:50 Student helpers will collect all projects and give them to Ms. V.

8:54: Students will use walking feet to line up by the door.

8:55: The homeroom teacher picks up students and they say says goodbye to Mrs. T and Ms. V as they leave.

## **DAY 3**

8:15: Students will say good morning as they come in and find their art chairs.

8:17-8:20: Students will listen to the recap and answer questions they remember from last time such as "We talked about Kehinde Wiley, or Amy Sherald or Shepard Fairey!" and "Our projects are inspiring for others and use powerful words to create meaning!" and "I am using Rosa Parks paired with the word 'Strength'!"

8:20 Students will excitedly and immediately pick up where they left off once they receive their papers.

8:20-8:50: Students will ask for help if needed and steadily add color to their portrait and description word. Finally, they will glue their piece to a larger piece of construction paper to add a professional backing.

8:50 Student helpers will collect and will bring all projects on their boards up to Ms. V.

8:54: Students will use walking feet to line up by the door. Students will answer closing

8:20-8:50: Teacher will walk around and encourage students as they finish adding color to their words, finish up their shading on each portrait, and glue their pieces to the construction paper.

8:50 Teacher will announce cleanup, congratulate students on their projects, and student helpers will collect finished projects. Ms. V will choose several for display in the foyer bulletin board.

8:54: Teacher will call students by table to line up. Teacher will ask follow up questions such as does the descriptor create more power? Name and artist we used as inspiration over the last 3 classes?

8:55: The homeroom teacher picks up students and the teacher says goodbye as they leave.

questions such as “The words create more power by conveying a clear message to viewers. We studied Kehinde Wiley, Amy Sberald and Shepherd Fairy. Mostly Shepherd.

8:55: The homeroom teacher picks up students and they say says goodbye to Mrs. T and Ms. V as they leave.

### **ADAPTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Students who need extra time may be allowed to come back as their homeroom teacher permits. Teacher will ask for “all eyes to me” on her during the presentation so that there is no temptation to talk or not pay attention to the materials. Teacher will also set the expectation that there are limited drawing days, and they must let Ms. V talk so it doesn’t cut into the work time. Asking fun questions on the presentation day is another way to engage learners: ie. “what colors would you have used if you were designing this campaign flyer? Would you change the colors if it was a Rock poster? How does the color effect meaning?”

### **DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES:**

- Flexible grouping
- Open-ended activities
- Exploration by interests
- Negotiated criteria
- Anchoring/Extension activities
- Independent studies
- Tiered activities/products
- Journal prompts
- Multiple levels of questions
- Scaffolding
- Choice: Learner profile, Readiness, Interest

### **ASSESSMENT & DOCUMENTATION OF TEACHER/STUDENT LEARNING**

#### **A. Assessment:**

*The scaffolding in this lesson will start immediately with the class discussion of the videos and a preliminary drawing in which students will trace their own design using color to create meaning based on what they learned in the PowerPoint. Next, they will expand their ideas and technical skills in colored pencil as begin using minimalistic shading to create their own celebratory poster.*

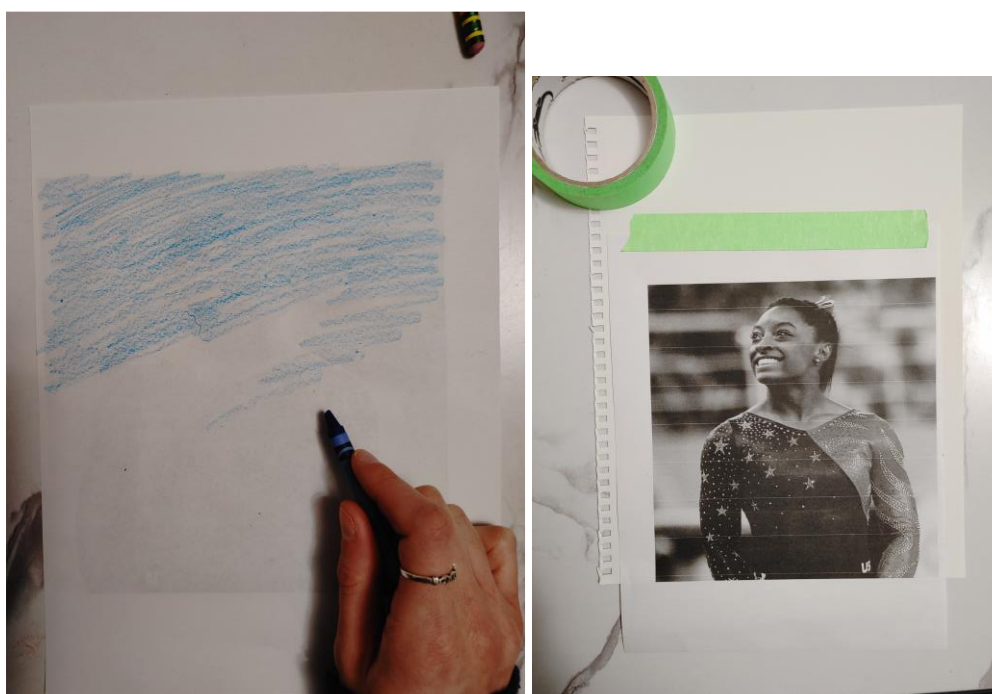
#### **B. Documentation:**

Photos of student's in-progress work will indicate that they understand the prominence of color and light source in this project. Further, their attention to detail and ability to create an inspiring poster will serve as the culminating assessment. Finally, student's answers during the recap at the start of each day will show that they are retaining and building on the historical and cultural significance of portraiture, specifically in the African American community.

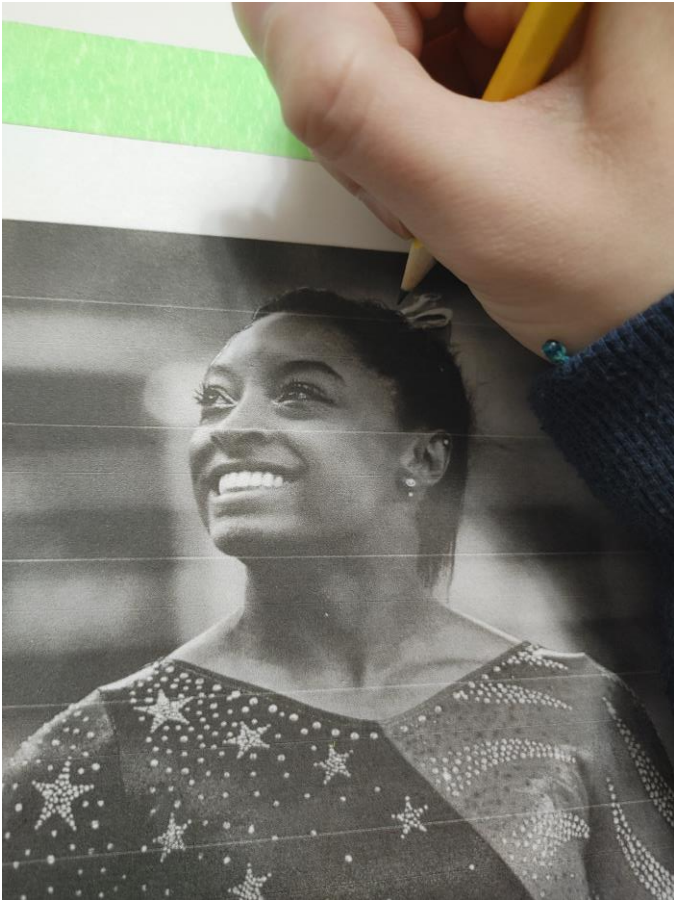
## PROCESS IMAGES



**Step1: Gather materials including a printed image, crayons, colored pencils, pencils, paper, glue, construction paper, and tape.**



**Step 2: Color on the back of the printed photo with a BOLD color (not a light one). Then tape it face-up onto the sketchbook paper.**



**Step 3: Trace all features, details, and shadows using a pencil.**



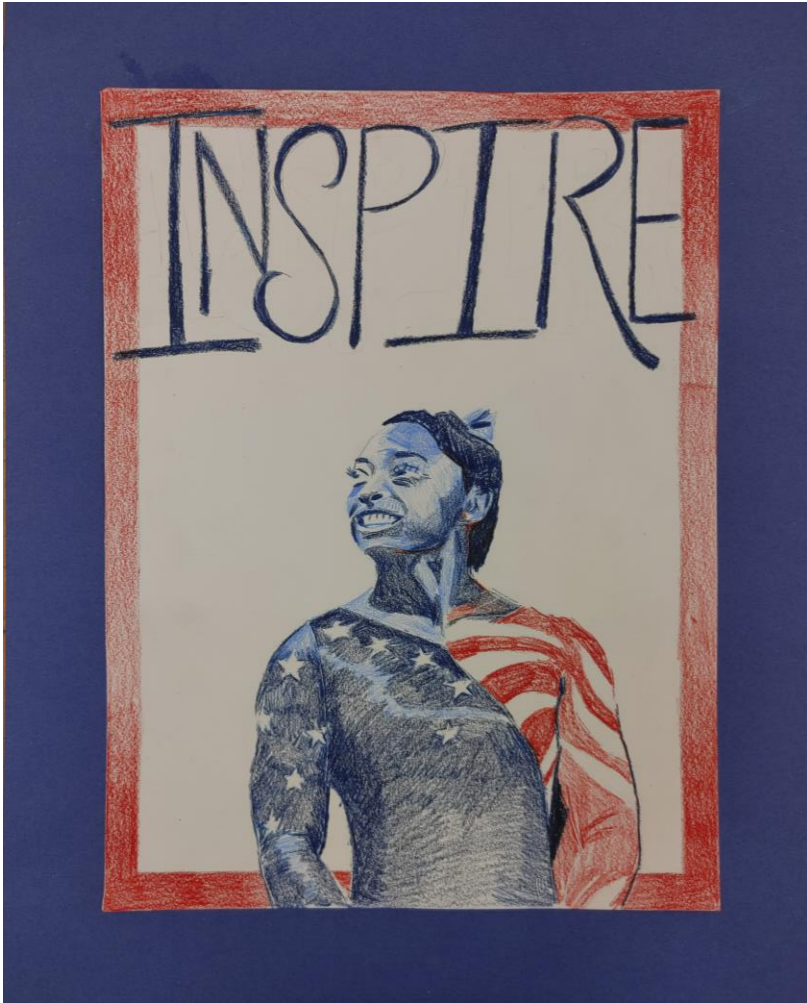
**Step 4: begin shading using colored pencils paying attention to the light source!**



**Step 5: Add your description word to create a literary connection and added power to the image!**



**Step 6: Time permitting, add a border, (this step can be removed to reduce the number of classes to 3 vs 4 days)**



**Step 7: Paste onto a piece of construction paper to create a professional backing.**

## References

- National Museum of Women in the Arts. (2025). *Amy Sherald | Artist Profile*. NMWA. <https://nmwa.org/art/artists/amy-sherald/>.
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- Stewart, J. (2025, February 21). *Amy Sherald's Powerful Portraits Take Over the Whitney Museum*. My Modern Met. <https://mymodernmet.com/amy-sherald-whitney-american-sublime/>.
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- The New Yorker. (2022, January 29). *Paint & Pitchfork: Illustrating Blackness | The New Yorker Documentary*. Wwww.youtube.com. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAHyrMXoIVw> (stop at 3:50)