

# Portraits and Perspectives

## LESSON PLANNING

### C-3 STANDARDS

#### *Perspectives*

D.2.His.5.3-5 Explain connections among historical context and peoples' perspectives at the time.

#### *Historical Sources and Evidence*

D2.His.10.3-5 Compare information provided by different historical sources about the past.

D2.His.13.3-5 Use information about a historical source, including the maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose to judge the extent to which the source is useful for studying a particular topic.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- 1 What does it mean “to take a perspective?”
- 2 How does understanding others' perspectives bring deeper meaning to the study of people, places, and issues?
- 3 How can artwork serve as primary source evidence to help us understand others' perspectives in the course of history?
- 4 How do our own experiences influence our perspectives?

## Materials

\* Click the link below each image for information from the NBMAA e-museum on the artist and the painting.



[Unknown Artist](#)  
[Morgan Family Portrait](#)  
ca. 1790



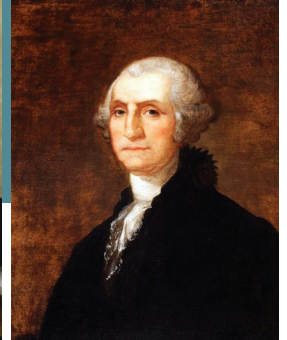
[Mather Brown](#)  
[Sir Richard Arkwright](#)  
1790



[John Singleton Copley](#)  
[Lydia Lynde](#)  
ca. 1762-1764



[Sarah Miriam Peale](#)  
[Mrs. Charles](#)  
[Ridgely Carroll](#)  
1822



[Rembrandt Peale](#)  
[George Washington](#)  
ca. 1850

## OBJECTIVES

*Students will be able to*

- 1 Explain how early portraits represented one component of society.
- 2 Connect to social studies content identified by the teacher.

## INTRODUCTION

Pose an interesting question or scenario to hook students' interest. For example, show the images of several contemporary sports figure, musicians, or other groups. Ask students what they can figure out about each person based on the image. Explain that students will examine portraits from colonial and early American society to see what they can learn.

## ENGAGING LEARNING

Divide the students into five groups. Give a different portrait to each group, on paper or digitally, so that each student has a copy.

## Art Vocabulary

Portrait—an artistic representation of a person/people.

## *Observe Closely*

Use VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies) to help students explore the works.

- Ask students to look at the works for a minute, then on your signal, discuss what they notice about the portrait.
- Ask students to share their observations about each work with the whole class. As they do, follow-up with the question, “What makes you say that?” or “Tell me more about that.”
- Ask further open-ended questions for the groups to consider, such as,
  - “How did the artists capture your attention?”
  - “What is the story behind the portrait that you are viewing?”
  - “What are some questions these painting brings up for you?”

## *Use Inquiry*

In whole class or small groups, explore the following questions.

- “What do we learn about colonial society from these portraits? What values do the artists convey? What did they want to communicate about the people in the portraits?”
- “How do the portraits reflect the time in which they were painted?”
- “How does the artists’ intention influence the work?”
- “How are colonial portraits and contemporary portraits (or selfies) alike? How are they different?”
- “From looking at these works, what are your thoughts about why portraits were the earliest forms of artwork for the colonists?”

## *Interpret to personalize and connect*

Help students connect with this work today with questions by relating to contemporary ideas and issues.

- “What do you notice about the details in the clothing? Is clothing part of the story? How or not? Is clothing part of the story today?”
- “If the person in the portrait could choose a contemporary person to represent him or her, who would it be? What makes you say that?”

### **Think Critically**

Connect this work to contemporary perspectives.

- Ask students, “Who is left out of this portrait story in colonial America?”
- Consider, “What is going on in our world today that helps us answer this?”

### **Evaluate: draw a conclusion**

- “Taken together, what message do we learn about the earliest years – colonial times and early America?”
- “Are these works meaningful primary sources to learn about colonial society? Why or why not?”

## **CLOSURE**

Summarize the value of looking at early portraits as a reflection of the culture and values that a privileged group of people conveyed.

Summarize the connections between the artwork and social studies content objectives related to this lesson.

## **OPTIONAL EXTENSION**

Your group has been chosen to impersonate everyday people from all walks of life on a historical float for a Fourth of July parade. The theme of the parade is “Celebrating the Everyday Hero in 1776.” Who would you include on your float? What is your reason for each?