

Art-Making Activity: Create a Self-Portrait

Frida Kahlo is an artist who created work inspired by her life experiences—including a bus accident she survived, her marriage and family, travels around the world, and more. Some of these experiences were sad and challenging, while others were happy and hopeful. No matter how she was feeling, Kahlo looked to her own image for inspiration and created self-portraits. Self-portraits are artworks where artists represent themselves. A self-portrait can look just like the artist or include objects and symbols that represent the artist.



Self-Portrait with Monkey, 1945, Frida Kahlo (Mexican, 1907–1954), oil on Masonite. Robert Brady Foundation Mexico

Let's look closely!
What do you notice?

In *Still Life with Parrot and Flag* (1951), Kahlo used a still life, or an arrangement of objects, to symbolize parts of her identity. The flag of Mexico and her choice to include citrus fruits native to her home country shows her pride in where she is from. Think about how Frida Kahlo included objects to represent herself—what objects would you include in a self-portrait?

Create your own self-portrait by following the steps on the next page!



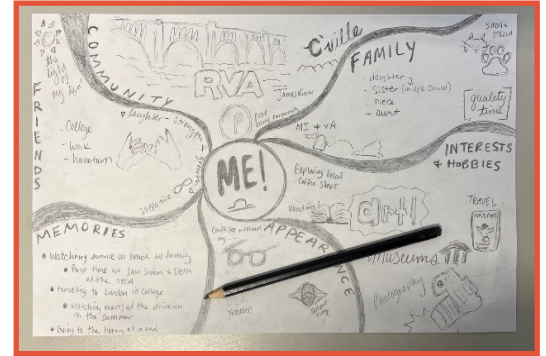
Still Life with Parrot and Flag, 1951, Frida Kahlo (Mexican, 1907–1954), oil on Masonite. Private collection, Courtesy Galeria Arvil, Mexico

Materials

- Paper
- Drawing materials (pencil, pen, crayons, markers, colored pencils)

Instructions

1. How can you use certain images or symbols to tell the world about yourself? Creating a mind map can help with this. Write your name in the middle of a piece of paper. Then, consider what life experiences make you who you are. Think about things like family, friends, your home, interests, personality traits, and memories. Use the rest of your paper to write ideas about these influences and sketch images or symbols that best represent you.
2. Decide what materials you will use to create your self-portrait. You can make a self-portrait through many art forms like drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, and mixed media.
3. Now that you have materials and ideas for images that represent your life, it's time to create your unique self-portrait! Don't forget to include the images or symbols you brainstormed in your mind map. Consider adding color! Color can be a powerful way to represent emotion and mood.



This art-making activity is inspired by the exhibition *Frida: Beyond the Myth*, organized by the Dallas Museum of Art, which is on view at VMFA April 5–September 28, 2025.



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