LESSON PLAN TITLE: *Scratchboard Portraits: Who Do You Think You Are?*   Grades 4-12

TIME REQUIRED: 2 classes (may be adapted to fit timeframe available)

CONCEPT STATEMENT: Students will investigate how and why artists reference works of art from earlier times in their creations, and how context affects the interpretation of images by making scratchboard portraits using imagination and craftsmanship.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will

1. select visual images from various timeframes and reinterpret visual elements found in the chosen images as they compose expressive scratchboard portraits;

2. practice critical thinking and problem solving skills; and

3. write artist statements (short narrative descriptions of the works of art including information such as explanations of their concepts, the symbolism within the works, and other information they choose to share).

VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING CORRELATIONS:

2013 Visual Arts – 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 (4 & 5), 4.6, 4.7, 4.11, 4.13, 4.14, 4.16, 4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 4.22, 4.23; 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 (2, 3, 5 & 6), 5.5, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14, 5.15, 5.18, 5.19, 5.23; 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5 (2, 3, & 5), 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 6.14, 6.15, 6.16, 6.17, 6.18, 6.19; 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.6 (2, 3, 4 & 5), 7.7, 7.8, 7.10, 7.11, 7.14, 7.17, 7.18, 7.19, 7.20; 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.6, 8.8 (3, 4, & 5), 8.9, 8.12, 8.13, 8.15, 8.17; AI.2, AI.3, AI.4, AI.5, AI.6, AI.8, AI.10, AI.11, AI.16, AI.17, AI.21, AII.1, AII.2, AII.3, AII.4, AII.6, AII.8, AII.9, AII.10, AII.12, AII.13, AII.14, AII.19, AII.22, AII.23, AII.24; AIII.2, AIII.3, AIII.4, AIII.6, AIII.7, AIII.9, AIII.11, AIII.12, AIII.13, AIII.14, AIII.17, AIII.18, AIII.21, AIII.22, AIII.25; AIV.1, AIV.3, AIV.5, AIV.6, AIV.7, AIV.9, AIV.10, AIV.11, AIV.13, AIV.17, AIV.18, AIV.19, AIV.20

2010 English – 4.7, 5.7, 6.7—many other English SOLs that relate to writing, research, and literature may apply depending on the parameters of the assignment.

2016 History and Social Science – This activity is easily adapted to history and social science lessons by asking students to make expressive portraits of people from specific timeframes and cultures.

MATERIALS:

Per Student
Student Activity Worksheet: *Planning and Making a Scratchboard Portrait*
scratchboard
scratching tool
clipboard (optional)

Shared Supplies
an assortment of visual images
tracing paper
scissors
pencils
black ink pens
erasers
white colored pencils
Saral® paper (wax-free transfer paper available at art supply stores)
artist tape

VOCABULARY

gender – the state of being male or female (often used when discussing social and cultural differences rather than biological ones).

iconic image – a visual representation that brings to mind an experience, place, or relationship, usually with an emotional impact, shared by people in a given time, place, or culture.

identity – who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that makes the person or group different from others.

pattern – a repeated form or design, especially ones used to decorate something.

portrait – a painting, drawing, photograph, or engraving of a person.

symbol – A form, sign, or emblem that represents something else, often something immaterial, such as an idea or emotion; Personal imagery.

OVERVIEW:

Scratchboard Portraits: A Question of Identity

Set the stage for making scratchboard portraits by giving a short overview of the history of portraits. If possible, show students examples of portraits from different timeframes and cultures.

Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans all had a tradition of making images that represented individual people. Many of these depicted the individual within a setting that provided information such as social status or occupation. Different styles of portraiture were connected with social trends, especially in ancient Rome. During the Republic, when citizenship and public service were considered essential duties, realistic (or "veristic") portraits were popular. These portraits were intended to suggest the wisdom that comes with experience, so they portrayed the subject with wrinkles, crow's feet and other signs of age. In the Imperial period, portraits (and sculptures) of emperors and other powerful people were often idealized. These portraits included visual references to powerful individuals, such as Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar.

➢ Ask students to describe how today's politicians choose to be portrayed.

In Europe during the Middle Ages, there was less emphasis on representing individuals because most works of art were designed to tell religious stories. Individual characters such as saints or apostles, however, often held objects or wore garments that helped identify them to observers. This practice, which is similar to how gods and goddesses can be identified in a number of cultures, is often a significant aspect of a portrait.

➢ Ask students if they can think of examples of figures identified in this manner.

The Renaissance emphasis on the individual made portraits very popular. In this era, many artists made self-portraits. Some of these images were composed to demonstrate the artist's skills. Some focused on suggesting social status within society, while others provided opportunities for self-analysis.

➢ Ask students to discuss how the self-portraits made by Renaissance artists might compare and contrast with selfies taken today.

If time allows, ask students to investigate portraiture in a variety of cultures and time periods. The impressive range of conventions and style choices would provide many inspirations for composing their own portraits on scratchboards.

Ask students to discuss how the interpretation of images can change as the context in which they are seen changes. For example, speculate about how a Renaissance prince might react to Edvard Munch's *The Scream*.

Other discussions and/or projects might include:

➤ Deciphering the symbols in religious paintings and icons.
Because this decoding requires specialized knowledge, the meaning of these works is not always apparent to modern viewers.

➤ Analyzing portraits of rulers and aristocrats in the 18th and 19th centuries.
How did these portraits represent their power and status?

➤ Investigating the portraits made during the Gilded Age in the United States and portraits of the late Victorian and Edwardian Age in England.
How do these portraits help us understand the relationship between these two countries before World War I?
Compare portraits from this timeframe with portraits made after World War I.
How do they differ?

Quite a number of artists in more modern times have used visual substitutes for themselves in self-portraits.

➤ American sculptor Deborah Butterfield views her sculptures of mares made from natural materials as self-portraits. She commented, "I first used the horse images as a metaphorical substitute for myself—it was a way of doing a self-portrait one step removed from the specificity of Deborah Butterfield."

➤ American painter, printmaker, and sculptor Jasper Johns has frequently represented himself using an empty Savarin Coffee can filled with paint brushes.

➤ Ask students to think about objects they might use to represent themselves.

End the activity introduction by discussing artists who have referenced the work of artists from earlier times to create new meanings.

The work of contemporary artist Kehinde Wiley is an excellent example of this practice.
Wiley paints portraits of African Americans in contemporary clothing who stand in for powerful individuals in recreations of famous paintings from past eras.

A typical example is the large canvas that substitutes rap artist Ice T for Napoleon in a painting that is visually similar to *Napoleon Enthroned*, a work by French artist Jean-August Ingres. Wiley's interesting choices for the type of clothing the figures wear, the background decorations and patterns, and the objects he places in his painting lead to interesting conversations about race, power, identity, and importance of visual literacy.

If possible, show students some of Wiley's work and ask them to discuss how images have shaped perceptions of the world.

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS:

After the introductory discussion, have the students complete the "Student Activity Worksheet: *Planning and Making a Scratchboard Portrait*." The "Who Do You Think You Are? Idea Generator" will help students organize their ideas as they visualize their portraits or self-portraits.

Providing them with examples of many types of portraits and decorative styles will help them with this section. If time allows, let students share their preliminary drawings with the class. The discussion will likely generate additional ideas.

The worksheet also contains instructions for transferring the preliminary drawings to the surface of the scratchboard. Younger students may need help with correctly organizing and securing the preliminary drawing, the transfer paper, and the scratchboard.

There's information on the last page about writing an artist's statement to accompany the finished portrait. Once the students have finished their projects, have them display the portraits with their artist's statements in the classroom. Ask each student to explain his or her artistic choices.

Closure/Evaluation: Did the student . . .

- ♦ complete sketches of a portrait that incorporates expressive elements?
- ♦ complete a scratchboard portrait based on preliminary sketches and ideas?
- ♦ meet all deadlines?

Student Activity Worksheet: *Planning and Making a Scratchboard Portrait*

Name: _____

In this assignment, you will use visual images, scratchboards, and other tools to create an expressive self-portrait or a portrait of someone who interests you. Begin by completing the exercises in the worksheet below.

Who Do You Think You Are? Idea Generator

1. List some thoughts and characteristics that you associate with the subject of your portrait. What kinds of things have meaning for your portrait subject?

2. Will you create a profile image or show the full face? Why?

3. What kind of clothing will the subject wear?

4. List and/or describe a few objects, patterns, or images that might represent the central image or personality you want to project.

5. What components of artworks and/or decorations from past eras would you like to use in your portrait? Explain how your choices relate to your basic idea for the portrait?

6. Sketch your portrait idea(s) below.
   (You are welcome to use collage techniques to build your composition.)

Transferring Your Image and Making Your Portrait:

After making a few sketches of the portrait you are visualizing, make a final preliminary drawing that incorporates all of your ideas. You will use this drawing to transfer your lines to the surface of the scratchboard.

There are many methods of transferring drawings and other decorative elements onto a prepared surface. This method should work well for your scratchboard portrait.

Once you have composed your plan for the portrait, lay tracing paper over your sketches and/or other references and trace your lines using a pencil (an HB works well). Make sure that the dimensions of your traced image matches the size of your scratchboard.

Next, cut out a rectangle of Saral® paper (wax-free transfer paper available at art supply stores) to match the dimensions of your scratchboard. Place it—darker side down—on top of the scratchboard.

Place your tracing paper drawing on top of the transfer paper. A clipboard may help you keep all three layers in the correct alignment—or you can use small pieces of artist's tape to secure them. Now, transfer the lines in your drawings by going over the original ones with pencil.

When you remove the tracing paper and transfer paper, the outlines of your drawing should appear on the scratchboard. If you want to clarify or add lines, use a white colored pencil.

Once you're satisfied with the drawing, use one of the scratching tools to scratch away the black ink layer of the scratch board to reveal the white clay layer underneath. This is the time to add other patterns and decorative elements. If you want to correct small mistakes, a black ink pen can often fill in small areas.

When you've finished your portrait, use your notes to write an artist's statement about your work. (See next page.)

Scratchboard Portrait Information

Artist _____

Title of the work _____

Date (of completion) _____

Medium _____

Artist Statement: An artist statement is a short narrative description of your work of art. It should include an explanation of your concept, the symbolism found in the work, and any other information that you choose to share. It should be 1-2 paragraphs. (Be prepared to read this statement aloud to the class.)