



Smithsonian's History Explorer Podcast

Teacher Guide



Investigating Portraiture

with curator Shannon Perich

Podcast Link: <http://amhistory.si.edu/thinkfinity/podcast/portrait.mp3>

Video Podcast Link: <http://amhistory.si.edu/thinkfinity/podcast/portrait.m4a>

Images Related to Podcast: <http://amhistory.si.edu/thinkfinity/podcast/portrait.zip>

Pre-Listening Questions:

- Think about the last time you sat down for a portrait or had your photo taken. What things might a future researcher look at and notice when looking for historical context?
- Look carefully at each image—who is this person? What can you learn about him or her from this photograph? Is there anything that stands out to you about the way this portrait is framed?

Discussion Questions:

- Is there anything from the three portraits Shannon discusses that she did not mention, and that you find interesting or important?
- Look in your textbook or online for other examples of historical photographs as portraiture (the [Library of Congress](#) and the [National Portrait Gallery](#) are great places to start). Pick one photograph you find intriguing and keep in mind Shannon's research tips while examining it. What do you now notice about the portrait? What historical clues are found within the photograph? Describe the portrait as if you were a curator here at the museum.

Activity:

- In pairs, have students photograph each other. Ask students to consider how they would like to be portrayed in the photograph as the sitter, and what issues they would like to consider when they are the photographer, and who their audience is. Or, have students choose one person to photograph, and explain why they chose the person they chose and how the elements of the photograph represent that person and his/her time period.

Related Resources—for continued instruction or resources for your students' research

National Museum of American History:

- Portraits of a City: The Scurlock Photographic Studio's Legacy to Washington, D.C.
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/scurlock/index.html>
- Photography Overview
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/subjects/photography>

Thinkfinity:

- Comparing Portrayals of Slavery in Nineteenth-Century Photography and Literature
<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/comparingportrayals-slavery-nineteenth-30527.html>
- Photojournalism Guide—from National Geographic Xpeditions
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/09/g68/photographyguidestudent.pdf>

National Standards—from the National Center for History in the Schools

- NSH (5-12) HT4: Historical Research Capabilities

Have your students email their question, comments, and discoveries to thinkfinity@si.edu

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Name:

Date:

Period:

Topic:

Listen to the podcast, take notes, and answer the questions.

1. Think about the last time you sat down for a portrait or had your photo taken. What things might a future researcher look at and notice when looking for historical context?
2. Is there anything from the three portraits Shannon discusses that she did not mention, and that you find interesting or important to their given time period?
3. Look in your textbook or online for other examples of historical portraiture (the [Library of Congress](#) and the [National Portrait Gallery](#) are great places to start). Pick one portrait you find intriguing and keep in mind Shannon's research tips while examining it. What do you now notice about the portrait? What historical clues are found within the photograph? When was it created? What makes you think that? Describe the portrait as if you were a curator here at the museum.

Email your questions, comments, and discoveries to thinkfinity@si.edu

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