Portraiture and Identity

with curator Shannon Perich

Podcast Link: http://amhistory.si.edu/thinkfinity/podcast/museumportrait.mp3
Video Podcast Link: http://amhistory.si.edu/thinkfinity/podcast/museumportrait.m4a
Image Gallery: http://americanhistory.si.edu/connect/podcasts/history-explorer-portraiture-and-identity

Pre-Listening Questions

- 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

- 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 thoughts on identity and portraiture. What do you now notice about the portrait? Describe the portrait as if you were a curator here at the museum.
- Look at the portrait of Colin Powell. If a photographer were to create an abstract portrait of you, what images would he or she include? What about another important historical figure?

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:

History Explorer:
- Object Portraits— http://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=7879
- American Presidents: Life Portraits— http://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=987
- Family Photo Album— http://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=1511
- Civil War Portraits— http://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=7097
- Martin Luther King Through the Scurlock Lens— http://historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=7808

Thinkfinity:

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
Find this podcast and more at http://americanhistory.si.edu/podcasts
Listen to the podcast. Take notes and answer the questions.

1. 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?

2. 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 thoughts on identity and portraiture. What do you now notice about the portrait? Describe the portrait as if you were a curator here at the museum.

3. Look at the portrait of Colin Powell. If a photographer were to create an abstract portrait of you, what images would he or she include? What about another important historical figure?

Give it a try and email your question, comments, and discoveries to historyteachers@si.edu

Find this podcast and more at http://americanhistory.si.edu/podcasts