

Powerful Portraits



([Image Source](#))

It's been said that a picture is worth a thousand words...but what are portraits trying to tell us? Portraits and photographs (yes, even selfies) can be used to send messages, convey feelings, share experiences, or gain power. Expressions can show everything from privilege to poverty, despair to joy. Official portraits and photographs are an excellent way to preserve these messages, feelings, or experiences.

This assignment has two parts.

Part I: Use the online [National Portrait Gallery exhibit of "America's Presidents"](#) to compare two presidential portraits. Please note: You CANNOT compare Presidents Washington and Obama above (but you can compare one of them to another president of your choosing!).



Write a paragraph (five to seven sentences) for each portrait answering the following questions:

- How is the president portrayed in his official portrait? How can you tell?
- What message is the artist trying to convey about the president?
- What stands out in the portrait? This can be anything -- color, pose, style, or other objects. Explain why these things caught your eye!

Part II: Now it's time to think about your own portrait! How would you want to be represented in an official portrait? Choose one photo of yourself as inspiration for your official portrait.



Write a paragraph (five to seven sentences) that answers the following questions:

- Identify the location and the time of year the photo was taken, your choice of clothes, pose, facial expression, setting, and any props.
- In your portrait, how are your choices of your clothes, your pose, your facial expression, and the setting (including any props) to be read 10, 20, or 50 years from now? If you want, you can also consider how other cultures would view your choices. (For example, look at President Obama's portrait above and examine his posture, his facial expression, and the flowery background.)
- Would the message in your official portrait differ from what you'd convey in a selfie? Explain why or why not.

TO REVIEW: You will have 3 paragraphs total -- one for each of your presidential portraits, and one describing your own portrait.

Adapted from East Coast Explorations, WorldStrides Discovery for Credit program