

Identifying the Changing Roles of Women Through Portraiture
Suggested Grades: Grade 8 and Grade 11
Lesson by: Meagan McCormick

(Be sure to contact the Castellani Art Museum for a copy of the teacher resource guide containing the images, activities, and additional information associated with this lesson plan.)

Disciplines: NYS Learning Standards

◆ **Social Studies**

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

Performance Indicator (1): The study of New York and the United States history requires an analysis of the development of American culture, its diversity and multicultural context, and the ways people are unified by many values, practices, and traditions.

Performance Indicator (2): Important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions from New York State and United States history illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives.

Performance Indicator (3): Study about the major social, political, economic, cultural and religious developments in New York State and United States history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups.

Standard 5: Civics, Citizenship, and Government

Performance Indicator (3): Central to civics and citizenship is an understanding of the roles of the citizen within American constitutional democracy and the scope of a citizen's rights responsibilities.

◆ **English Language Arts (ELA)**

Standard 3: Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

Performance Indicator (2): Speaking and writing for critical analysis and evaluation requires presenting opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues clearly, logically, and persuasively with reference to specific criteria on which the opinion or judgment is based.

Standard 4: Language for Social Interaction

Performance Indicator (1): Oral communication in formal and informal settings requires the ability to talk with people of different ages, genders, and cultures, to adapt presentations to different audiences, and to reflect on how talk varies in different situations.

◆ **The Arts- Visual Arts**

Standard 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts

Performance Indicator (1): Students will make works of art that explore different kinds of subject matter, topics, themes, and metaphors. Students will understand and use sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive images to communicate their own ideas in works of art. Students will use a variety of art materials processes, mediums, and techniques, and use appropriate technologies for creating and exhibiting visual art works.

Standard 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources

Performance Indicator (2): Students will know and use a variety of visual arts materials, techniques, and processes. Students will know about resources and opportunities for participation in visual arts in the community (exhibitions, libraries, museums, galleries) and use appropriate materials (art reproductions, slides, print materials, electronic media). Students will be aware of vocational options available in the visual arts.

Standard 3: Responding to and analyzing Works of Art

Performance Indicator (3): Students will reflect on, interpret, and evaluate works of art, using the language of art criticism. Students will analyze the visual art characteristics of the natural and built environment and explain the social, cultural, psychological, and environmental dimensions of the visual arts. Students will compare the way in which a variety of ideas, themes, and concepts are expressed in other disciplines.

Standard 4: Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

Performance Indicator (4): Students will explore art and artifacts from various historical periods and world cultures to discover the roles that art plays in the lives of people of a given time and place and to understand how the time and place influence the visual characteristics of the art work. Students will explore art to understand the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of human society.

Descriptive Title: Identifying the Changing Roles of Women Through Portraiture

Context (Rationale):

The lesson is important as it attempts to describe the changing roles of women throughout history. From earliest times women have been expected to act, look and dress in a particular way. Their futures were preordained by societal expectations. Their freedoms and their rights were limited and they were often forced to conform to roles decided by others. Through the years attitudes changed allowing women the opportunity to explore their true potential and break the “glass ceiling” as described by Hillary Clinton. Students should develop an understanding of how and why attitudes concerning women’s roles have changed.

Performance Task:

The student will be able to –

- Identify the time period represented in the artwork
- Describe what they see
- Describe how certain portraits reinforce societal views
- Describe how certain portraits attempt to contradict societal views
- Create a collage that represents the type of roles women lead today

Art Resources:

- Portrait of Kathleen Palmer, artist unknown, Castellani Art Museum
- Portrait of a Girl with a Doll, George Luks, Castellani Art Museum
- The Parasol, Beal, Castellani Art Museum
- Woman Standing, 1948, Reginald Marsh, Castellani Art Museum

- Circle from Barriers Portfolio 1976, Robert E. Dorksen, Castellani Art Museum
- Doctor, Cindy Sherman, Castellani Art Museum
- Nurse, Cindy Sherman, Castellani Art Museum
- Untitled 1975, Cindy Sherman, Castellani Art Museum
- “Women are Beautiful Portfolio” 1981, Garry Winogrand, Castellani Art Museum

Art Materials:

- Magazines
- Scissors
- Tag board with universal symbol for women
- Acrylic Paint
- Paint brushes
- Markers
- Glue sticks

Motivation:

The teacher will motivate students by asking them to think about the adult women who have played an important part in their lives; who they are, what they do for a living, what obstacles they have faced and if they think that these obstacles were based on their gender. The teacher will ask the students if these women felt that certain careers were closed to them because they were women. The teacher will ask students if they think there is any pressure from society today for women to look, dress, or act in a particular way. The teacher will then tell them that they are going to look at a number of portraits and discuss how these images of women either reinforced or contradicted certain prevailing attitudes about women and their role in society.

Presentation:

1. Once the students arrive at the museum the teacher will bring them into the gallery where the portraits are hanging.
2. The teacher will ask the students what type of art work they are looking at and what type of medium is used.
3. The teacher will then ask the students if they see a common link with the work displayed.
4. The teacher will ask the students to think about the women in their lives and use the motivational questions to think about the obstacles these women may have faced personally and professionally.
5. The teacher will direct the students to look at each portrait which has been numbered

and describe what they see.

6. The teacher will ask them specific questions about the time period the portrait represents, the subject depicted and the significance of their appearance.
7. The teacher will ask them if the artist represents the traditional role of a woman or is attempting to contradict the accepted norm.
8. After student responses to each individual portrait the teacher will give them background information concerning the artist, their work, and what influences may have motivated them.
9. The teacher will generate a group discussion highlighting social, political, and cultural changes that have influenced the roles of women.
10. At this point the teacher will hand out a list of names of famous women from the last hundred years from various walks of life and ask students if they can identify what these women are known to have accomplished.
11. The teacher will ask them to add any additional names they can think should be placed on the list.
12. The teacher will ask students if certain attitudes about women have remained constant and ask them to explain why they believe that is true.
13. The teacher will then tell students that they will create a collage that represents the modern woman of today. Using any of the art materials that I have supplied and their own creativity they will depict all that a woman in the 21st century can aspire to be.

Assessment Tools and Evidence:

Tools: At the end of the session the teacher will ask students to volunteer to share their collage with the rest of the class. The teacher will then ask students questions about their work.

Evidence: The evidence of whether or not the students understood the concept of portrayal of women in art through the use of portraits will be the collage created and the discussion it generates.

Teacher Reflection/Follow Up: Did students understand the concept of the use of portraits to describe values of society? Do they understand that attitudes can change values? What may have seemed important in the past may no longer seem important today. Can students draw similarities and differences between the role of women in the past and the role of women in contemporary society? The teacher will make decisions based on their collages and responses as well as feedback from their classroom teachers. The teacher will make changes as necessary.