

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT! A FOOD SELF-PORTRAIT

ART AND LANGUAGE ARTS

GRADE LEVEL: 9–12

BASED ON

Benjamin West
Portrait of Anne Allen, Later Mrs. John Penn, 1795,
Museum Purchase, The Fanny B. Lehmer Fund,
1998.33

MATERIALS

illustration board 10 x15 in.
colored pencils
fine line ink pen
optional: watercolor sets with brush, water-based
markers

REFERENCES

Web Gallery of Art
<http://gallery.euroweb.hu/html/>

CONCEPT

Benjamin West's portrait of the young Anne Allen depicts a lovely young woman who was born into one of the wealthiest families of eighteenth-century America. Through his handling of the subject and the setting in which she is placed, the artist brings the viewer to an understanding not only of this young woman's social and economic status but her personality and demeanor as well. Visual clues, both obvious and subliminal, define her culture and her lifestyle. Students will create portraits of themselves that provide the viewer a glimpse into adolescent lifestyles of the time. By visually defining themselves through what they eat, students will metaphorically convey the influence of consumer culture on their own lives.

OBJECTIVE

Students will create a believable self-portrait incorporating selected food items as details, forms, and textures. The compositional focus is a head-and-shoulders portrait with fully developed clothing, hair, and background appropriate to the food theme resulting in a humorous illustration. Written reflections on the students' choices of imagery will accompany each work.

PROCEDURE

Note: Students should be familiar with the proportions of the human face. A self-portrait study should precede this project.

- Begin by having students do sketchbook drawings of six of their favorite foods.
- Through a series of thumbnail studies students should explore the integration of foods as substitutes for facial features in a self-portrait.
- Develop a compositional idea that includes relating the background space appropriately with the chosen food imagery.
- Draft compositions onto illustration board lightly with pencil.
- Conduct a group critique of works in-progress discussing the variety of student solutions.
- Render in colored pencil. Consider a layered media approach using either watercolor or water-based marker combined with colored pencil for detailed modeling.
- Mat finished work.

CLASS EXPERIENCE

CRITICAL THINKING

Renaissance master Giuseppe Archimboldo produced a large body of portrait work in which an individual's facial features were inspired by themes centered on nature. Organic themes including food, fire, water, and wind produced provocative profiles considered humorous for the time. View and discuss his works and compare them with caricatures of today's world leaders. Write a comparative essay on the use of portrait humor over time.

CRITERIA

Student produces a believable self-portrait creatively incorporating food in the treatment of facial features, hair, and clothing. The background space should extend the theme in either a spatial or decorative manner.

ASSESSMENT

Resulting work should demonstrate successful performance in terms of defined

GOALS OF THE ASSIGNMENT

CRAFTSMANSHIP

ORIGINALITY

OVERALL VISUAL IMPACT

Ratings: (4) Exceeds (3) Meets (3) Approaches (2) Attempts

NATIONAL VISUAL ART STANDARDS

Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.