

# THE SELF

## IN ART

AN EXPLORATION OF THE  
**SELF-PORTRAIT**



THROUGH THE CREATION  
OF  
**IDENTITY BOXES**

# THE SELF IN ART

**An exploration of the Self Portrait through the creation of Identity Boxes**

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# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

## The Self in Art

An exploration of the self portrait  
through the creation of Identity Boxes

A visual Art Unit for Grade Level(s) 9-10

### **Description:**

This unit explores the subject of The Self in Art. Students will learn about self-portraits and identity through a variety of methods: Reviewing artists works, writing autobiographical narratives, drawing self portraits, and reading art history. Students will develop and create an Identity Box that incorporates several of the ideas and images they have created.

### **Essential Questions:**

What makes up our identities?  
How do artists communicate identity through visual art?

Created by Jodi Robison  
for EDCI 561  
Instructor Julie McDonnell  
Ashland University, Ashland Ohio

## INTRODUCTION

**The Self in Art** *Post questions on board to motivate students in classroom discussion*

# HOW IS IDENTITY FORMED?

How do artists communicate  
identity through visual art?

To what extent are we defined by our:

**Talents?**      Tastes?  
**SelfImage?**      Interests?  
Work Ethic?      *families?*      Heritage?  
**Hobbies?**      Goals?  
*Dreams?*

*Take turns sharing something about ourselves that may not be known by the classmates.*



SLIDE SHOW  
**Self Portraits**



Frida Kahlo



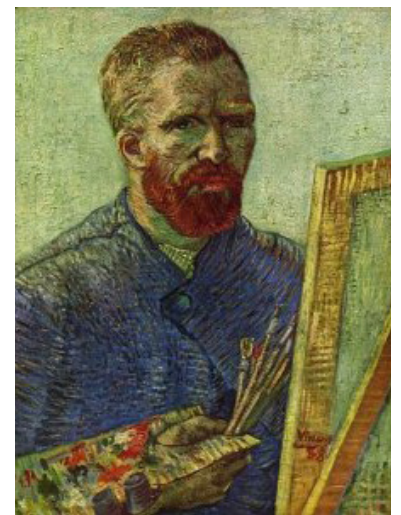
D.H. Lawrence



Albrecht Dueher



Marie-Denise Villers Young



Vincent Van Gogh



Rembrandt van Rijn



Alfred Steglitz

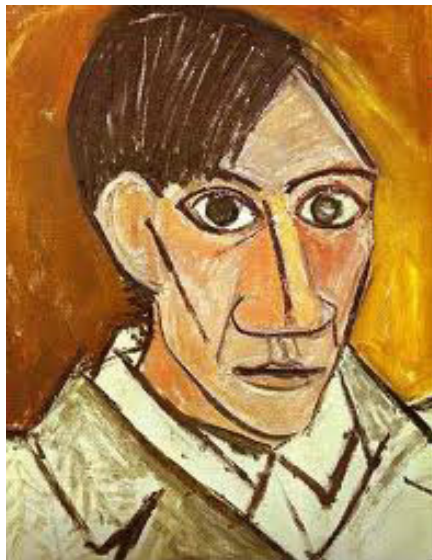


Joseph Cornell

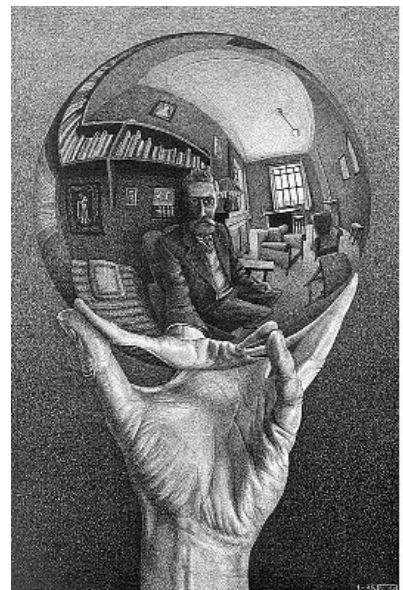




Student Identity Box samples



Picasso



MC Esher



Student IdentityBox samples



Sample of Self Portrait



Frida Kahlo



Rembrandt's Frick portrait



Rembrandt's Kenwood portrait



another kind of  
self portrait

# PROCEDURE

## Session 1: Introduction and Overview of Unit

**Teacher will:** Initiate a classroom discussion by asking the essential questions: What makes up our identities? How do artists communicate identity?

Hand out vocabulary list, asking students to share what words they know with the class.

Motivate students with slide show, noting and encouraging dialog about the symbolism and expressions of identity in the artists works. Point out examples of student work for reference to their own projects.

Ask class to compare through discussion self portraits of the past vs. self portraits of today.

Hand out the Identity Box Idea sheet and Rubric explaining the expectations for the week.

Remind students the found objects will need collected and brought to class by the 3rd session.

Note: teacher will also create an Identity Box to share with the class.

**Students will:** Brainstorm their ideas in their journal and begin thinking about the 4 found objects they will include in their boxes.

## Session 2: Learning Stations

**Teacher will** refer to the Station description page to introduce the stations and requirements at each station.

Remind students that instructions will be posted in detail at each station. Explain time line and that the goal is to complete the first 4 stations by the end of Session 3 and the 5th Station: Identity Boxes will be complete on Friday.

After the Stations are explained and any questions are answered, the...

**Students will:** begin work at the stations for the remaining 30 minutes of class.

## Session 3: Continue work at Learning Stations

**Students will:** continue work at the stations. They will dialog with teacher about artistic processes from conceiving an idea to how to translate the idea into the finished piece.

**Teacher will** encourage class to ask questions and share progress of the tasks.

observe student work and model skills when needed. Go over the rubric for the elements of a successful Identity Box.

## Session 4: The Identity Box

**Students will:** focus work on Station 5, The Identity Box

**Teacher will:**

Collect the vocabulary worksheet. Check Journals to monitor progress and assist where needed.

Observe student work and model skills when needed.

Ask students to hand in completed vocabulary sheet and reading guide.

Encourage students to refer to the Identity Box and rubric when needed.

## Session 5: Identity Box and Reflection

**Students will:** complete work on Identity boxes.

Each student will briefly explain their work to the class and choose 2 symbolic references to share.

**Teacher will:** hand out the reflection sheets and encourage class discussion about what they have learned.

If time is available ask students to do an “exit slip” journal entry describing a different\* way to create a self portrait using modern technology. *\*Different than the projects we worked on in this unit.*



# THE STATIONS

## **Station 1: Mirror Image**

Students will briefly explore their facial expressions. They will look in the mirror and try to express: happiness sadness, excitement, confusion, and confidence/determination. They will then strike their own pose and complete a simple self portrait drawing in charcoal or black marker on the 9x12 drawing paper. Teacher will spend some extra time here modeling the drawing activity. Let students know that this art will later be sized to fit their Identity Boxes.

## **Station 2: Symbols and Assemblage**

Students will work in groups of 2 or 3. They will learn about Symbols and Assemblage by studying the work of 2 artists at 2 interactive websites

**Frida Kahlo- Symbols** <http://www.pbs.org/weta/fridakahlo/worksofart/accident.html>

**Joseph Cornell- Assemblage** <http://www.pem.org/sites/cornell/>

Teacher will encourage students have some fun and enjoy the interactivity of the sites.

Students will show what they learned in a journal entry of approx. 50 words about each site.  
(this station will be set up at one of the 2 classroom computers)

## **Station 3: My Personal Narrative**

An autobiographical journal exercise to build words and ideas for your Identity Box  
Description of assignment on handout. This may be taken home as homework if needed.

## **Station 4: Reading about artist Rembrandt van Rijn**

Looking more closely at 2 of his self portraits

Complete the Reading assignment and Reading Guide handout

(this station will be set up at the other of the 2 classroom computers)

## **Station 5: Identity Box Creation**

Using the materials available in the classroom, found objects from home, the drawings created in station 1 and words and ideas developed in Station 3, students will create their own Identity box.

The Identity Box is the culminating project of this unit.

Teacher will hand out the Rubric and encourage students to review it carefully and ask questions.

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## **Assessment Methods**

Teacher will observe students while working at the stations.

Students will complete a reading guide to assess understanding of the reading assignment.

Students will complete worksheet reflecting on their Identity Box.

Students will complete writing activities in their journals.

Students and teacher will follow a rubric for the Identity Box portion of the lesson.

## **Instructional/Environment Modifications:**

2 Computers in the classroom Interactive websites can be explored in groups of 2-4 as needed for time. Make certain that all stations are equally accessible to all students

## **Duration:**

Unit plan to be completed in 5 sessions of 50 minutes each.

40 minutes to introduce, discuss, view slide show, and review the unit.

30-40 minutes to read passage and complete reading guide.

40 minutes to complete drawing

2- 40 minute sessions to complete Identity boxes

15 minutes to do reflection worksheet

Writing assignments can be done as stations in class or as homework assignments if time is limited.

## **Differentiated learning:**

The design of the lesson with primary learning occurring at stations allows teacher to observe and assist where needed.

Small groups may be formed for work at the stations as time and space allows.

Journal writing assignments allow students to work at their own pace and ability.

Instructional aid for students with learning challenges and extended time if needed.

## **Additional Resources:**

If time is available this would be an excellent group of sites to visit with the students:

<http://www.vsarts.org/prebuilt/showcase/gallery/exhibits/cbborders/index.html>

<http://www.womenbeyondborders.org/WBB.ASP?WCI=tplCountry-serif&WCU>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0HH8MHQaSA>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Muv9SnVGkpc>

## **Curriculum Ideas:**

This lesson could easily be modified and simplified for success with younger students.

This lesson would be even better given more time to develop the Identity Boxes

For high school students, this lesson could be lengthened to a second week where the students take their Identity Box themes and expand upon them to create **Digital Self Portraits**. Using this unit as the information collecting and research part of a bigger project.... still further, the Digital Self Portrait can be a component of a senior level **Digital Portfolio**.

# MATERIALS LIST

## **Station 1**

- 9X12 white drawing paper
- Charcoal and black markers
- 4-5 mirrors
- Copier/scanner/printer access to reduce drawings

## **Station 2**

- Computer access for online interactive artist research
- Art journal, pens, pencils

## **Station 3**

- Art journals, pens, pencils
- Autobiographical Narrative handout

## **Station 4**

- Computer access for online reading assignment
- Reading guide handout
- Since station 4 may be done as homework the teacher must provide hard copies of the reading assignment for students that do not have computer access at home.

## **Station 5**

- A variety of boxes to choose from. (no smaller than 6x4x2
- Found objects from nature or home
- Found images for collage work may require computer printer
- Magazines, colored paper, fabric
- Paint, pens, pencils.
- String, plastic, wood and any other materials of use in art room
- A variety of raw material could be obtained at a recycle store

## IDEA SHEET HANDOUT

### **Identity Boxes** - *an assemblage about you*

We will be exploring the subject of The Self in Art. Our primary project is to create an Identity Box.

Your goal is to create an artwork that tells the viewer about your identity. A conceptual narrative

You should use a box the size of a shoebox or cigar box. Your box will be viewable closed and open. It will have an outside concept and inside concept. You may include an assortment of images, words, objects, artifacts, pieces of music, photographs, items of significance to you (or images of them). You can tape, glue, or loosely place these items in your box. You will be sharing the contents of the box with the class. No live specimens in your boxes please.

Paint, draw on or cover in collage (inside and out) all sides of the box except the bottom. (bottom will be covered in black or white paper.

Use both collage - 2 dimensional AND assemblage - 3 dimensional elements

The box must include 4 objects that are meaningful to you, such as medals, ribbons, coins, programs, ticket stubs, old sunglasses, trophies, and found objects of all types.

Name the artwork.

**Refer to the rubric for specific requirements.**

All materials will be supplied in the art classroom.

Things that you might want to consider as you create a box to describe yourself:

- Your hobbies
- Your age
- Music you play or listen to
- Your passions
- Your pets
- A key moment(s) in your life
- Your neighborhood
- Your school
- Your nationality
- Your ancestry and heritage
- Your family and your position within your family
- Your relationship to group(s) or community
- Your relation to other people and the people who matter most to you
- Activities in which you participate or clubs or teams to which you belong
- Favorite clothes, music, food, places, experiences that somehow define or describe you



## UNIT VOCABULARY HANDOUT

### **The Self in Art-** *Self Portraits and Identity Boxes*

assemblage:

collage:

identity:

portrait-

self-portrait:

symbol:

metaphor:

representational:

caricature:

portraiture:

found objects:

autobiographical:

narrative:

## UNIT VOCABULARY

### **The Self in Art-** *Self Portraits and Identity Boxes*

assemblage: A three-dimensional composition that utilizes a variety of materials both found and original.

collage: The technique and resulting work of art in which fragments of paper and other materials are arranged and glued to a supporting surface; also, the resulting work of art.

identity: The distinguishing characteristics that determine one's self.

portrait- A portrait is a painting, photograph, sculpture, or other artistic representation of a person, in which the face and its expression is predominant.

self-portrait: An individual's representation of him- or herself.

symbol: Something that represents or stands for something else, either in pictorial or textual form.

metaphor: something used to represent something else; emblem; symbol, including intangible concepts.

representational: Depicts an object in nature in recognizable form.

caricature: A rendering, usually a drawing, of a person or thing with exaggerated or distorted features, meant to satirize the subject.

portraiture: graphic, detailed drawing or painting of a person

found objects: sculpture materials from everyday life

autobiographical- telling the story of your own life

narrative: A spoken, written, or visual account of an event or a series of connected events.

## My Autobiographical Narrative

Write a clear statement that addresses who you are, your values, goals, commitments, and your relationship to your family, school, & community.

Make your statement a true representation of who you are and what you stand for. Proofread your mission statement carefully so that you eliminate errors in grammar, spelling, or vocabulary use. It should be from 150-250 words long, but no more.

Think about your own life, where and who you are now, what you value as you write.... Remember, you can include your future dreams and goals.

As you write....note that you will use some key words and or ideas from this narrative in your Identity Box.

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half sheet

## STATION 4 READING GUIDE

### Rembrandt and 2 Self Portraits, *by Harry Trosman*

Go to google books link: [http://books.google.com/books?id=9gj5RS7Oj1UC&pg=PA109&lpg=PA109&dq=Rembrandt+and+Two+Self+Portraits+trosman&source=bl&ots=CUzOx26AJz&sig=LmZAbkQrV9GNf9jHxmKOOSiv0y8&hl=en&ei=j2TUTI27LuKKnAeQ1O3qBQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBcQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=9gj5RS7Oj1UC&pg=PA109&lpg=PA109&dq=Rembrandt+and+Two+Self+Portraits+trosman&source=bl&ots=CUzOx26AJz&sig=LmZAbkQrV9GNf9jHxmKOOSiv0y8&hl=en&ei=j2TUTI27LuKKnAeQ1O3qBQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBcQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false)

*Follow the link on our classroom home page. First review the reading guide. Then begin reading pages 109-121. Respond in your reading guide as you go.*

Take a guess on what the author means by quasi- psychoanalytic means:

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Generally art historians agree that this person created the earliest self portrait?

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Why did the genre of self portraiture develop in Renaissance time (15th century)?

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Give one reason Rembrandt may have explored self portraiture:

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Now stop reading and look at the two portraits. Give your first impression and 2 general observations about each portrait before continuing the reading

The Frick self-portrait

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The Kenwood self-portrait

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When an infant is confronted with its own mirror image the author suggests that the self exists in what two “states”? (not Ohio and California!)

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How did Rembrandt’s self portraits help him through stressful times in his life?

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Now, explore via the internet some of the other 75 self portraits of Rembrandt van Rijn..... Pick one out write a brief critique of it here:

Title of the piece \_\_\_\_\_ year created \_\_\_\_\_

Thoughts

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## REFLECTION

# Identity Boxes

Name \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Title of your Identity box:

List 5 items or images that you used in your assemblage and explain why you chose to use them

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

indicate with an S or R -- whether each of the items or symbolic or representative.

What is the focal point of your assemblage?

How did you lead the viewer's eye to this place/object first?

Did the other projects help you build ideas for your Identity Box?

Overall, how do feel about the success of your creation and about how it is a reflection of you?

## RUBRIC

### The Self in Art- *Identity Boxes*

Use the rubric below to guide you to success on your project. Remember to ask me if you have any questions concerning the requirements. Points given as follows.

#### Points Available for each category

Criteria	1-5	6-14	15-20
Technical Production	Lack of interest in selecting materials with little attention to detail	Some effort in material and subject matter selection. Moderate attention to technique.	Made informed choices in the selection of materials, subject matter and techniques to achieve certain visual effects.
Creativity	Uninspired with little planning and effort	Reasonably good choices made but only average creativity applied.	Creative original expressive artwork that displays personal style.
Comprehension of Symbolism	Does not show understanding of symbolism.	Shows reasonable understanding of symbolism in at least 2 inclusions.	Shows strong use of symbolism or metaphor in more than 2 inclusions.
Classroom Participation	Seems distracted and does not work well on project.	Average participation and work ethic.	Works well on task and asks and responds to questions
Includes found or created objects	Includes only 1 found or created object in box.	Includes 2-3 found or created objects in box.	Includes at least 4 found or created objects in box.

**Total Available Points: 100**

# ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS (source ODE)

## **Visual Arts Content Standard: Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts**

Students understand the impact of visual art on the history, culture and society from which it emanates. They understand the cultural, social and political forces that, in turn, shape visual art communication and expression. Students identify the significant contributions of visual artists to cultural heritage. They analyze the historical, cultural, social and political contexts that influence the function and role of visual art in the lives of people.

### **Benchmarks grade 9**

1. Discuss the roles of visual art forms within social contexts.
4. Compare and contrast the stylistic characteristics of visual art from one historical period with the those of the previous time period.

### **Benchmarks grade 10**

5. Compare the artistic styles and subject matter in artworks by contemporary artists of different cultures.

## **Visual Arts Content Standard: Creative Expression and Communication**

Students create artworks that demonstrate understanding of materials, processes, tools, media, techniques and available technology. They understand how to use art elements, principles and images to communicate their ideas in a variety of visual forms.

### **Benchmarks grade 9**

3. Make informed choices in the selection of materials, subject matter and techniques to achieve certain visual effects.
4. Explain artistic processes from conceiving an idea to completing a work of art.

### **Benchmarks grade 10**

1. Create original artworks in at least two three-dimensional media and several two-dimensional media that show the development of a personal style.
2. Evaluate their choices of compositional elements in terms of how those choices affect the subject matter of the work.
3. Trace the origin of symbolism, imagery and metaphor in art and demonstrate the use of these visual devices in their artworks.

## **Visual Arts Content Standard: Analyzing and Responding**

Students identify and discriminate themes, media, subject matter and formal technical and expressive aspects in works of art. They understand and use the vocabulary of art criticism to describe visual features, analyze relationships and interpret meanings in works of art. Students make judgments about the quality of works of art using the appropriate criteria.

### **Benchmarks grade 9**

2. Explain how form and media influence artistic decisions.
3. Research and describe the work of an artist on the basis of how the artist's choice of media and style contribute to the meaning of the work.
4. Use appropriate vocabulary to define and describe techniques, materials and methods that artists use to create works of art.
5. Analyze and describe the visual aspects of their own artworks and the work of others.

### **Benchmarks grade 10**

1. Analyze the way media, technique, compositional elements and subject matter work together to create meaning in selected artworks.
2. Apply methods of art criticism in writing and speaking about works of art.



## Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.