

Powerful Presidential Portraits

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.

Scan the QR code or use the links below to watch two videos about the history of presidential portraits.



Hail to the Chiefs' Portraits



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The Tradition of White House Presidential Portraits



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If pictures are worth 1,000 words, what do presidential portraits say about the legacy of presidents?

Analyze presidential portraits throughout history and create your own portrait.

1. The Presidential Portraits:

- After gaining some insight on the importance and historical value of presidential portraits, take a deep dive into the collection of portraits from the National Portrait Gallery exhibit "[America's Presidents.](#)"
- As you peruse the collection, take note of how the artist displays the president's legacy through art in conjunction with historical events. *What message would you like your portrait to display? What artistic similarities would you pull from existing presidential portraits for your own?*
- Pick two portraits that spark your interest and consider the following questions:
 - *How is the artistic expression similar in the two portraits you selected? How is it different?*
 - *What message do you think the artist intended to convey with each portrait?*
 - *Are there historical events that impacted the style or message in each portrait?*
 - *Why did these two portraits stand out for you? Explain why you chose them for your analysis.*

2. The Presentation:

- Now that you have analyzed your two portraits, present your findings on social media.
- Pick a social media platform (Instagram or TikTok is preferred) to showcase your findings.
- Display the two portraits you selected and answer the questions above by posting a video or text response.

3. Your Portrait:

- Now that we understand the artistic display of legacy and the importance of telling a story through pictures, it is your turn to create a portrait.
- Use the styles and expressions of past presidential portraits to create your own. You can paint, draw, take a selfie, or edit a photo of yourself. Use your creativity to best capture your message in the portrait.
- Post your personal portrait to social media explaining the story your portrait tells, and which presidential portrait inspired you.

Share your work with us! Tag us with #LivingHistory



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