

Teaching Identity Through the National Portrait Gallery's *Talking Heads* Exhibit

Introduction:

This lesson plan was developed for 5th and 6th grade students who are going on a field trip to the National Portrait Gallery and have seen the *Talking Heads* exhibit. The content in this lesson plan references the exhibit, but could be easily modified for students who have not been. The students will be exploring themes of identity and community through portraiture and art history. Taking the opportunity of the portraiture and individuality seen at the National Portrait Gallery, we will challenge students to start to explore their identity and identify what makes them unique.

Objective:

- Students will be able to define the word Identity
- Students will be able to identify various factors that shape their identity
- Students will be able to write about their identities and background

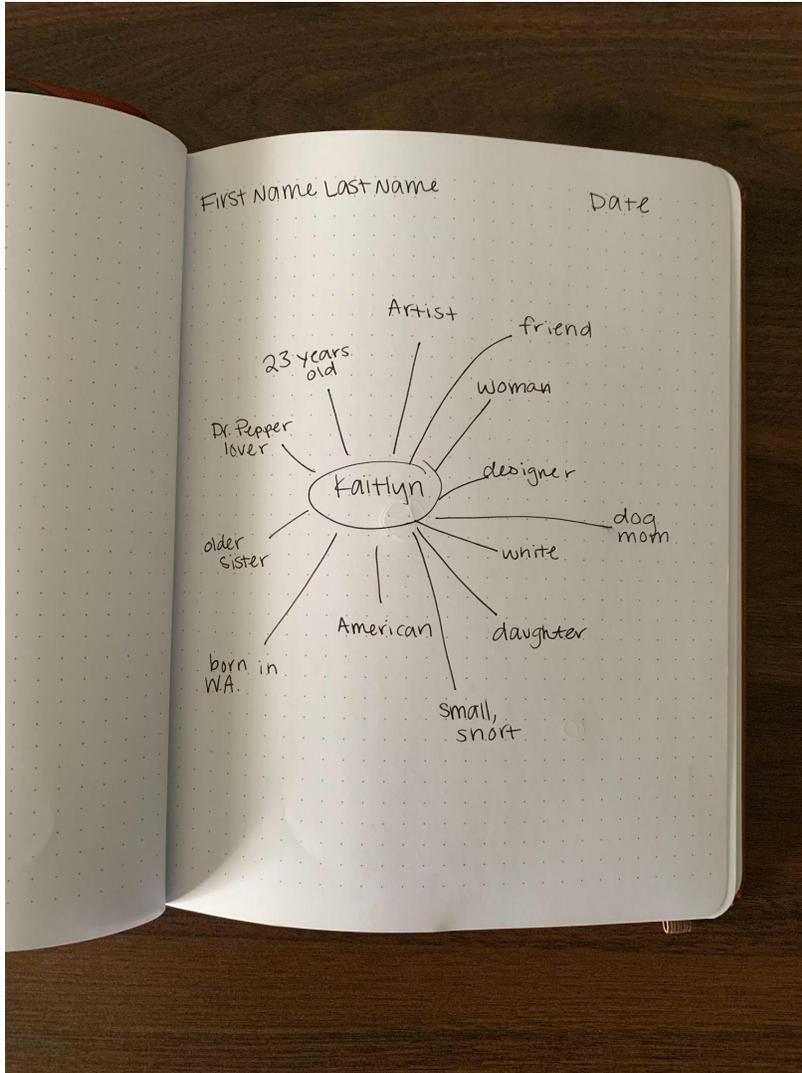
Lesson Plan(s):

Pre-Museum Visit Activity:

Write the word identity on the board and ask for the students to share their thoughts on what it means. Brainstorm as a class what this word means. After a few minutes of brainstorming, give the students the definition of the word. We suggest using a definition such as this one: ***Identity is the qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and/or expressions that make a person or group***, as it articulates what we are trying to teach the students in a simple way.

After introducing the topic of identity to students, have the students create an identity chart. The students will write their name in the middle and things that make them unique around it. Give your students a few examples of things they might write such as their gender, age, nationality, race, hobbies, physical characteristics, interests, etc.

Example:



Post-Museum Visit Activity:

After visiting the National Portrait Gallery and seeing the *Talking Heads* exhibit, challenge students to help create their own classroom exhibit. Have students create a self portrait out of any medium they prefer (collage, crayons, colored pencil, paint, etc.). Encourage them to take inspiration from the portraits they saw at the National Portrait Gallery. Are their self portraits engaged in an activity? Maybe they are engaged in one of the hobbies they wrote on their identity chart? Are they sitting still? Are they with one of their family members or friends? Allow students to be as creative as they wish.

After students complete their self portraits, have them write a 5-7 sentence biography about themselves. This will go on a placecard that will accompany their new art piece. They'll format it like this:

FirstName LastName
Birth year
Self Portrait, current year
Medium
Student Biography.

Example:

