Lesson Plan

Grades 3–5

Subject: Art, Math

Time: 60–90 min.

Overview

In this lesson, students will explore Amedeo Modigliani’s trademark portrait style and create their own self-portraits. Students will gain an understanding of how art and math intersect through exploration of the unique facial proportions in Modigliani’s works. Additionally, there will be opportunities to discuss what self-portraits can convey about a person as well as an exploration of realism in contrast to more modernist styles.

Objectives

By the end of the lesson students will be able to

- Distinguish between Modigliani-style and standard portrait proportions and characteristics
- Understand how a self-portrait can reflect an individual’s personality
- Formulate opinions on realism versus modernism
Materials

- Construction paper
- Colored pencils, markers, and/or crayons

Procedure

1. Before the lesson, create both a standard self-portrait and a Modigliani-style self-portrait (by following steps 3–7) to use as examples for your students.
2. Show your students the two portraits you created and explain Modigliani’s unique use of elongated features and distorted proportions. This is a great opportunity to discuss how modern artists rejected the idea that subjects must be depicted realistically. Let your students know they’ll be making Modigliani-style self-portraits.
3. Pass out a sheet of paper and coloring utensils to each student. Instruct students to fold the paper in half horizontally (hamburger style) twice. The creases should create 4 equal horizontal quadrants (with quadrant 1 at the top and quadrant 4 at the bottom).
4. Instruct students to draw a vertical oval on the top half of the page, extending from the center of the page toward the top of quadrant 1. Have students draw a neck starting at the base of the oval extending down through quadrant 3.
5. Instruct students to draw shoulders from the neck into quadrant 4.
6. For the features, have students draw two football-shaped eyes at the base of quadrant 1 and a small mouth at the base of quadrant 2. For the nose, students should draw a long upside down “7” to mimic Modigliani’s signature style.
7. From there, let your students experiment! They can create fun colored backgrounds and draw accessories, hair, and clothing. Since this is a self-portrait, let your students know they should incorporate parts of their personality into the drawing.
8. Hand out the attached post-activity questions to your students to reflect on or use the questions to host a discussion session.
Post-Activity Questions

1. What can we discover about a person by looking at their portrait? How does your self-portrait reflect who you are?

2. What do you like about Modigliani-style portraits? What do you dislike?

3. Do you think portraits should be realistic? Why or why not?

4. What are some other ways an artist could distort their subject’s facial features in a portrait?

5. Create a fun title and caption to describe your self-portrait.