IMAGE AND IDENTITY

This learning resource for Secondary Art focuses on a selection of portraits from the Collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Man’s Head (Self-portrait III)
Lucian Freud (1922-1011), self-portrait, oil on canvas, 1963
NPG 5205 © Lucian Freud Archive
IMAGE AND IDENTITY

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

The resource focuses on examining the concept of Image and Identity, asking the key questions:

- How do we see ourselves? (Individual/personal identity)
- How do we portray ourselves? (Chosen identity)
- What do we project to others? (Implied identity)
- What do others see and impose onto us? (Imposed or perceived identity)

Each portrait is viewed and examined in a number of different ways with discussion questions and factual information relating directly to the works. The material in this resource can be used in the classroom or in conjunction with a visit to the Gallery.

The information is suitable for KS3 to KS5 Secondary Art, but is particularly aimed at KS4. In this unit, students learn about Image and Identity through the ideas, methods and approaches used by artists who have made images of themselves and/or portrayed others.

The contextual information provides background material that can be fed into the students’ work as required. The guided discussion gives questions for the teacher to ask a group or class, it may be necessary to pose further questions around Image and Identity to help explore and develop ideas more fully. Students should have the opportunity to pose their own questions, too.

This resource connects to our learning programmes developed around the theme of ‘Image and Identity’. See: www.npg.org.uk/learning

Portraits from the National Portrait Gallery, London are the basis of our investigations. All images are © National Portrait Gallery, London, unless otherwise indicated.

Each section contains the following: an introduction to each theme, definitions, key words, questions and art projects.
# IMAGE AND IDENTITY

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Self-imagery can be as varied and limitless as our imaginations. It is more than just a mirror reflection. These can be exact likenesses or abstract collections of thoughts and feelings. Written, they tell a story, give a history or an invented myth, map out someone’s life and trace their family tree. Passports are a formal way of defining the identity of a person.

People have always wanted to leave behind traces of their lives within the world. Long before artists used oil paints to paint pictures, others left marks: for example, the early Egyptians, the cavemen of Chauvet and indigenous artists in Australia who also left their hand stencils on rock surfaces 20,000 years ago. These marks document their presence, not necessarily as recognisable portraits but as manifestations of a desire to create images and make a record of their lives on earth. Look at this website for more in depth information about western European ways of looking at oneself.


Lucian Freud was dedicated to working from life, rather than using photographs for his paintings. Born in Berlin, the grandson of Sigmund Freud, he moved to Britain aged ten, studying first at Central School of Arts and Crafts and then the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing, under Cedric Morris. Their two self-portraits have points in common if one considers the way the paint is applied. Freud paints the human body with a direct and critical gaze, often from disconcerting angles. The artist said, “as far as I am concerned, the paint is the person. I want it to work for me just as the flesh does”. William Feaver, Lucian Freud (Tate Publishing, London, 2002), p.47.
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Both details here show how the artists use the physicality of the paint to create the illusion of skin and wool. There is an almost sculptural feel to the surface of the paintings that can be sensed even from looking at reproductions.

Definitions/Discussion Points

- Advertising in this context is a demonstration of an artist’s style and skill that can be shown to prospective clients.
- Analysis here could be an exploration of the artist’s face, body and personality. In psychological terms it means an investigation into the workings of someone’s mind.
- Authorship is an historical record of the person that made it, left behind for posterity, often written but also drawn or painted by that particular person.
- An autobiography is a journal or book documenting a person’s life.
- Availability – a way to experiment with pose and technique using a readily available model.

Key words


Questions

- Do you have a group of close friends?
- How would you identify yourself on your own and with them?
- Could you draw a diagram that shows how you all relate to each other?
- Do you know what a family tree is?
- Think of ways that groups identify themselves publicly, for example, football fans or other specialist groups who may use tattoos, clothing.
- What does wearing badges, uniforms or special clothes say about you?
- Can you make a list of tribes, in other words the names we give to particular groups of people? For example; Chavs, Hippies, Goths.
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Investigate YOURSELF: even more discussion points

- Why do you think artists make self-portraits?
- Does your DNA give a self-portrait of you? What does DNA look like? (Look at the portrait of Sir John Edward Sulston NPG 6591 to give you some idea).
- Do you know how many teeth you have? What are your hands like?
- Do you believe in palmistry? What do your hands say about you?
- Which symbols would you use to represent yourself in a photograph? (Look at her self-portrait in ‘Single-breasted Suit with Hare’ by Sam Taylor-Wood NPG 959 for ideas).
- Discuss what you might call an alternative portrait, for example, what type of ‘portrait’ does your Facebook account give of you in the way that it links across to your friends and beyond?


Dame Edith Sitwell (1887-1964) by John Banting (1902-1972), gouache, 1944. NPG5962
1: IMAGE AND IDENTITY

Identity and self-portraiture

Chris Ofili (1968-) self-portrait, oil on canvas, 1991. NPG 6835
© Chris Ofili, courtesy Victoria Miro Gallery, London; with help from Laura and Barry Townsley and Janet de Botton

Barbara Hepworth, self-portrait, oil and pencil on board, 1950. NPG 5919
© Alan Bowness, Hepworth estate
1: IMAGE AND IDENTITY

**Activity**

**Art Project 1**

- **a.** Make shadow shapes on a large piece of paper pinned to the wall, do this by playing around with a spotlight, and get a partner to trace around your outline. Join the figures up to make a larger collection of silhouettes.

- **b.** Get a roller and some water-based printing ink, ink up your writing hand. Make different prints of your hand, onto acetate. Place the acetate on an overhead projector and project the image onto the first piece of paper. Retrace the printed lines, using them to fill in the figures. Decide if this is a self-portrait.

**Art Project 2**

- **a.** Make paper prints of your hand, and look at an Asian signature stamp, invent your own. Discuss the importance of a signature in an artwork or letter. See James Abbott McNeill Whistler’s (1834-1903) portrait NPG D1400 and find out more about him and his special signature.

- **b.** Draw your face over your hand print. Compare your work with Roland Penrose’s ‘superimposed name’ portrait, NPG 6388. Consider how it relates to the gouache of Dame Edith Sitwell by John Banting, NPG 5962. Look at what a difference it makes when artists show themselves and others in profile or with the head cropped to fit a long, thin space like the image by Chris Ofili (NPG 6835). Does this suggest that there is something missing from the work or does this help us feel the mystery of the personality?
Introduction

Marc Quinn’s self-portrait uses his own blood to form a frozen life mask, the cast took several pints of his blood to form. Described by Quinn as a frozen moment on life support, the work is carefully maintained in a refrigeration unit, and this reminds the viewer of the fragility of existence – if the power is turned off the portrait will liquefy and turn into a pool of blood. The artist makes a new version of “Self” every five years, each of which documents Quinn’s own aging process.

William Blake’s life cast portrait was by a sculptor and phrenologist called James Deville who was employed as a young assistant by Joseph Nollekens from whom no doubt he learned the technique of taking life-masks with the help of straws to prevent suffocation. The mask was taken when Blake was aged fifty-six so that the phrenologist could have a cast of Blake’s head ‘as representative of the...
2: ALIVE AND DEAD

imaginative faculty’. It failed however to please his family and friends. George Richmond said that the unnatural severity of the mouth was caused by the discomforture of the process ‘as the plaster pulled out a quantity of his hair’. (see NPG1045 on our website).

This gives us another interpretation of his physical presence that is equally gloomy.

Colley Cibber appears so life-like in this painted plaster bust. A Londoner, he was a famous actor/manager who wrote comedies, poetry and an autobiography. Painted sculpture from the past is rare as the painted surface was so fragile it has often disappeared, in this unique and curious example his hat is removeable too.


Edward Collier (active 1673-1706), self-portrait, oil on canvas, 1683. NPG 6069
2: ALIVE AND DEAD

Edward Collier painted this work in 1683, he shows himself seated between his easel and a book propped up against a skull. He is about to make a mark on his canvas, showing us his active and creative presence within the imaginary world of the painting. Including a skull in his picture like this, reinforces the idea of our limited time alive, it is known as a ‘memento mori’ which means in Latin: ‘Remember you must die’.

Over three hundred years later, Sarah Lucas is doing the same thing with herself in her 1997, ‘Self-portrait with skull’. She graduated from Goldsmiths’ College, London in 1987, and became famous for exhibiting in Freeze (1988) and Charles Saatchi’s Young British Artists II (1993) and Sensation (1997). A friend of Tracy Emin, she uses photography, collage and found objects and examines gender issues in her work. Some of her recent sculptures are made from stuffed flesh-coloured tights.

See this link to view another ‘memento mori’ painting by a follower of Jan van Scorel, c.1535, see: http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/follower-of-jan-van-scorel-a-man-with-a-pansy-and-a-skull


Edward Collier (active 1673-1706), self-portrait, oil on canvas, 1683. NPG 6069
Watts’s painting ‘Choosing’, is a delicate yet sensuous portrait showing the seventeen-year-old Terry choosing between the camellias, which despite their luscious appearance have little scent, and the violets in her hand which are far humbler in appearance but smell sweeter. The choice, which is symbolic of that between worldly vanities and higher virtues, had a personal significance for the artist and the sitter. 1864 was the year in which Terry gave up the stage to marry Watts, (thirty years her senior), and to be educated by him. The marriage lasted barely a year, and despite Watts’s disapproval, Terry eventually returned to the stage. The post card shows her in one of her most celebrated roles, that of Lady Macbeth. She poses in the famous dress designed for her, that incorporated shimmering beetle wings, she also wears it in the Sargent (1856-1925) portrait of her.
Dame (Alice) Ellen Terry (1847-1928)
Actress by Unknown artist, plaster cast of death-mask, after 1928. NPG 3657.

Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth in
‘Macbeth’ by William Henry Grove,
printed and published by Window & Grove, platinum print, 1888; published 1906. NPG Ax131311

See:
http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sargent-ellen-terry-as-lady-macbeth-n02053
http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/smallhythe-place/things-to-see-and-do/for-groups/
2: ALIVE AND DEAD

Definitions/Discussion Points

- The average human has between ten and twelve pints of blood in their body. You can donate blood every 16 weeks (roughly every four months) and regular donors can donate up until they are 70 years of age. During most blood donations, approximately 470ml (just under one pint) of blood is taken. This amount is only 10-12% of an adult’s blood supply, and the body is able to replace it very quickly.
- Phrenology is the study of the outer shape of the skull, based on the now outdated belief that this can tell us about the character and mental capacity of the person to whom it belongs.
- ‘Being alive’ is the physiological opposite of being dead.
- ‘Memento mori’ is Latin for ‘Remember you must die’
- Food, water, sleep and oxygen keep the body alive.

Key words

Cast, plaster, bronze, mould, impression, expression, hairline, facelift, filtrum, facial hair, face mole, headrest, iconography, celebrity, facial features, medium, sculpture, plasticine, phrenology, measurement, physiognomy.

Questions

- What would you fill a mould of your own head with?
- Do you like the idea of having a life or/and death mask? Why do you think that these were made?
- How important are open eyes in portraiture – painted or sculpted?
- How do you think people know how to tell the difference between someone sleeping and someone dead?
- Can you be dead with your eyes open?
- If you had to choose between being a famous actor or a quiet life living in the countryside, what would you choose and why?
- How would you symbolise the two things you love to do if you were to make a painting, a drawing or a photograph of yourself choosing between them?
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2: ALIVE AND DEAD

Activity

Art Project 1

a. Find out where your local cemetery is and go to visit it on a sunny day. Make notes about what you see – the layout, the sculpture, the dates and symbols on the grave stones, the types of plants growing and the wild life you notice.

b. Design your own headstone or one for someone that you admire or use the cemetery as a setting for a series of photographs.

Art Project 2

a. Without looking in a mirror, make a drawing of your face just using your hands to feel the surface and the structure: the dips and bumps, hairline, chin and location of eyes, nose, mouth and ears.

b. Now make a wire frame of the shape of your face and build up with papier-mâché a surface that refers to your own face in the best way that you can. This will not be a perfect rendition of you, but it will be a kind of self-portrait and one that tells something about the physical rather than the mental picture that you have of yourself. Traditionally papier-mâché is made by mixing water and flour together and adding torn strips of paper to constitute a moldable pulp. You could also make a more immediate and alternative portrait head using plasticine.
3: MIRRORS, FRAGMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

Important Link

This link will take you to all the pictures in the National Portrait Gallery that portray mirrors in portraits, see: http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait-list.php?search=ap&firstRun=true&title=&npgno=&Date=&lDate=&medium=&subj=2003%20%3BAccessory&subSubject=64%20%3B%20Mirrors%20and%20reflections&set=&searchCatalogue=&submitSearchTerm.x=40&submitSearchTerm.y=12

Gerlach Flicke (active 1554-died 1558) and Henry Strangwish or Strangways (died 1562), by Gerlach Flicke, oil on paper or vellum, laid in panel, 1554. NPG 6353

Angela Gorgas (1948- ) self-portrait, bromide print, 1973. NPG x133043 © Angela Gorgas
Introduction

Mirrors, or any reflective surface – puddles, windows in sunlight, hub caps or spoons – are essential to self-portraiture if an artist is trying to achieve some kind of likeness. Self-image isn’t always necessarily about likeness but in portraits generally it is one of the aspects that artists are conscious of tackling in their work. When looking into a mirror, we don’t exactly see ourselves as others do – there are issues of scale and reversal (see artist Ron Bowen’s self-portrait resource, see: http://www.npg.org.uk/learning/digital/portraiture/drawing-self-portraits.php) – but a reflective surface can help to define one kind of self-image. Angela Gorgas’s reflection in the mirror is an equivalent to Gerlach Flicke’s image: he holds his palette in his right hand, and described his self-portrait like this, ‘Such was the face of Gerlach Flicke when he was a painter in the City of London. This he himself painted from a looking-glass for his dear friends. That they might have something by which to remember him after his death.’ Gorgas holds her camera between her hands, obscuring some of her face, but recording the room behind her and her equipment.

Cecil Beaton made hundreds of self-portraits, including mirrors in many of them. This particular image shows his self-portrait painting and a reflection of him holding a camera as he takes the picture.


3: MIRRORS, FRAGMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

Unlike the Beaton and de Grey images, both Chadwick and Yevonde record themselves posing at an angle to the mirror. The background to their portraits gives a context for their self-portrait; Chadwick shows us her ICA exhibition and Yevonde, the paraphernalia of the dark room. Both artists manipulate the frame as compositional device. These works are discussed on pages 69 and 64 in another gallery resource, see: Portrait Photography from the Victorians to the present day. Zoom in: http://www.npg.org.uk/learning/digital/teachers-notes/teachers-resources-art.php
(see: http://www.npg.org.uk/assets/files/pdf/learning/learning_zoom_in.pdf)


Madame Yevonde (1893-1985), 1940. NPG P620 © Yevonde Portrait Archive.
Definitions/Discussion points
- Mirrors have remained a key tool in the artist’s studio.
- Sometimes in a self-portrait, the mirror becomes invisible, having stood between the artist and his or her image, with the reflection from within the mirror translated onto the canvas. In looking at these pictures we assume the position of the artist facing his or her own reflection.
- Mirrors have been associated with both vanity and self-knowledge.
- Catoptric means pertaining to a mirror, reflection, or reflector.
- Mirrors as we know them started being produced in sixteenth century Venice, Italy. Sheets of glass were back-coated with an amalgam of tin and mercury to create a reflective surface.

Key words
Glass, mercury, reflect, refract, looking glass, speculum, surface, imitation, polished metal, heliography, cheval mirror, copy, echo, repeat, emulate, parallel, concave, convex, cylindrical, overmantle, distortion.

Questions
- It is said that ‘the mirror is the window to the soul’, and apparently ‘a broken mirror brings bad luck’, why might this be and why do you think these sayings exist?
- Discuss the saying, ‘Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?’
- What type of mirror do you use most frequently and for what purpose?
- Have you ever bought a mirror? How big was/is it?
- How many mirrors exist in your home?
- If you polish the surface of a kettle and then look into it, what happens to your reflection?
- What happens when you hold one mirror in front of another? Discuss the concept of infinity.
3: MIRRORS, FRAGMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

Activity

Art Project 1

a. Design the perfect mirror to contain your reflection. Will it be square, portrait, oval or round in shape?

b. Do another drawing that shows the location for your mirror – you can put it anywhere and for any type of use.

Art Project 2

a. Use a mirror to make your own photographic portrait and then draw a portrait following the Masterclass by artist Ron Bowen, see: http://www.npg.org.uk/learning/digital/portraiture/drawing-self-portraits.php

b. Now make a painting from your drawing using colours that you feel reflect your personality. To give the work a slightly surreal touch, you could use a distorted mirror or reflective surface such as a spoon instead of an ordinary mirror or try drawing yourself with the hand you do not usually write with.
**4: MAKING PAINTED PORTRAITS, TECHNIQUE AND ANALYSIS**

**Introduction**

Artists have been making portraits of people from the first time they discovered that they could use burnt twigs to draw with. Using black and white meant that they could start to produce artefacts that had shading and the illusion of a third dimension. Naturally in the beginning these works were primitive, but as civilization developed, so did the ability to make more complicated materials and when they started to experiment with oils, natural pigments and resins, their work could become more sophisticated. The Renaissance is generally taken to be the period of time when painting developed to a high standard and at this time we see magnificent portraits being painted.

Talented artists, some of whom might be called painters of genius such as Leonardo da Vinci, Hans Holbein, Albrecht Dürer, Artemisia Gentileschi and Rogier Van de Weyden created images of people that we can still appreciate and identify today, long before the invention of photography, film or television. The works in this section were painted during the twentieth century which saw the birth of abstraction art movement that also influenced the art of portraiture. One could call the portrait of Alan Rawsthorne an ‘abstract portrait’ in that it is not a recognisable likeness but gives an atmosphere or feeling about the person portrayed in paint.

**Alan Rawsthorne** by Isabel Rawsthorne (née Nicholas), oil on canvas, 1966.
NPG 6175
Definitions/Discussion points
- Any picture or image says something about the sitter and in this way one could say that it contains a fragment of their identity.
- Pictures tell stories in ways that words do not.
- Portraits can be painted from life or from photographic records, but the ones taken from life are deemed to be better records. This is debateable.
- A portrait can be a written description of someone.
- A portrait is a likeness of a person, usually showing a face.

Key words
Shape, colour, size, features, nose, mouth, eyes, cheeks, ears, expression, age, gender, material, visage, face lighting, shadows, thin/thick paint, impasto, size, colour, manipulation, process, examination, catalogue, style, original, copy, nuance, accurate, prototype, pastiche, genuine, original, signature, oeuvre, genre, provenance, authentic, fake, forgery, connoisseurship, pentimenti.

Questions
- Can you say what you feel the artist is trying to say about a sitter’s identity and how do they do this?
- Consider the visual vocabulary of one of the portraits in this resource. Which is the most important feature – the nose/mouth/eyes/cheeks/ears, the expression or the age, gender or clothing of the sitter?
- Have you chosen someone we know or think we know – a friend, someone famous or in our family or ourselves?
- Is it a good likeness? Would we recognise the person from their portrait?
- When was it produced? Why was it produced? Who made it? Did it take a long time to create?
- What is it made of and what sort of technique was used? Look at the use of line, colour, tone, pattern, texture and form.
- Does artists’ work evolve over time and if so, how can we tell if their style of painting changes?
Image and Identity

4: Making Painted Portraits, Technique and Analysis

Activity

Art Project 1

a. Choose a portrait that appeals to you in some way and make a drawing of it and the frame that surrounds it.

b. Annotate your portrait with the following key points: Name the sitter and the date it was made and who made it. Now invent the rest of the information about that person in the same manner as an NPG label. If you do not know the identity of the person portrayed, invent that also.

Art Project 2

a. Make another portrait and write about the relationship between the artist and the sitter or else create a story about their relationship.

b. Make this portrait either a private or a public depiction by indicating specific ‘tell tale’ things within the portrait setting like; clothing/jewellery/glasses/hairstyle…the pose (profile? seated? full length?) of the individual and their expression.
**IN SHARP FOCUS**

Two painted self-portraits by Henry Lamb (1883-1960) and Jessica Dismorr (1885-1939)

In the painting by Henry Lamb, we can see the different effects of paint on wood panel. If scrutinised closely, the bare wood showing through can be seen to act like another colour within the portrait. The dark background makes his head stand out and seem to glow, almost like a light bulb: the light hitting the head very noticeably from the left hand side of the painted panel. There is what is known as ‘pentimenti’ on the section where his left shoulder is indicated, and we can perceive where he drew his original outline. The bottom section of the portrait appears sketched in, making the top part appear completely finished and resolved, drawing our attention to focus on his head. Unpainted wood can be seen around the eye which is sharply delineated by the sole use of burnt umber – a dark brown paint that is purposefully not black, which would be too strong note within the composition. The specific directions of the individual brush strokes can be easily seen and he uses them together with the texture (plasticity) of the paint to render the features. The slightly greenish tinge to the shadows on the head recall an Impressionist method of working, white highlights also occur on the ear, the nose, the eyeball and iris.

**Henry Lamb**
(1883-1960),
self-portrait, oil on panel, 1914. NPG 4432
4: MAKING PAINTED PORTRAITS, TECHNIQUE AND ANALYSIS
IN SHARP FOCUS  (continued)

Two painted self-portraits by Henry Lamb (1883-1960) and Jessica Dismorr (1885-1939)

Contrast the painting by Lamb with that of Dismorr and the feeling of her work is altogether different: Dismorr uses a support of gesso which is a smooth white plaster covering on board, this surface is used as a foil for an equally tight range of colours, her palette is all orange browns, blues and greys which show up to good effect against the white background. We can see the pencil marks that outline her portrait and her important position within the studio (her whole body takes up most of the space of the composition), two artworks are on the wall behind her. Sitting on an ordinary wooden kitchen chair she appears to be handling a book (Dismorr was also a published poet). Her expression is far away and vacant, and her head is painted in the same way as the rest of the painting, with light dabs of colour put down adjacent to each other with very little overlap, leaving much unpainted surface. The whiteness left to operate as a ‘colour’ is in its own right. Specifically directional brushstrokes can be seen on her scarf, her lower left arm and the book cover. The lightness of touch translates as a fragile translucency. Looking closely at the way that the paint is worked, it is apparent that there is a chalky feel to it, gesso is very porous and so the oil in the colours that she is using would literally be sucked out leaving this pastel impression behind on the board.

Jessica Dismorr
(1885-1939), self-portrait, oil on gesso board, 1929. NPG 6393
4: MAKING PAINTED PORTRAITS, TECHNIQUE AND ANALYSIS
Introduction

Famous people seem familiar to us because we see images of them in the media. In some ways we think we know them because we can recognise them. In this section we consider two iconic and world famous individuals, one famous by birthright and the other by achievement. The images of Queen Elizabeth II are constructed in particular ways to show us aspects of her that we might expect to see, for example royal gravitas. However, some of the portraits challenge our expectations and give us other insights into how we perceive this royal British icon. The fame of these two also affects the photographers who take and create their portraits. In the case of David Beckham, although the National Portrait Gallery owns a number of works depicting him, not one of these can be shown online due to copyright reasons. We are however permitted to reproduce a ‘free’ online portrait of him playing for the Los Angeles Galaxy team (p.30).

If we search further on the net for websites dealing with both Queen Elizabeth II and Beckham, a plethora of information and data unfolds that further bolsters their fame and simultaneously obscures the reality of their existence as ordinary humans with everyday lives.
Crowned in 1953, Queen Elizabeth II is the second longest serving British monarch. As Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth, she celebrated her Silver Jubilee in 1977 and her Golden Jubilee in 2002. Her Diamond Jubilee celebrations took place in 2012. She is perhaps the most painted and photographed sitter in the world.

David Beckham OBE was born in East London in 1975. He captained the England team for six years. Since leaving Manchester United in 2003 he has played for Real Madrid and Los Angeles Galaxy. In 1999 he married 'Spice Girl', Victoria Adams and the couple have three sons and a daughter.

These brief biographical texts are both types of portrait, giving us a factual, written, historical and contextual evocation of these personalities. The images on the other hand provide us with pictures of people whose faces are already familiar to us through mass media exposure.

Queen Elizabeth II (1926-)
by David Dawson (1960-)
C-type colour print,
2001. NPG x128062
© David Dawson
5. CELEBRITY AND ICONS

Mama Ngina; Elizabeth II (1926-); Jomo Kenyatta (circa 1889-1978) by Thomas Patrick John Anson, 5th Earl of Lichfield, cibachrome print on card mount, 1970s. NPG x29566 © Lichfield

David Beckham (1975-) image courtesy of Wikicommons

Definitions/Discussion points

• Andy Warhol said that ‘In the future everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes’. This was quoted in the catalogue for his first international retrospective exhibition at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm in February 1978.
• Public estimation, reputation and reknown are words that could describe fame.
• People can be famous or infamous, for doing ‘good’ and ‘bad’ things.
• People can be born famous – for example someone from the royal family – or else gain their fame by reputation.
• Some people that were famous in the past are completely unheard of now, fame can be known as being ‘fickle’.

Key words
Icon, celebrity, fame, paparazzi, commission, status, power, dissembling, ambition, birthright, popular, media, impression, relationship, character, hero/heroine, known, recognised, aspiration, statue, status, superstar, reputation, emblem idol, deity, god, divinity, obituary, copyright, branding.

Questions
• How would you define fame? Is being famous the same as being a celebrity? What is ‘branding’?
• What does one have to do to become famous? What would be the easiest way to become famous? Can anyone be famous?
• How can young people become famous? Are there more young or old famous people? Why would you want to be famous?
• Do we really know what famous people are like? How much of their famous persona is constructed?
• Have you ever met anyone famous? And what was it like? Did they ‘look’ famous?
• Does being famous mean adopting a particular lifestyle? What are the risks and the rewards of being famous? Is there a responsibility in being famous?
• Consider the photographs in this section and decide which ones seem purposefully posed for the camera. Does the ease of taking digital photographs today affect the way that fame is mediated or controlled? Why do you think that photographs are copyrighted?
IMAGE AND IDENTITY

5. CELEBRITY AND ICONS

Activity

Art Project 1

a. Get hold of a copy of Hello or OK magazine or an equivalent publication. Choose one of the spreads within the magazine – one that you like and that communicates something about the person featured.

b. Use this model as a template for your own feature on someone that you consider should be famous for something they have done or the exemplary life they have led. The Guardian newspaper does a written version of this idea in their obituary pages.

Art Project 2

a. Study the images of Queen Elizabeth II, in the Collection and online. If you did not know that she was famous would these images tell you anything about what made her important in our society? Compare the images to an drawing made by Hans Holbein the Younger of Henry VIII (NPG4027) at a time when there was no television, film or photography. How would you guess from this drawing that he was an important person?

b. Now make a painting of yourself or someone you know, that suggests that you/they are a very important person. Incorporate three symbols of power and status within your painting.
Introduction

Portrait caricatures can be a way of poking fun at well known people by exaggerating their facial characteristics – for example if they might have big eyes with big bags under them – such as in this image by Gerald Scarfe of the Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson. This feature is manipulated by the artist and extra attention drawn to it by focussing on the cloak that he is wearing which is gathered up and draped around his neck and gathered into his fingers. What might be just his clothing (even though it is ceremonial dress) is used to underpin the artists criticism of his looks. His whole demeanour is one of fake obsequiousness as he seems to bow and scrape. The implication is that he should not be receiving a gong as he is a SOCIALIST – this spelt out on his garter – the usual moniker of which should read: HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE, (Evil to him who evil thinks) which is the motto of the Order of the Garter that he is wearing, see: http://www.royal.gov.uk/monarchUK/honours/Orderofthegarter/orderofthegarter.aspx
Written on his coronet are the damning words, “So we all sell out in the end?”

Harold Wilson (1916-1995)
by Gerald Scarfe (1936-), pen and Indian ink, 1976. NPG 6432
© Gerald Scarfe
6. CARICATURE AND STEREOTYPES

By contrast, Prince Charles is portrayed less viciously in what looks like a discreet riding jacket and tie, however, the mockery of the image is evident if we look at his enlarged ears and pointed nose. The horse and rider next to him make a visual comment on his polo playing skills. The French caricaturist, Honoré Daumier, who also made paintings and sculpture, caricatured the life and politics of the Nineteenth Century. In this reproduction of his work we can see the furious radical politician Richard Cobden kicking someone in the pants, Daumier’s work mocks his loss of temper. Gerald Scarfe’s self-portrait demonstrates that he can poke fun at himself as well as those in power.

**Richard Cobden** (1804-1865) by Honoré Daumier (1808-1879)
lithograph, published 9 April 1856. NPG D9683

**Prince Charles** (1948-)
by Marc Boxer (1931-1988),
ink and coloured crayon, 1981.
NPG 5920(6) © estate of Mark Boxer

**Gerald Scarfe** (1936-)
NPG 6431 © Gerald Scarfe
6. CARICATURE AND STEREOTYPES

Definitions/Discussion points
- A cartoon can depict a funny scenario, often with a written caption.
- A cartoon can depict a current political situation with public figures being made fun of for their actions.
- There are animated cartoons and comic strips – sequences of drawings.
- A caricature exaggerates someone’s distinctive facial features specifically to make fun of that person.
- A caricature can be a grotesque and disturbing image.

Key words
Travesty, cartoon, humour, sequential, animation, funny, mocking, lampoon, stylistic, political, irreverent, dangerous, uncomfortable, silly, dangerous, burlesque, mean, parody, hilarity, satire, malicious.

Questions
- Discuss the difference between a cartoon and a caricature.
- Define the links between the static (printed) cartoon and the cartoon you might see on television or dvd. The unfolding narrative in the moving cartoon is only one aspect of this difference.
- What sort of materials do cartoonists use and what do you think is their style of working?
- Look at framing and composition, lighting and shadows. Discuss the type of audience that these works are made for.
- Do you think that the distortions within portrait caricatures can help identify a sitter or not? Pay attention to the features that are chosen for these distortions.
- When do you think people started creating cartoons? Consider the work of Daumier, work out what is happening in the cartoon reproduced.
- Why do you think that this genre (type) of art became and remains popular?
6. CARICATURE AND STEREOTYPES

Activity

Art Project 1

a. Cartoons appear in most daily newspapers, and can also be found online. Check out the cartoon archive at Canterbury University, see: http://www.cartoons.ac.uk/ and Steve Bell’s work at, see http://www.belltoons.co.uk/bellworks/

b. Collect cartoons from a daily newspaper, a weekly magazine and a monthly publication. Try and organise these into types of cartoon, for example are they political? What type of cartoon is most prevalent?

Art Project 2


See also the contemporary artist David Shrigley, see: http://www.davidshrigley.com/

b. Are there any similarities that you can draw from comparing the works of these artists? Choose one of them as inspiration and make your own work in a similar style. For your subject, choose an event that you have experienced or become aware of through television or the newspaper. Your chosen ‘event’ must be something that you find ridiculous or stupid or annoying.
Introduction

Everybody has a personal family history, and a family tree, even if they don’t know it. Some people can trace their ancestors, especially if these relations were famous for some reason, as fame generates information recorded in a variety of ways. Portraits provide evidence of one type with their own clues to when they were produced and for what reason. Important concerns, such as politics and religion are the issues that form history and create timelines. Diaries, such as the one written by Samuel Pepys in the seventeenth century, are a unique way of gaining insights into a period when there was no photography or film to show us what life was like then. In his diary, Pepys records on 17 March 1666: ‘I sit to have it full of shadows and so almost break my neck looking over my shoulders to make the posture for him to work by’. There were more sittings on 20, 23, 28 and 30 March, when he sat ‘till almost quite darke upon working my gowne which I hired to be drawne in; an Indian gowne’. Pepys paid Hayls £14 for the picture and 25s for the frame on 16 May, commenting that he was ‘well satisfied’ with it. The music he holds is his own setting of a lyric by Sir William Davenant, ‘Beauty, retire’. In our time digital records exist of everything imaginable, with different ways of telling histories.
7. HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Tinie Tempah, a musician of Nigerian descent, makes his own stories come alive by reiterating his words to music. His digital recordings could be seen to be a kind of contemporary equivalent to the diaries of Pepys. His rapping gives a flavour of the concerns of a first generation Nigerian immigrant living in London in the twenty-first century. ‘I’m an average, regular guy from South London… On every single song you’ll get a line that reveals what life was, and is, like for me. I recorded a lot of it after “Pass Out” went to No.1, so that gave me a chance to reflect on life before and after achieving success. When I’m in the studio, it’s just me in my tracksuit, a bottle of water and my thoughts. Going to No.1 gave me a chance to consider how far I’ve come, but also how far I intend to go … People are interested in who we are and where we come from, so let’s be proud of that and make music that represents us properly’, see: http://www.tinietempah.com/biog/

Tinie Tempah
(Patrick Chukwuemeka Okogwu)
(1988-) by Nadav Kander (1961-)
archival pigment print, 2011.
NPG x134919 © Nadav Kander; courtesy Flowers Galleries
7. HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Definitions/Discussion points
- History is a chronological record of events.
- A biography is someone’s written life story.
- An autobiography is when someone writes their own life story.
- Hagiography is a biography that idealizes or idolizes someone, especially a person who is a saint.
- A profile is a biographical sketch of someone.

Key-words
Chronology, gender, race, relationships, chronicle, history, similarities, differences, memoir, contingent, dependent, time and place, psychological, cultural, factors, record, C.V.

Questions
- How do you think you are seen by others?
- How do you see yourself?
- Which aspects of yourself do you think were inherited genetically – your gender, personality and race?
- What about aspects that we decide for ourselves? How we dress, how we style our hair, talk to people and present ourselves?
- Who would you like to be or have been?
- How much of this is contingent and dependent on time and place, your education and psychological and cultural factors?
- How much do you think personalities change due to our complex and changing world. Do you think personalities are moulded by this state of flux?

Activity

Art Project 1
a. Choose a person you admire or invent one. Fold an A3 piece of paper into four sections and draw a portrait of this person in the first rectangle and in the second a picture of their family tree.

b. In the other two, write notes about their character, and in the final section discuss their life story and whatever made them famous.

Art Project 2
a. Ask a relative if they will sit for their portrait.

b. When you have drawn/painted/taken a photograph or made a film of them, interview them about their life and the most important things that they have experienced.
8. FILM PORTRAITS: The biopic

Artists and famous people on screen

A small selection of films that celebrate and dramatise the lives and attitudes of artists and famous people:

- **Francis Bacon** ‘Love is the Devil, Study for a portrait of Francis Bacon’. Directed in 1998 by John Maybury.
- **Frida Khalo** ‘Frida’. Directed in 2002 by Julie Taymor.
- **Thomas Becket** ‘Becket’ Directed in 1964 by Peter Glenville.
- **Dora Carrington** and **Lytton Strachey**, ‘Carrington’ Directed in 1995 by Christopher Hampton.
- **Queen Victoria**, ‘The Young Victoria’ Directed by Jean-Marc Vallée.
More information

The following websites have a wonderful selection of self-portraits on view, some with the ‘Zoomify’ facility which means that minute and secret painterly details can be appreciated on screen.

Metropolitan Museum, New York, www.metmuseum.org
The Frick, New York, www.frick.org
John Ashbury’s poem inspired by Parmigianino’s self-portrait, www.people.virginia.edu/
Van Gogh’s self-portraits, www.vangoghmuseum.nl
The National Galleries of Scotland, www.nationalgalleries.org/