

Lesson Plan: Texture in Relief-Print Portraits

Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Suggested Grade Level: 7-12

Estimated Time: Two to three class periods

Introduction

In this lesson plan, students will use Elizabeth's Catlett's *Sharecropper* for inspiration to create relief-print portraits.

Lesson Objectives

- Learn how to make a relief print
- Use a range of marks to suggest texture in a work of art

Key Terms

- relief
- relief printing
- brayer
- texture
- impression
- portrait

Instructional Materials

- Pencils
- Drawing paper
- Mounted or unmounted linoleum or Speedball Speedy Cut® (available at most art-supply stores)
- Cutting tools
- Bench hook (available at most art-supply stores)
- Printmaking paper
- Water-based printing inks
- Brayers
- Glass or Plexiglas inking surface
- Wooden spoons
- Drying rack or clothesline and clothespins

Procedures

Discussion

- Provide students with a printout of *Sharecropper* and discuss the image with them, asking:
 - How old does this woman appear to be? How can you tell?
 - What might her clothing tell us about her?
 - Where are we standing?
 - What might she be feeling? How can you tell?
- Discuss the concept of texture, asking:
 - What sorts of textures are visible in the painting?
 - How did the artist suggest these textures?

Activity

- Have students draw a portrait of someone they admire using pencils and drawing paper. Encourage them to begin by making a bold, linear design and then filling the paper with various marks (dots, dashes, and lines) to lend texture to the portrait.
- Tell students to cover the back of the drawing with pencil until it is completely black, then instruct them to place the drawing face up on the linoleum plate and trace it firmly with pencil.
- Have students use the tools provided to cut their designs into the linoleum plate.
- Show students how to place a few tablespoons of ink on the glass and use a brayer to spread the ink evenly over the surface. When the brayer is inked, have students roll it over the plate until it is evenly covered.
- Ask students to lay a sheet of paper on the plate and apply pressure by rubbing a spoon over the paper. Before removing the paper completely, students can lift a corner, replace it, and rub again until the desired impression is achieved.
- Have students repeat the process for five to ten additional sheets, applying more ink to the plate for each print. Dry the prints on a drying rack or clothesline.
- Encourage students to add broad areas of watercolor to their portraits.
- Show students how to sign, date, and number each of their prints in the lower right corner.

Evaluation

Base evaluation on students' creative work.

Follow-Up

Hang the prints in an exhibition and encourage students to exchange impressions.

Glossary

brayer (n)

a printer's hand-inking roller

impression (n)

one of a number of prints made from the same plate at different times

portrait (n)

the likeness of a person (especially a face) in a work of art, such as a painting, drawing, sculpture, or photograph

relief (n)

a three-dimensional figure or object that projects from the flat surface on which it is formed, as in sculpture or printmaking

relief printing (v)

printing from a raised surface, as in woodcut or linoleum-block printing

Illinois Learning Standards

Fine Arts: 25, 26