Lesson/Activity: Emotional Self-Portraits

Level:

1st grade and up

Suggested Time:

Discussion time plus 30 minutes (1st-2nd) to 1 hour (3rd-5th) for artwork

Objective(s):

Students will:

1. analyze and discuss the use of emotion in storytelling and paintings.
2. create a self-portrait that communicates a chosen emotion.
3. interpret and communicate ideas about emotions depicted in personal artwork and the artwork of others.

Materials/Tools:

Drawing paper
Pencils
Color media such as crayons, markers, and/ or colored pencils

Preparation:

After reading Grandfather Gandhi, discuss the range of emotions expressed in Arun’s character, as well as in other characters. How did he feel arriving at the Sevagram? How did he feel about his grandfather? How did he feel around the other boys? Ask the students if they have ever felt that way and what made them feel like that. Look at Evan Turk’s illustrations and discuss how he captured Arun’s emotions in his illustrations. How does Arun’s facial features change?

Look at artists who depict people showing emotions, such as Vincent van Gogh’s self-portraits, Edvard Munch’s The Scream, and Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa. Discuss how facial features change when people express different emotions. Have students mimic different emotions and discuss what happens to their mouths, eyes, and
eyebrows. For example, when someone is happy, their eyes are open, their eyebrows up, and their mouth is curved upward.

**PROCEDURE:**

Have students choose an emotion to depict in their self-portrait. Using a pencil or a black crayon, have students draw a large oval for their head. Next draw the eyes (the eyes should be in the center of the oval). Pay attention to how your eyes look if you are happy, sad, frustrated, etc. If possible, let them look at mirrors while drawing themselves. Continue drawing the eyebrows, nose, mouth, ears, neck, and hair. Before coloring in the self-portraits, discuss how colors are related to emotion. For example, blue is associated with sadness, pink with happiness, red with anger, and green with envy. Have students choose colors that relate to their emotion. When finished, hang up all pictures and have a gallery show. View/guess/discuss the emotions being shown.

**VOCABULARY:**

A self-portrait is a picture one creates of one’s self. A portrait is a picture one creates of another person.

**RESOURCES:**

*Grandfather Gandhi* by Arun Gandhi and Bethany Hegedus, illustrated by Evan Turk. Various portraits and self-portraits, such as Leonardo Da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*, Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*, and Vincent van Gogh’s self portraits

**POINTERs/ PITFALLs:**

Students, especially older ones, can often spend hours erasing and re-drawing until it is perfect, especially if they are drawing themselves. To avoid this, you may want to forgo pencils and just use crayon. Capturing the emotion is more important than making your picture look exactly like you.

**VARIATIONS:**

Students could include images or text around their self-portrait of the things that make them feel that emotion.