John Singer Sargent, Mrs. Edward Goetz, 1901

INTRODUCTION

Mrs. Edward Goetz is a beautiful example of a portrait painting created by John Singer Sargent. Sargent painted with a realistic perspective that never failed to capture his subject's unique identity. His carefully crafted portraits also provide a lens into the lives of his subjects, and shed light on the society they represent.

GOALS

Students will be able to:

- Use visual evidence to draw conclusions about the subject and context of a painting
- Identify artistic choices and infer the reasoning behind them
- Create original artistic and/or literary works inspired by the painting

LOOK AND DISCUSS

- Portraits not only capture an individual's appearance, but they can also tell us about the sitter's lifestyle, social standing, and personal interests. How would you describe Mrs. Edward Goetz based on her expression, posture, and clothing?
- Did you notice how Sargent painted Mrs. Goetz looking directly at the viewer. How would your experience with the painting change if she was looking elsewhere?
- What textures can you identify within the artwork?
- Would you rather sit for a painted or a photographed portrait, and why?

CONTINUE THE STORY

During John Singer Sargent's lifetime, photographed portraits became increasingly popular. Sitting for a photograph was quicker, cheaper, and arguably more true to life. As technology advanced, some photographers wanted to promote photography from its status as a commercial or scientific tool to a fine art medium. These artists, known as Pictorialists, captured creative and expressive scenes paying careful attention to artistic elements, like composition and lighting. Similar to a painted portrait, a photographed portrait could reflect the subject's personality and interests.

ACTIVITY #1: PHOTOGRAPHED PORTRAIT

Materials: Paper, pencils, a camera, butcher paper and crayons or colored pencils (optional)

Subject Areas: Visual Arts, Language Arts

Duration: 60 minutes

After discussing various elements of portraits such as background, clothing, and props, stage your own photographed portrait. First, choose who you will represent in the photo: yourself, someone you know, a historical figure, etc. Include at least three details (props, poses, costumes, backgrounds, frames, etc.), then give your audience some information about your identity. Then, have your picture taken! Write an exhibition label to accompany your portrait with a short paragraph about who you are and why you selected each detail (scan QR code for template).

ACTIVITY #2: A HISTORICAL NARRATIVE FOR MRS. GOETZ

Materials: Internet, paper and pencil

Subject Areas: Visual Arts, Language Arts, Social Studies

Duration: 60 minutes

Your journal entries should be written in the first person, as if you were Mrs. Goetz. Dates and locations should be included to add to the authenticity of the narrative. You should also incorporate details and inferences about Mrs. Goetz from your discussion of her portrait. How did the artwork inspire your journal entry? The length of the entry should be sufficient to thoroughly and imaginatively explore the chosen event or figure. Entries may be shared with a partner or displayed on a bulletin board in the classroom.

Optional: To align with grade-level curriculum, invite students to consider what was going on in the United States or even in the Utah region during the same time period. Who might Mrs. Goetz have met on a trip to these places?

ASSESSMENT

Assessment for this lesson may include group discussion, group reflection, or individual presentation of completed projects. The activity “Photographed Portrait” allows students to integrate their personality and personal interests. The activity “A Historical Narrative for Mrs. Goetz” can be used to expand creative imagination in literary form, practice perspective-taking, and inspire responses to historical events and themes.