

## Blind-Contour Portraits



Lesson developed by artist, Alexander White

**Objective**

Students will work with a partner to strengthen their observational and visual art skills through a blind-contour portrait activity. Additionally, students will experiment with positive affirmations.

**Age** Kindergarten/1st Grade and up

**Time** 45 mins

**Focus** Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Group Work, Identity and Affirmation, Visual Art (Line, Space, Form)

**Material**

- Crayons
- White paper

**Core Standards**

- Social Emotional Competency: Self Management - Set plans and work towards goals.
- Visual Arts: Creating - Engage in exploration and imaginative play with various arts materials.

(See below for a full list of standards.)

**Opening (5 mins)**

Assign students to a partner. Distribute paper and crayons to each student.

Give an overview of the activity.

- *We will be drawing portraits of each other but we won't be allowed to look at the paper while we are drawing!*

Next, ask students to discuss the questions below with their partner.

- *What do you do when you draw something?*
- *Imagine if your eyes were closed and you had to draw something that your partner described to you. Do you think you could do it?*
- *Today each of you will draw a portrait of your partner but with a twist. You can NOT look down at your paper while you draw them. You may only look at your partner and draw exactly what you see. This is called blind-contour drawing.*
- *Additionally, you have to keep your crayon on the paper the whole time so that the portrait is made up of one long line. Want to try? It'll be fun!*
- *Note: students can draw each other at the same time. Since they are not looking down at the paper it should be easy for both artists to capture one another while drawing.*

### **Instruction and Guided Practice (3-Step Activity)**

#### **Part One - Drawing (15 mins)**

**Step 1:** *Take your piece of paper and choose a crayon color you want to use to draw your partner's face.*

**Step 2:** *Sit facing across from your partner. Remember, each partner can draw one another at the same time. Since you can't look down at your paper you should be able to look at each other at the same time while drawing. Try not to move your head too much!*

**Step 3:** *Start by drawing one of your partner's eyes. With your crayon touching the paper, slowly draw across the eye and then draw down to your partner's nose. Next, move to drawing their lips, across the lips and down to the chin. Draw, but **don't look!** Try not to pick up your pencil. The line will be continuous.*

**Step 4:** *Follow the chin down to the neck and hair.*

**Step 5:** *Once you have completed one side of their face, you can start drawing the other side of their face with a new line. Begin by drawing the other eye and continue down to the chin, up to the ear and up along the hairline.*

- *You may use a different color if you'd like.*
- *But remember, **don't look** at the page until you are all done!*

#### **Part Two - Personality Embellishment (10 mins)**

**Step 6:** *Now that you have the beginning of your partner's face drawn, take a look at the artwork of famous artist, Jean-Michel Basquiat (**Show examples to the class. See photo examples on the resource page.**)*

- *You'll notice that the artist used props like crowns and halos to change the image of the person he was drawing. These extra embellishments add personality to your subject.*

- Ask your partner which prop they would like to have to represent them – a crown or halo? Or choose something different and totally unique to them.

**Step 7:** Draw the prop on your portrait. If you chose a crown or a halo, you could draw it on their head. Or, change it up and draw it somewhere else. Maybe, the crown fell off your partner's head and is on the ground of your drawing. You choose.

### **Closing (5 mins)**

Ask students to reveal their artwork to their partner. They can also show their partner which props they chose to incorporate into their drawing and why.

### **Extension**

2nd-5th Grade: Add this step following Part Two in Guided Practice. This is a great add-on for older students learning how to write words or sentences.

### **Part Three - Identity Affirmation (10 mins)**

- Words and language also play an important role in Basquiat's work. He combines words and symbols in his paintings to tell stories. **(Show examples to the class. See photo examples on the resource page.)**

**Step 8:** With that in mind, pick any two words that **compliment your partner OR describe things they love.**

- You can brainstorm with your partner and ask them a few words that represent who they are, or you can choose the words for them. Be kind!
- Word examples: SMART, FUNNY, KIND, SOCCER, QUEEN, COOL, BASKETBALL, etc.

**Step 9:** Write them on the page.

- Write the words anywhere on the page that you think would look best. It could be on the bottom, top or on the sides. You choose! Have fun with it and feel free to be silly or funny!
- You can also incorporate other symbols like (+ = # !) to enhance your words. For example if your partner's name is Sam, you could write **Sam=Cool!**

## **Philosophy**

Art is an essential tool for early childhood development. Studies have shown that art education helps to increase comprehension of STEM and literacy concepts as well as offering students an outlet to process trauma, develop self-discipline and self-management, and interpersonal relationship skills. Active engagement in the arts can yield positive benefits in social and emotional growth. The art lessons developed by Crayon Collection are meant to support this growth.

## **Standards**

### **Common Core Standards**

#### **Speaking and Listening**

6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

### **Social Emotional Competencies**

#### **Self Management**

- Set plans and work towards goals
- Display grit, determination and perseverance

#### **Relationship Management**

- Exhibit cooperative learning and working toward group goals

### **Visual Arts Standards**

#### **Creating**

- 1.1 Engage in exploration and **imaginative play** with various arts **materials**.
- 1.2 Engage **collaboratively** in creative artmaking in response to an artistic problem.
- 2.1 Through experimentation, build skills in various **media** and approaches to artmaking.

#### **Responding**

- 7.2 Describe what an **image** represents.

#### **Connecting**

10. Create **art** that tells a story about a life experience.

### **About the Artist**

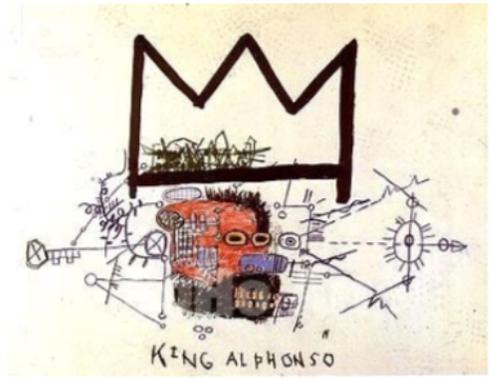
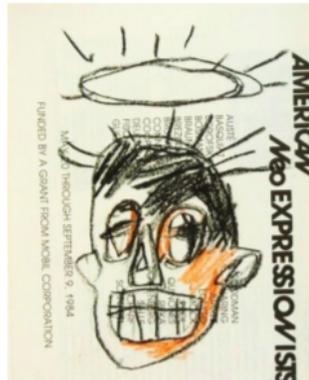
Alexander White graduated from Bard College with a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts. He also studied Figure Drawing at Circle Artistic de Sant Lluc in Barcelona and Spring Studio. His work has been featured in numerous exhibitions including the Chainlink Gallery and Giant Robot Gallery in Los Angeles, the Skylight Projects, Spring Studio, and LaViola Bank Gallery in New York, and the Beauchamp Club in London. His films have also been featured at the New York City Independent Film Festival, Atlanta Film Festival, and Vancouver Film Festival, among others.

**Additional Resource**

**Step 1 - Blind Contour Drawing: Draw your partner without looking at the paper.**



**Step 2 - Add a symbol to your drawing like a halo, crown or hat. Decide which symbol best represents your partner and add it to your drawing.**

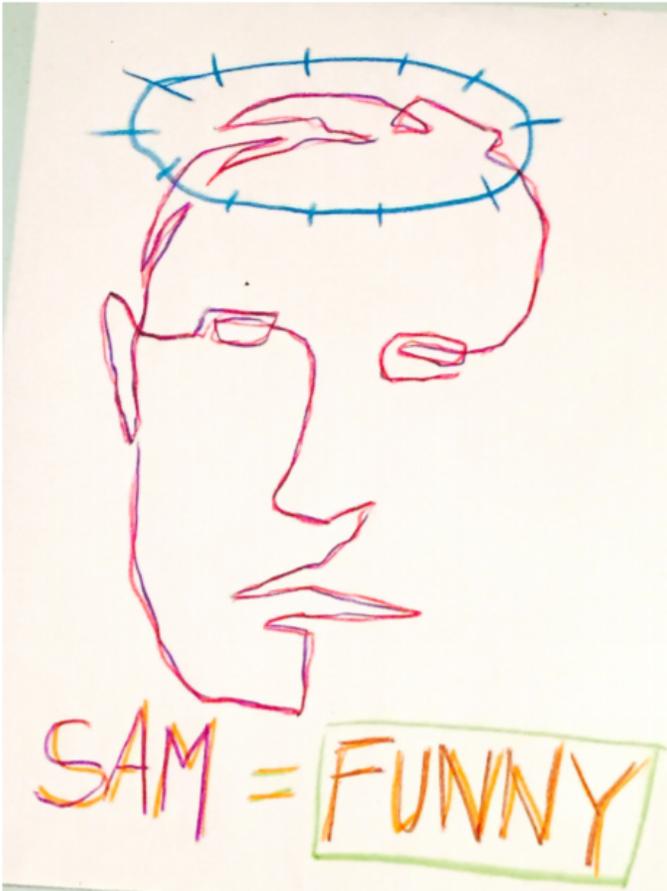




# CRAYON COLLECTION

COLLECT -> CONTRIBUTE -> CREATE

Do you see how the symbols like a crown and the descriptive words express more about your partner than the portrait does alone?



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