

Identity Portraits

Objective: Students will interview and create portraits of each other, highlighting aspects of identity.

Topics & Keywords for Discussion:

Identity- the distinguishing character or personality of an individual.

Culture- the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group.

Symbol- a shape or sign used to represent something

Portrait- a painting, drawing, photograph, or engraving of a person

Materials: Pencils, paper, colored pencils, oil pastels/crayons

Opening activity: Alliteration Name Game- students can play this game seated at their tables. Instructor will introduce themselves FIRST by saying an ADJECTIVE that describes them, beginning with the same letter or sound as their name. EXAMPLE: "Hi! I'm Creative Casandra!" They'll then ask another student to introduce THEMSELF with an ADJECTIVE that shares the same letter as THEIR first name, and pass it on until everyone in the room has introduced themselves. You might have students RAISE THEIR HANDS until they're called on. For YOUNGER STUDENTS, give them ALL a few minutes to THINK of adjectives (DESCRIBING WORDS) that begin with the same letter as their first name, before you begin!

Core Activity: Begin with having students share about what they think is meant by the words: identity and culture. Then, have students come up with some questions they would ask a stranger about their identity: what are their likes and dislikes? How do they celebrate holidays, and what holidays do they celebrate? What are they proud of in their culture? Who do they look up- who are their heroes (in story or in real life)? Share with students some symbols that we use as images to stand in for words, ask them what symbols they notice and connect with. Students can pair up to INTERVIEW another classmate and then draw a portrait of the student including symbols that represent their likes and culture. OR, students can create a SELF-PORTRAIT, including symbols that represent their lives and culture.

Have the students interview each other while they draw- remind them that the portrait should include symbols that represent their subject's identity, beliefs, values or areas of interest! Invite students to choose a specific way to highlight the symbols with color: maybe the portrait is in black and white but the symbols are very colorful! Maybe the portrait uses bright colors but the symbols are pale or muted colors. Maybe the portrait is in ONE color family (COOL colors, for example) and the symbols are in the OPPOSITE color family (WARM colors)... etc.

Reflection: Ask students to reflect on the experience: What did you learn about yourself and your classmate through the process? How are you similar to and different from your classmates? How do we show/express or hide our identity in school or at the club? Do we build our identity, or is it something given to us?

