Portrait of My Friend by Elisa (age 7.5)

Portrait of a Friend

Artists often do their best work when working from subjects that they know well and encounter everyday. So, it's not surprising that many artists like to draw, paint, and sculpt their close friends and family members. Besides, friends and family members will usually pose for free—unlike models that the artist must hire. In this activity, you will get to draw a portrait of your friend.

Materials: a large sheet of paper, and a pencil, a crayon or a thin-line black marker.

The Activity: Ask a friend to pose for you while you draw his or her portrait. Look closely at your friend's face and posture before you start to draw. Notice, for example, the shape and size of his or her head, eyes, nose and mouth. While you want to try hard to make the picture look like your friend, it's just as important to try to convey his or her personality and character. Is your friend quiet? shy? outgoing? talkative? How will you capture this feeling in his or her portrait?

Portrait of Joseph Roulin (The Postman)
by Vincent van Gogh (1888)

Want To Do More? Study the portraits that artists like Vincent van Gogh did of their friends. By looking at portraits, you can learn a lot about the people who posed for them. You can learn how they lived and also make guesses about what kind of people they were.

Think about your friend and the things the two of you do together. Then, write a poem or story about your friend to exhibit alongside his or her portrait.

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