

Self-portrait: Mid-project feedback to students

This project will be evaluated according to three general criteria. In order to help you do your best, here is some feedback with suggestions about how to improve your drawing. I have only chosen what I think are the most important pieces of advice for you. If these suggestions are unclear, please ask me or a friend to give you more help.

Proportion and detail

Proportion is the name of the skill where you accurately portray shapes and sizes.

- Observe closely.** Keep looking at your photograph. Try to forget what you are looking at, and focus on the component lines and shapes.
- Look for missing details.** Look for small things that you may have overlooked: small bits of your hair, wrinkles in your clothing, small differences in the background, and so on.
- Start drawing the other half of your face.** If you develop one side of the face too fully, it will be hard to match it up with the other side.
- Measure carefully.** Use a grid, rulers, or slips of paper to guide where you should place things.
- Observe the shapes of your shadows.** The shapes of the parts of the face are good, but the shapes of the shadows are off. Take a closer look at the shapes and sizes of the light and dark areas.
- Consider changes in texture.** Hair needs a different kind of drawing than cloth, skin, or fuzzy shadows. Try to capture the texture of the different things you are drawing.

Shading

Shading is using light and dark to draw. It is an easy way to make things look realistic and three dimensional.

- Lighten your outlines.** Outlines are essential to getting proportions correct, but they should disappear after you start shading.
- Darken your darks.** Doing so will increase the overall impact of your drawing, and will help it pop.
- Add tone to your lights.** Leaving areas white tends to leave the impression that your artwork is unfinished. Instead, look for light shades of grey you can add instead.
- Work on smoothness.** Build up your greys by stacking layers of alternating line directions, use lines with overlapping lines (no white gaps), or use a blending stump.
- Work on blending.** Your shadows are sometimes going abruptly from light to dark, with few or no middle greys. Add greys to the middle areas until you end up with smooth blends instead of sudden jumps.
- Start shading your background.** Once you shade in your background, it changes the balance of greys and forces you to reshade the rest of your portrait. If you start shading your background early it will save you time and frustration.
- Look carefully at the different greys in your hair.** You can get basic hair texture by creating lines that flow along the length. However, it works even better when you replicate the pattern of light and dark of the different strands. It takes more time, but the impact is many times stronger.
- Watch for sharp vs. fuzzy edges.** Sometimes blending goes quickly from light to dark, and sometimes it stretches out over a long distance. Reobserve your photo to see where you should do which one.

Composition

Composition is the overall arrangement and completeness of your artwork.

- You have the option of leaving out the background if you wish.**
- Add a background.** A background puts a person or object in a particular place, real or imaginary. Compared to drawings without backgrounds, your artwork may look simple and incomplete.
- Start shading your background.** You have some lines in there, but it lacks substance in comparison to the rest of your drawing.
- Start drawing the other half of your face.** If you develop one side of the face too fully, it will be hard to match it up with the other side.
- You seem to be behind.** Please consider working on your project at lunch or before or after school. Or, try to pick up your pace or use your time more effectively during class. If you have enough done, you can ask if you can take it home to work on it. Remember that if too much of your work is done outside school I cannot accept it.