

AGNES LEARNS



Exploring form and pose with Rembrandt

GRADES 4-6

Rembrandt was famous for the way he painted light and shadow using a technique called *chiaroscuro*—it's one of the reasons the people in his paintings look so lifelike!

Explore light and shadow and Rembrandt's work *Portrait of a Man with Arms Akimbo* with the following activities:

ART ACTIVITIES

Draw a three-dimensional object

First, draw a circle. Using shading, try and make your circle look like a three-dimensional object, a sphere. Think about where the light is coming from and whether your sphere casts a shadow. It can help to grab a spherical object (like an orange or a ball) in real life. Shine a light on it and observe how light falls on it. Parts that are darker will look farther away than parts that are light. Try drawing a different form like a cube or a pyramid.

Play with light and pose

Grab a flashlight and go into a dark room or do this activity at night. Stand in front of a mirror and play with how the flashlight lights up your face. Try making different faces: scary, happy, sad. Try different poses: stand tall like the man in Rembrandt's painting. Have someone take photographs of your different faces and poses.



Rembrandt van Rijn

Portrait of a Man with Arms Akimbo
1658, oil on canvas
Gift of Alfred and Isabel Bader, 2015
(58-008)

Create a dramatic portrait

Choose a model for your portrait. A member of your family or a toy like a stuffed animal works well. Position your model near a source of light such as a lamp or a window so there are dramatic highlights and shadows like in Rembrandt's portrait. Grab a pencil and paper and start your portrait by lightly sketching the outline of the head and features like the eyes, nose and mouth. Once you are happy with the face you've drawn, observe the shadows on your model's face. Draw light shadows by pressing the pencil lightly, and deep shadows by pressing hard or layering (shading your pencil over one spot several times). Use an eraser to remove shading and create highlights and to clean up the edges.

If you'd like to extend the lesson beyond visual art, here are some other activities

Write a postcard from 1658

In 1658, when this painting was made, Rembrandt lived in Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Pretend you've time travelled to visit him and write a postcard to your family. Do some research about what Amsterdam was like then. Look up pictures of the city and imagine what you would see.



Rembrandt van Rijn

Portrait of a Man with Arms Akimbo (detail)

1658, oil on canvas

Gift of Alfred and Isabel Bader, 2015

(58-008)

Power pose!

Explore body language and emotions. Describe the pose of the man in Rembrandt's painting. Pose like him for 30 seconds (stand tall, chin up, shoulders back, hands on hips). How does that make you feel? Next, slouch with your shoulders hunched and head down. How does that make you feel? Compare and contrast how different poses make you feel. Which pose do you prefer? Does your pose change your mood?

Write about the model

Imagine who the man in Rembrandt's painting is and write a short journal entry. For an extra challenge, make sure your entry includes the Five Ws:

- Who is he;
- What does he do;
- Where does he live;
- When is he from;
- Why did he have his portrait painted?

GLOSSARY

Portrait: A portrait is a picture of a person. It usually includes their face or the head and shoulders.

Rembrandt van Rijn: Rembrandt (1606-1669) was a Dutch painter. He is very famous for painting portraits, but he also painted landscapes and historical scenes.

Value: Value is an element of art. It deals with the lightness or darkness of a colour. Using highlights and shadows in a painting can create the illusion of a source of light and helps make objects look three-dimensional.

Chiaroscuro: Chiaroscuro is a technique in art where light and dark is used to create a sense of form, making objects and people look three-dimensional. This also creates a dramatic or theatrical effect.

Form: Form is an element of art. It describes a shape that is three-dimensional. A sculpture has form because it has length, width and depth. Images in flat paintings can appear to have form when a technique like chiaroscuro is used.