

**Critical
Activity
Portraits**
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In this **Critical Expressive** essay you will investigate two portrait painters, describe one painting by each artist and, finally, you will compare the two pieces.

You should try to show examples of the artist's work to help illustrate your essay. You should type out your essay.



There will be eight parts to this essay:

1. Introduction
2. Information on your first chosen artist
3. Study of a portrait painting by your first artist
4. Information on your second artist
5. Study of a portrait painting by your second artist
6. Compare both paintings
7. Conclusion
8. Bibliography (list of books/websites/notes you used in this essay)

Try to write the essay in **YOUR OWN WORDS**. Avoid copying information. The marker will easily be able to tell if your essay is genuine. Work your way through all of the questions below to create your essay.

Let's begin

1. Introduction

Write a brief introduction to your essay. You might begin something like this:

*In this essay I am going to write about the work of two famous portrait painters, their lives and influences. This is just a guide; make sure that the introduction is in **YOUR OWN words**.*

2. & 5. Information about your first artist. Repeat this task for your second artist.

First pick which portrait painting you would like to discuss - Use the picture worksheet hand out.

Read the information on the artist (this can be found on the back of the picture worksheet).

Answer the questions below. (Note: not all of the questions can be answered using the hand-outs alone- you may have to give personal opinions.... and for a good grade you should answer these questions as thoroughly as possible/do some more research of your own.)

It might be a good idea to change the order of some of your answers, so that your essay 'flows' better.

1. Write down some background information about the artist?
2. Where and when were they born? Include dates.
3. What kind of art education - if any - did they have?
4. Who and what influenced the artist?
5. What Art movement, if any, were they part of? What was this movement influenced by?
6. What cultural trends influenced the artist e.g. music, politics, fashion etc.?
7. Have they created a range of work? Are they only known for painting portraits or do they sculpt, draw, etc.?
8. How original or pioneering were/are they? What did they do that had never been done before?
9. Does the artist have a distinctive style or trademark? What materials/media is she/he best known for using?
10. Write down any other relevant information about the artist?

3. & 6. This part of your essay is very important because it will be based on your own opinions about each painting. Answer all of the questions in FULL sentences. Put your answers in an order that makes sense to you.

Introduction/the Facts

Introduce the painting you will be writing about.

- Does the artwork have a name?
- When was it made?

- Who made it?
- What MEDIA was it painted with?
- Do you know the size of the artwork?

Content/subject matter

What the painting shows you

- Who is the sitter?
- Tell the reader the name of the person and their connection to the painter.
- Why did you choose this painting? Explain why you like it? Give reasons.

Composition/layout of the painting

This is how the artist has arranged everything on the canvas.

Now describe the painting in detail

- Is the portrait full length?
- Is the person sitting or standing?
- Is it a close up (head and shoulders) or is the person sitting further away?
- Are some parts of the portrait bigger than others?
- Is there a focal point?
- What is in the background/foreground/mid ground/left and right of the canvas?
- Do the background and the foreground look separate or joined together?
- Can you see the all of the sitter/ bacground or only a part of it?
- Have any items been cropped (cut off)?

Describe everything in **FULL DETAIL!**

The Time Tunnel

Imagine you have suddenly been transported into this painting and you can look around and walk around in it.

- Say what you can see inside the frame of the canvas; say what you think you could see outside of the frame.
 - What can you smell and hear?
 - What time of the day and/or year is it?
 - Has something just happened or is there something about to happen?
- Does it feel like a nice place?

Light

- What kind of lighting is present in the painting?
- Is it natural daylight or artificial? (electric/lamplight etc)
- Which direction does the light coming from?
- Does it suggest a time of year, season, or time of day? For example, does it look like a summer's evening/ or cold winter's morning?
- Does the light cast shadows? Do you think that the shadows are there to show distance/ 3D form or atmosphere ?

Mood/Atmosphere

- What do you think is the mood or atmosphere of the painting? Say why you think this is. It could be the use of colour / light in the painting /the pose, body language/ expression of the sitter.
- How would you describe the mood of the sitter ? Are the shoulders slumped or do they look proud and confident? How is the head positioned? Can you see the hands?
- Describe their clothes and their colours. Do they give you any clues about their character or style?
- Sometimes the artist chooses the colour scheme for a reason. Why do you think the artist chose the colour scheme in this painting?

Style/Technique

- Study the painting closely. Now describe the painter's style, technique and use of texture.
- Describe the painter's brush strokes: is the paint so fine that the brushstrokes cannot be seen, or are they part of the image? Are they tight and controlled or are they looser and more sweeping?
- Do you think that the artist worked slowly or quickly to produce this painting? Why do you think that?
- Is the paint itself flat and decorative or is it rough and textural? Are dots/dabs or textures used?
- Does the painting look realistic; abstract; unrealistic; lifelike; exaggerated; childlike? Try to describe what kind of style the artist has used.

The way in which the paint has been applied will most likely determine the style of the artwork.

Colour

- Describe the colours the artist has used. Why do you think they have picked these colours?

- Do they help to add to the mood or atmosphere of the painting?
- Does the artist's use of colour make all or parts of the image stand out?
- Do the colours remind you of anything- a season, a time of day, a situation, anything at all?
- Would you say that this is a warm or a cold image?

Pattern

- Has the artist used pattern in any part of the painting?
- Is it regular and uniform or is it irregular?
- Is it only in a certain part of the painting?
- Is it obvious or is it subtle?

Line

- How has the artist used line in the artwork?
- Have they outlined anything or have they used implied line? (This is when the artist uses two different colours side by side with a crisp edge: there is no line actually there, it just looks as if there could be.)
- Use your word bank to describe the types of line the artist has used in the painting

Personal Opinion

Finally, state your opinion.

- What do you think or feel about the artwork?
- Do you like or dislike it?
- Do you feel that it is a successful work of art?

You must back up your responses with a reason, i.e. **you must say WHY you think what you think.**

7. Compare both paintings. Note the differences and similarities referring to the following:

- Media/Style/Techniques used
- Content/Subject Matter
- Composition
- Light
- Mood/Atmosphere
- Use of Colour
- Use of Pattern and Line

The easiest way to write this part is to draw yourself a table with two columns headed 'Similarities' and 'Differences'. Write down any information you can think of and then turn these notes into sentences.

8. Conclusion

The best way to conclude your essay is to tell the marker why you enjoyed looking at the artists' works and then to say which of the two portrait paintings you liked best, and give a reason why.

9. Bibliography

It is very important that you include a Bibliography at the end of your essay. This should include all web sites, books etc. It must be quite precise so that the marker can see where you got your information from. If you do not include a Bibliography you will lose marks. It is a good idea to write down every site you visit at the time. Note any websites on your draft notes for this essay.