



## ***Contemporary Folk Art Portraits***

***Grade level:*** 5th – 7h

***Time required*** 2 45 min. class periods

### ***Objective***

Students create their own unique self-portraits inspired by Frida Kahlo and an 18th century soldier by executing them in a Folk Art style.

# Contemporary Folk Art Portraits

The term “Folk Art” originated hundreds of years ago, describing a style of art done anonymously by the common people, peasants and other laboring trades people from different cultures around the world. These people’s lack of art training was what defined the look; a simplified style lacking in perspective (drawings with no illusion of depth or distance), or proportion (where the shape and size of things were incorrect, with elements being exaggerated or distorted). Bright colors, basic techniques, and childlike imperfection has been what defines it’s naive, appealing charm, a look so very similar to children’s artwork in general, and lending itself so naturally to this self-portrait lesson plan.

In this lesson plan, students create a fun and stylized Folk Art style self-portrait in the spirit of Frida Kahlo or an 18th century soldier.

## **Materials:**

*Pencil*

*FC black PITT Pen*

*FC white PITT Pen*

*Drawing Paper*

**FC World Colors**

**EcoPencils**

*including 6 soft and  
blendable skin tones*



## **Vocabulary:**

*self-portrait, Folk Art, Frida Kahlo, stylize, complimentary, vignette*

## **National Core Art Standards—Visual**

### **Creating**

*Anchor Standard #1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work*

*Anchor Standard #3: Refine and complete artistic work*

### **Presenting**

*Anchor Standard #5: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation*

### **Responding**

*Anchor Standard #8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work*

### **Connecting**

*Anchor Standard #10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art*



**1. Begin** with a short discussion with your students on Folk Art, and share the following portrait project ideas with them:

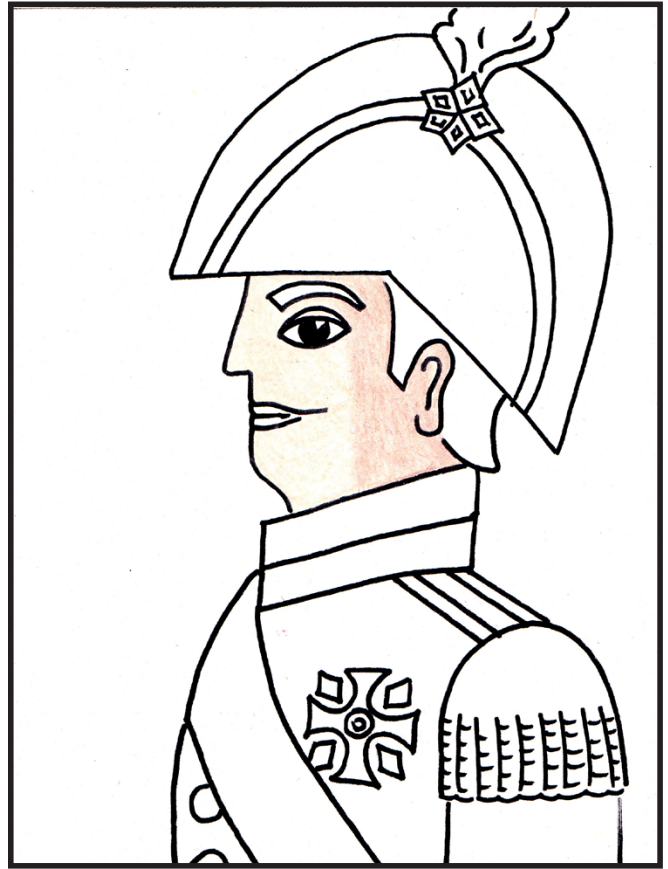
**Frida Kahlo inspired portrait-** have girls personalize their portraits with their own hair color and style, their own smiles and eye color. Encourage them to get creative designing their own floral headdress and jewelry. They can also include their own pet as Frida often did, including her bird or monkey in her many self-portraits!

**Soldier profile-** tell the boys to have fun with drawing their profile, suggesting things like drawing expressive eyes looking all around, (glasses perhaps?), big or little noses, smiles or serious mouths, (maybe shouting a command in a speech bubble), their own hair cuts and color. They may be funny! Boys continue to design their soldier uniform and hat with their own color combinations, pins, feathers, etc...

**Students begin** by sketching themselves in one of the two classic Folk Art portrait positions— straight on, or a profile. Encourage them to draw big, filling an 8 1/2 x 11 size paper. Show them how to draw the strong almond shaped eye with lid, which is also so characteristic to Folk Art.



**2. Next,** have students outline their portrait in a bold black PITT pen, and then erase unwanted pencil lines. This black line immediately transforms a pencil sketch, adding a strong stylized look to the art, giving it an impressive character, and making it fun to color in, in the following steps.



**3. Continue** by introducing students to the unique skin toned pencils and how to use them. Show them how they can create their own personal skin tone by layering two colors. Explain that layering colors adds a warmth and richness to skin tones. Suggest that they experiment with different layering combinations on scrap paper before coloring their faces.



**4. Have students** continue to color in their portraits with the colored pencils. Show them how to achieve a nice coloring effect by applying an even, medium pressure while coloring, and keeping their pencils sharp for coloring details and along outlined edges. Offer white PITT pens for any small white detail (like the dots on the soldier's uniform) or anywhere else.

For the background, show students how to choose a color/colors to compliment the colors in their portraits. Demonstrate how to create a vignettted background by using a darker tone of the same background color in the corners and all around the edges.

These expressive Folk Art style portraits will be full of the artist's unique features and personality, along with unexpected details that only kids can think of!

**Tip:** *Mounting the portraits on larger black paper will make them pop, perfect for displaying in the art room or your next art show!*