

# Silhouette Portraits

Scribble  
&  
Sketch 



**Artist: Abigail Reed**

**You will need at least three people to do this activity**  
**For all age ranges**

What are silhouette portraits? A silhouette portrait is the image of a person represented as a solid shape of a single colour, usually black, with its edges matching the outline of the subject. The interior of a silhouette is featureless, and the silhouette is usually presented on a light background, usually white, or none at all.

Cutting portraits, generally in profile, from black card became popular in the mid-18th century. They represented a cheap but effective alternative to the portrait miniature, and skilled specialist artists could cut a high-quality bust portrait in a matter of minutes, working purely by eye. The portraits were usually small and framed in an oval frame to keep it protected and treasured for life.



## Materials

- Black and white paper (A3 or two A4 bits stuck together)
- Masking tape
- A pencil
- Pen
- Scissors
- A torch.

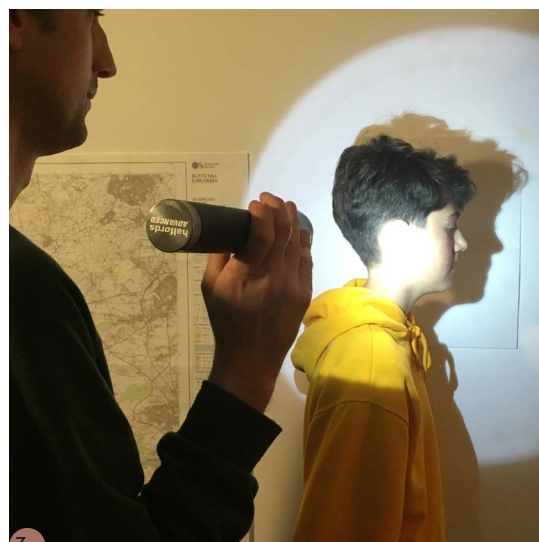
## Instructions

**Step 1.** Find a bare patch of wall at home in a dark room (you can close the curtains if its too light or wait till it gets dark!). Try shining your torch at the wall. If it casts a strong shadow- you are ready to begin.

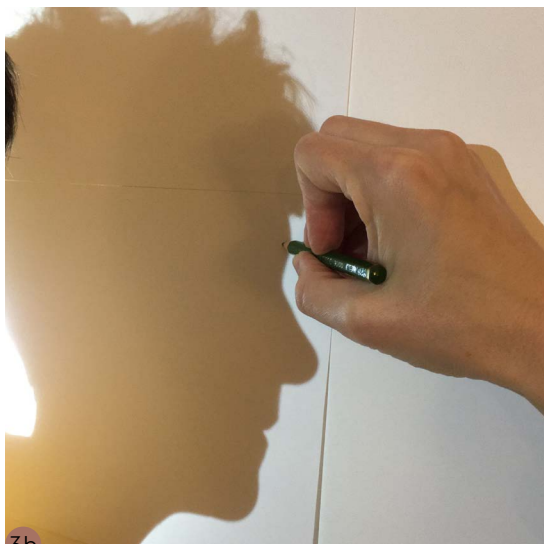
**Step 2.** stand in front of the wall and get someone to hold the torch so a strong shadow of your face is cast onto the wall. Stand in profile position. Once you have worked out where best the shadow forms, stick your piece of white paper onto the wall with the masking tape. I am using two bits of a4 size white paper stuck together so it is big enough to fit the whole shadow on.

**Step 3.** You want your shadow to fit well on the white paper, so this may mean you and the

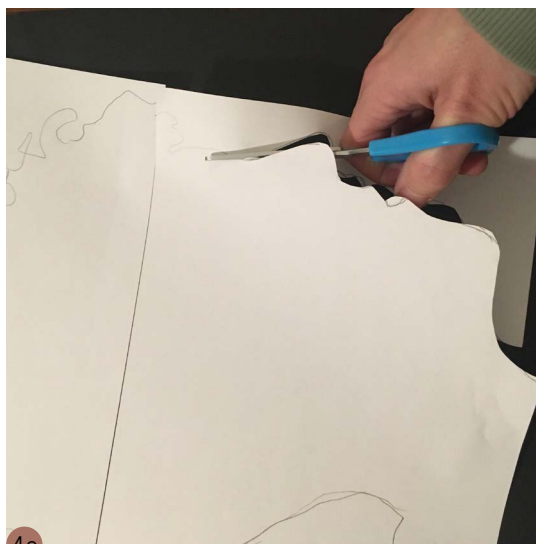
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page 2*



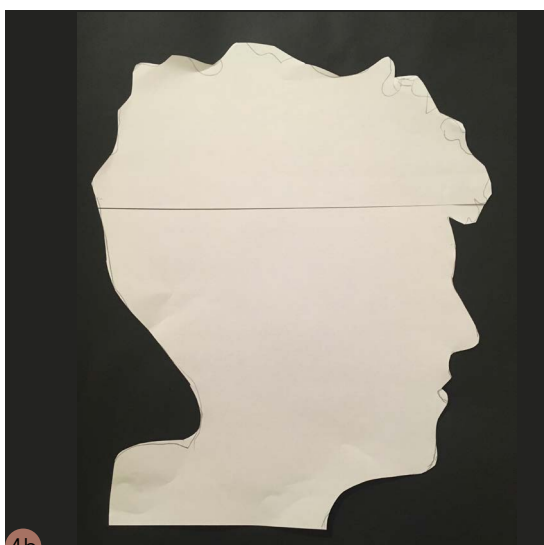
# Silhouette Portraits (continued)



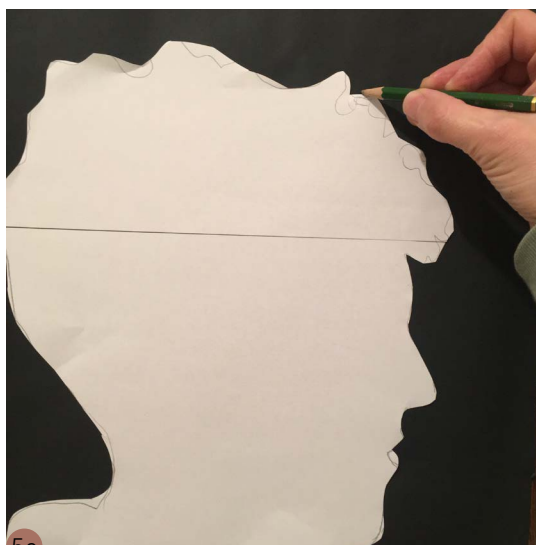
3b



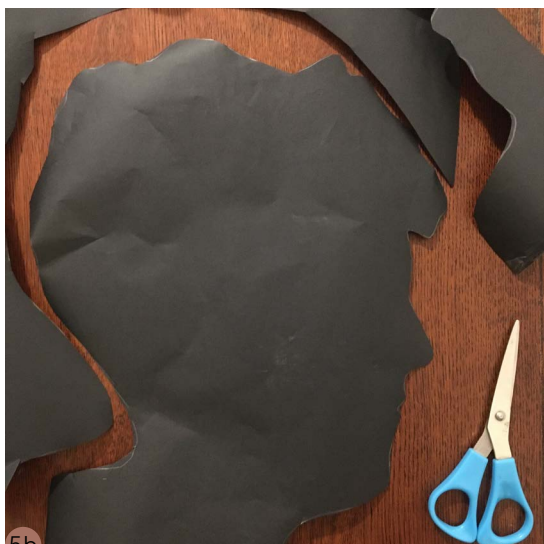
4a



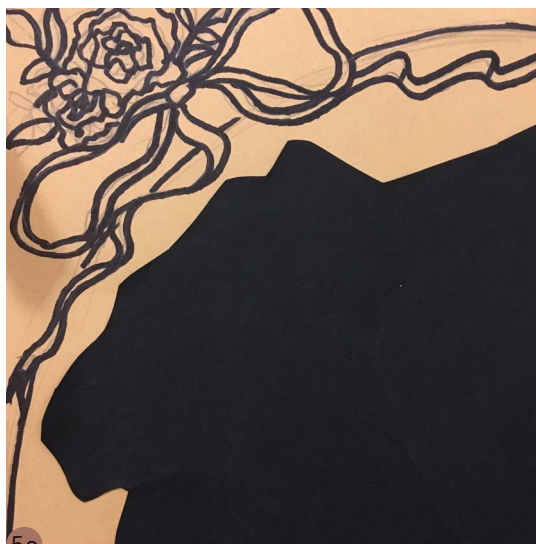
4b



5a



5b



5c

## Instructions continued from page 1

designated torch holder need to play around a bit with the distance between the torch and the wall. Now the third person is going to draw around your shadow. Try and capture as much detail as you can and take your time tracing the shadow, **DON'T RUSH IT!**

**Step 4.** Carefully take your paper off the wall and move to a table or somewhere you can draw comfortably. Now, using the scissors, carefully cut out your drawn shadow. Younger kids- maybe get an adult to do this bit for you.

**Step 5.** Now place your cut out head onto the black paper and trace around that. Cut that out and you have your own silhouette portrait.

*continued on page 3*

## Silhouette Portraits (continued)



6a

### Instructions continued from page 2

**Step 6.** To finish off your silhouette portrait, how about sticking it onto another piece of paper and drawing around it? I have drawn an oval and some decorative flowers around it (like in the example) to mimic the old tradition of silhouette portraits.

Can you make your whole household silhouette portraits?



6b