



Retratos

My People, Myself

Recommended for Ages 6-12

Grades 1 to 6

A Reproducible Learning Guide for Educators

This guide is designed to help educators prepare for, enjoy, and discuss *Retratos: My People, Myself*

It contains background, discussion questions and activities appropriate for ages 6 to 12.

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About the Play

Retratos asks "How am I a portrait of my history, heritage, family and myself as a young person in America? How am I a portrait of today's world and the creative, vibrant world inside of us?"

Retratos was originally created in 2005 by Discovery Theater with the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery and Young Playwright's Theater. Inspired by the traveling exhibition "Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits" (previously on view at the Smithsonian's International Gallery from October 21, 2005 to January 8, 2006), this show uses text written by nearly 60 students at Bancroft Elementary, Oyster Bilingual Elementary, and Lincoln Middle schools who responded to the portraits of the exhibit. The student playwrights also learned about Pre-Columbian history and Latin American art, toured the Discovery Theater space where their show would be performed, met with professional actors, and considered how they themselves—like all Americans—are portraits of their heritage as well as reflections of the future. The student's monologues inspired this warm and interactive play about how our lives are magnificent reflections of our ancestry and America's future. Some of their work is present verbatim in the words of the characters. We remount this show today, in 2019, because it is still vital to find ourselves and our heritage.

Themes & Discussion Questions

The themes in *Retratos* focus on heritage and history—our nation's, our ancestors' and most importantly, our own personal history. Talking about your personal history is important, because it is a way to connect you and your family to the larger history of your area, which can be your town, state or even country. People have often moved from one area to another, have relocated from one town to another, or have emigrated from one country to another. How do these words reflect their movement, and our movement as a people? Use some these questions to discuss how personal history is also a people's history:

Do you know your family's country of origin?

- If you do: What does the Flag look like? Do you know anything about the cultural traditions from your country of origin? Music and Art? What is one important event in your country of origin's history that you know about?
- If you don't: What country's traditions/cultures do identify the most with?
- What about your family's Country of Origin do you want to know more about?

LatinX History is also at the heart of *Retratos*. Here are some questions to guide discussion about Latin History:

- What did you already know about civilizations in the Latin America before the Spanish came?
- How did the Spanish Conquistadors change the Americas?
- What challenges do people who emigrate face?



Important Faces from *Retratos*

In *Retratos*, you will learn about Aztec Gods, how Conquistadors created a world empire and what a portrait is. Many of the faces below helped shape the stories that you will learn about in this play and while learning about Latin History. Do you know any of these faces? Who are they and why were they important?



Aztec God of Rain and Thunder

Tlaloc



Cuban singer

Celia Cruz



Aztec God of Wind

Ehecatl



Latin American Activist

Cesar Chavez



Mexican Painter

Frida Kahlo



Latin American Activist

Dolores Huerta



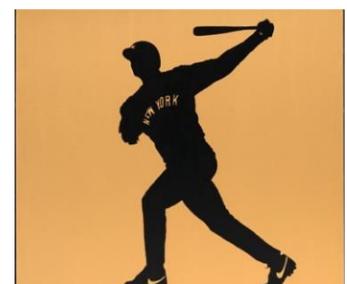
Mexican Revolutionary

Father Miguel Hidalgo



Aztec God of Fire and Volcanoes

Chantico



Dominican Shortstop /record holder

Alex Rodriguez



Create Your Own Self Portrait

In *Retratos* Jasmine, Jennifer, and Jorge talk about how their portraits would look. What about yours? Try creating your own self portrait by drawing or painting with the activity below! If you don't think that you can do it, take a selfie. Photography is another way in which artists can express themselves.

Materials:

- A base for your portrait (paper or a canvas)
- Crayons, Colored Pencils and Markers
- Paint, Paintbrushes and Water

Instructions:

1. Decide what kind of portrait that you want to create. Is it going to be realistic (like a photograph) or abstract (using bright colors or different forms)
2. Start by sketching the subject of the portrait, which is you! (Hint: You might want to try using a pencil to lightly sketch an outline first and go over it later with color)
3. Create a background for your portrait. Is it just one plain color? Is there a scene going on in the background?
4. Color and decorate your portrait!

The Story of Yourself

Now that you have created your own portrait, it is important to tell its story! If you don't already know the story of your portrait, use these questions to help guide you as you write:

As you were creating your portrait, did you take a minute to think about why you chose the colors that you did? Did you use bright blues or deep reds? Even if you made a portrait that was realistic, **what do the colors that you chose mean to you?**

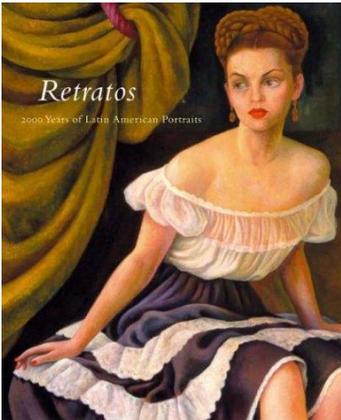
Place is a very important thing in storytelling. What is happening in the background of your portrait? This is the world in which your portrait exists. **Where did you set your portrait and why?**

Finally, think about the way in which you drew or painted the subject, which is you! **What do you see in the face that you drew? What emotions are behind your eyes?** Maybe you are happy, nervous, sad or mad. All those feelings make up just one part of the fantastic story of a self-portrait that is yours to tell!

These are just a few things to help you get started in writing your story, see where you can go from here!



Resources for Teachers



Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits
by Marion Oettinger Jr., Miguel A. Bretos , and Carolyn Kinder Carr

The book features the portraits that were on display in during the exhibition and is a great resource of Latin American art and visual culture.

Available for purchase on Amazon

[Teaching Central America:](#)

This website has many different lessons you can download and use in the classroom. It includes lessons on the history, geography, politics, art, literature and culture of the Central America region.

www.teachingcentralamerica.org/middle-high

[PBS' "Latino Americans" Documentary – Lesson Plan](#)

This website features different lessons centered around the PBS "Latino Americans" documentary series on Latin culture and history. There is an introductory lesson to the series itself and then each corresponding episode has its own lesson plan for teachers to use.

www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons-plans/lesson-plans-pbs-latino-americans-documentary/

Smithsonian Connections

Are you interested in learning more about art history? Visit the **National Portrait Gallery** in Washington D.C. to see the Smithsonian's collection of different portraits that cover a broad scope of American art. Look out for ***The Outwin 2019: American Portraiture Today***, which opens in October 2019 and features the winners of the Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition. The competition is an opportunity for American artists to submit pieces that challenge the conventions of portraiture and highlight the diversity of new works in America.

The Great Inka Road: Engineering an Empire, currently on exhibition through June 2020 at the **National Museum of the American Indian**, "explores the foundations of the Inka Road in earlier Andean cultures." Through this exhibit, students can explore what technology made building the road possible as well as the origin and organization of the Inka and the legacy of the Empire during the colonial period and present day.

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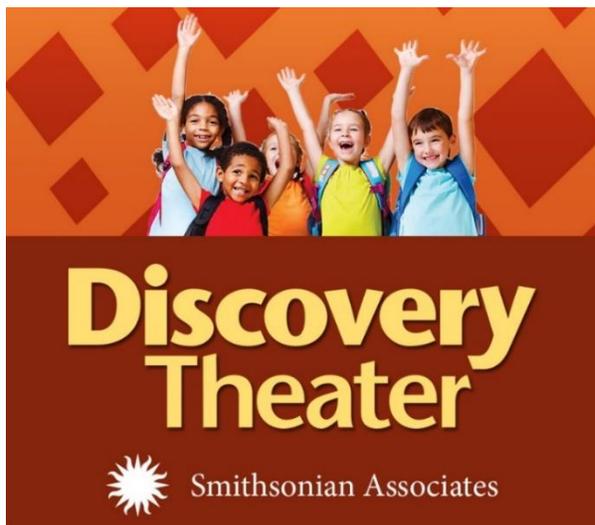


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Smithsonian Associates advances the Institution's mission through life-enriching educational and cultural experiences inspired by the Smithsonian's research and collections for DC-region students, families, and adults, and for learning communities nationwide.

Discovery Theater has been presenting DC-area children with live educational performances for almost 40 years. With programs that enrich the Smithsonian experience for nearly 50,000 children annually, Discovery Theater is a gateway to the exhibits, collections, and themes contained in the museums and galleries on the National Mall and beyond. We explore American history and cultures, folk tales from around the world, and exciting, accessible science and math programs in the company of puppeteers, storytellers, dancers, actors, and musicians. Discovery Theater performances unite ideologies, enact themes that reflect the diversity of its audiences, open avenues of self-reflection, and offer an enjoyable means for parents and teachers to demonstrate life's lessons. There's so much to do and explore at the Smithsonian—and Discovery Theater is the ideal place to begin!



Our Location

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