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1980 Volume II: Art, Artifacts, and Material Culture

The Portrait as Metaphor: A Study of the World of John Singleton Copley

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A work of art may be studied as though bounded absolutely by its frame from the world of everyday, from our world, from the other arts, from history; but a work of art may additionally be studied as metaphor, living with meaning. Teaching a portrait may begin at any level, from the most primary facts of size, colors, light and dark, and simple shapes, to the most deeply felt and personal insight; s, but the vitality of the study is one of discovery, of exploring each level and the tensions between levels, and across the frame, in the articulation of meaning. It is probably possible to abstract any number of levels in this process; in classroom practice five levels, or steps. serve handily. Use them and Copley's portraits will come alive in your classroom.

(Recommended for 11th grade American Literature and 10th and 11th grade American History.)

Key Words

Art Portraiture Copley John Singleton

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