Welcome to the Winter 2014 issue of *NPG in Your Classroom*! In this issue, we take a closer look at the foundation of our school and teacher programming—reading portraiture. Two guest writers, an eighth-grade U.S. history teacher and a National Portrait Gallery gallery educator, share how they read portraits with students to convey a richer understanding of the 1920s and of Franklin D. Roosevelt. And find out how you can delve deeper into reading portraiture at our summer teacher institute, “Learning to Look with the National Portrait Gallery.” We will host this institute TWICE this summer!

**New Exhibition**

**American Cool**

**Closes September 7, 2014**

What do we mean when we say someone is cool? Cool carries a social charge of rebellious self-expression, charisma, edge, and mystery. In the early 1940s, legendary jazz saxophonist Lester Young brought this central African American concept into the modern vernacular. Cool has been embodied in jazz musicians such as Miles Davis and Billie Holiday, in actors such as Robert Mitchum, Faye Dunaway, and Johnny Depp, and in singers such as Elvis Presley, Patti Smith, and Jay-Z. The “American Cool” exhibition features portraits of such iconic figures, each of whom has contributed an original artistic vision to American culture symbolic of a particular historical moment. They emerged from a variety of fields: art, music, film, sports, comedy, literature, and political activism. “American Cool” is captured by a roll call of fine-art photographers from Henri Cartier-Bresson to Annie Leibovitz, from Richard Avedon to Herman Leonard to Diane Arbus.

**Upcoming Exhibition**

**Face Value: Portraiture in the Age of Abstraction**

April 18, 2014, to January 11, 2015

“Face Value: Portraiture in the Age of Abstraction” will feature mid-twentieth-century artists who were reinventing portraiture at a moment when most agreed that figuration was dead as a progressive art form. Chuck Close recalled that during this time, “the dumbest, most moribund, out-of-date, and shopworn of possible things you could do was to make a portrait.” And yet, with startling freshness and a touch of defiance, a group of young artists demonstrated the value of exploring the face and figure.

With more than fifty paintings, drawings, prints, and sculpture from approximately 1945 to 1975, “Face Value” will highlight the innovations of American portraiture hiding behind the vogue for abstraction. Artists such as Alice Neel, Elaine de Kooning, Robert Rauschenberg, Beauford Delaney, Alex Katz, Romare Bearden, Fairfield Porter, Jamie Wyeth, and Andy Warhol—along with less well-known artists—pushed the boundaries of portrait traditions. Inspired by the theories and ambitions of the Abstract Expressionists and keenly attuned to the themes of their own turbulent times, they reinterpreted human portrayal, reinventing portraiture for the next generation.
Learning to Look with the National Portrait Gallery

Summer Teacher Institute

Integrating portraiture into the classroom provides exciting opportunities to connect students with history, biography, visual art, and many other subjects. The National Portrait Gallery’s collection presents the wonderful diversity of individuals who have left—and are leaving—their mark on our country and our culture. The museum portrays poets and presidents, visionaries and villains, actors and activists whose lives tell the American story. The Summer Teacher Institute will take a broad look at the Portrait Gallery’s collection. During the institute, the museum’s curators and historians will provide in-gallery content lectures, introducing the collection. Utilizing an interactive approach, NPG educators will model a variety of “learning to look” strategies—unique ways to hook and engage students when they look closely at portraits. Participants will learn how to “read” portraiture and use the art as a springboard into a more in-depth discussion about biography and history. Teachers from kindergarten through twelfth grade may apply as individuals or as part of a team. Priority will be given to social studies, English/language arts, and visual arts teachers.

The institute will be held twice during summer 2014: July 7–9 and July 28–30.

Institute participants will:

- Gain expertise from museum educators, curators, and historians through gallery talks, discussions, and hands-on activities
- Learn to use portraiture in the classroom, identifying and analyzing key components of a portrait and relating visual elements to relevant historical context and significance
- Make interdisciplinary connections among portraiture, social studies, and English/language arts
- Develop and share lesson ideas with colleagues

A nonrefundable program fee of $100 per person is due upon acceptance into the teacher institute. Participants are responsible for travel and lodging costs. Each participant will receive a stipend of $200 at the conclusion of the workshop.

Visit http://npg.si.edu/education/teachprog.html to apply. Please direct queries to npgeducation@si.edu or 202.633.8503. Application deadline is April 15, 2014.
Franklin D. Roosevelt: See. Think. Wonder
By Kita McCord, NPG Gallery Educator

As a gallery educator at the National Portrait Gallery, I have used the See-Think-Wonder strategy to facilitate careful observation of an object. It has worked equally well with groups of students and groups of teachers, and I have had particular success using it with Douglas Chandor’s painting of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. To understand this process, I encourage you to participate in it now.

See-Think-Wonder allows our visitors to build theories based on their own observations before they can ask questions about the works. The reward is a rich learning experience, one that I encourage you to replicate in the classroom.

About the Portrait
This portrait of Franklin Roosevelt by Douglas Chandor was a study for a much larger composition, which is sketched in miniature in the picture’s lower left corner. The drawing depicts Roosevelt seated with Allied leaders Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, where the three men discussed issues related to the final phases of World War II and the coming peace. Chandor intended to make three versions of the picture—one for each country involved in the conference. He insisted, however, that all three men sit for their likenesses, and when Stalin refused to pose, the artist gave up his plans for his group portrait.

Roosevelt returned from Yalta looking disturbingly haggard, and many intimates sensed that he perhaps did not have long to live. Yet when Chandor confronted him several weeks later at the White House, he chose to underplay the signs of physical deterioration. The presence of the hand studies beneath Roosevelt’s likeness bespoke the artist’s fascination with what he considered his subject’s most intriguing feature. Roosevelt could not understand that fascination and told the artist that he thought his hands were really quite ordinary, or, as he put it, “the hands of a farmer.”

Excerpt from Portraits of the Presidents: The National Portrait Gallery by Frederick S. Voss (New York: Rizzoli, 2000).
Jumping into the Jazz Age

By Skip McCarty
Eighth grade U.S. history teacher
Corning Free Academy Middle School
Corning, New York

In planning a recent American history unit for an eighth-grade social studies class on the 1920s (“Roaring Twenties”), I wanted students to appreciate the depth, richness, and grandeur of the people and events of this time period. The best way to do this was to use visual examples of the decade that would allow them to get “inside” the people and events who shaped America. After sifting through many images on the National Portrait Gallery website, I decided to use portraits of Thomas Hart Benton, Dizzy Gillespie, and Duke Ellington.

Of the many important skills that students should acquire while in middle school, one is the ability to transfer knowledge between subject areas. Any time a student can see the connections between content areas, he or she is more likely to retain information for both subjects. The educational synergy created when interdisciplinary connections are made will propel a student’s ability to retain content unlike anything that two teachers can provide separately. Since attending the Teaching American History grant sessions put on by the National Portrait Gallery, I have begun to use portraiture and other artworks as a teaching tool in my social studies classroom. These activities are also an attempt to capitalize on middle school students’ preference to learn using visualization techniques.

One of the best activities I have used to introduce students to reading portraiture is called “Jumping into the Portrait.” Students must imagine they are “inside” the portrait and use their senses to analyze the scene. They are shown a portrait (I prefer busy or active visuals) and given time to study it. Students are then asked to respond, in writing, to the following questions:

- Describe what you see, smell, touch or feel, hear, and taste in the portrait.
- What conclusions can you draw about the sitter and era of the portrait?

Students are required to conclude their analysis with a minimum of two sentences. Although describing some of the senses is often challenging, providing details forces them to use their creativity. Plus, having them come up with a minimum number of sentences gives them valuable writing practice in small chunks.

Using the same or similar activity with another unit requires a minimal amount of image searching on websites like the National Portrait Gallery’s in order to find age-appropriate and usable images.

If you are interested in more reading portraiture strategies, please check out the NPG’s Reading Portraiture Guide for Educators: http://www.npg.si.edu/docs/reading.pdf.

Unless otherwise noted, all images are from the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

Images, clockwise from top: Duke Ellington by Peter Hurd, tempera on board, 1956, gift of Time magazine ©Peter Hurd; Self-Portrait with Rita by Thomas Hart Benton, oil on canvas, 1922, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jack H. Mooney; Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Buck Clayton, and Max Kaminsky by Gjon Mili, gelatin silver print, 1944, courtesy Gjon Mili/TimePix