

Draw or Paint a Self-Portrait

For ages 11 - 17

**FUTURE
CREATIVES**

Many famous artists have created self-portraits. Are these to show us what they look like or are they trying to tell us more about themselves? Here are two self-portraits by the Dutch painter **Rembrandt Van Rijn**.

Look closely and see if you can identify the differences?



Self-portrait with ring collar
c. 1629 Wikimedia Commons



Self-portrait 1669
Wikimedia Commons

We can see that he is older, but look at what he is wearing. In the first he is wearing armour, a sign of rank, and an expensive silk collar. In the second he is wearing his 'painting clothes'. Look how his head is tilted up and then down, in the first painting this makes him look confident in the second it makes him look sad. Do the different brushstrokes tell us something more?



Self Portrait with Monkeys 1943
courtesy FridaKalo.org

Here is a self-portrait by the Mexican artist **Frida Kahlo**. Compare this with the studio paintings of Rembrandt. This is a painting full of **symbolism**, carefully arranged. Kahlo was very proud of her heritage, her dress is a traditional working garment, the symbol is the Aztec sign for change or movement. She kept monkeys as pets, here they seem to be protecting her. Look at the tropical setting and the bird of paradise flower.

This is Kahlo telling us about herself and how she would like to be seen by others.





Now it's your turn. Think carefully about how you would like to appear or what you would like to represent. Frida Kahlo cared about nature and her environment, is this important to you? Think about what you are wearing, the objects you surround yourself with, how you are stood or sat.



Materials You May Need:

Paper
Paint and brushes or markers,
pastels or coloured paper
A mirror
Glue
Scissors
Pencils or charcoal and an eraser
Camera and printer
Collage material - magazines, wallpaper,
cardboard or any other interesting scraps



Here's a self-portrait by **Peter Blake**. He is a big Elvis Presley fan and keen badge collector!

Self-portrait with Badges Peter Blake 1961 © Peter Blake

Things to try:

Take a photo of yourself using the self-timer, print it out and colour it in. You could cut out your picture and glue it on to a pattern or photo you like.

Have a look at our **first activity sheet** for more collage ideas.

Draw yourself in the mirror, try only having one light on for dramatic effect.

You could paint yourself as someone you admire or as something you would like to be.

Try using a different perspective - you could put a camera on something high up or low down.

Use two mirrors next to each other for a distorted effect when you photograph or draw yourself.



Untitled film still #21 1978
©Cindy Sherman

In the late 1970s **Cindy Sherman** produced a series of photographs called 'Untitled Film Stills' in which she appeared as characters in imaginary films.

