

## Lesson Title

**Cubism Portrait Drawing + Bright Color Block Finish (Half Profile + Half Front View) Art Lesson for Grades 2–5**

## Grade Levels

Grades 2–5 (works beautifully as a whole-school “same project, different expectations” lesson)

## Lesson Objective

Students will create a **Cubism-inspired portrait** by combining **two viewpoints** (half profile + half front view) using **simple closed shapes** for facial features, then apply **bold, contrasting color** to emphasize flattened, “many-sides-at-once” Cubist thinking.

## NCAS Visual Arts Standards

- **VA:Cr1.2.2/3/4/5a:** *Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose*
- **VA:Cr2.1.2/3/4/5a:** *Experiment with various materials and tools to explore personal interests in a work of art or design*
- **VA:Cr2.2.2/3/4/5a:** *Demonstrate safe and proper procedures for using materials, tools, and equipment*
- **VA:Cr3.1.2/3/4/5a:** *Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating artwork*
- **VA:Re7.2.2/3/4/5a:** *Perceive and describe aesthetic characteristics of one’s natural world and constructed environments / analyze components to determine expressive qualities (use grade-appropriate phrasing in discussion)*

## Lesson Description

This is the **ultimate “everyone succeeds” portrait** because we’re not chasing realism—we’re chasing **ideas**: *multiple views in one face*. Cubism is often described as showing more than one angle at the same time, and this project is a super literal, kid-friendly version of that concept. ([Tate](#))

**Teaching notes (aka: the secret sauce):**

- Keep reminding kids: **“Simple shapes = strong art.”** The less detail, the more “Cubist” it looks.

- This is a closed-shape party: **every feature is an enclosed shape** so coloring is easy and bold.

## Vocabulary

- **Cubism:** An art style where artists show **multiple views/angles** of something at the same time. ([Tate](#))
- **Portrait:** Artwork showing a person’s face (or head/shoulders).
- **Profile view:** A side view of the face (you can see the nose silhouette).
- **Front view:** Face looking straight ahead.
- **Geometric shapes:** Shapes like rectangles, triangles, circles—often used in Cubism. ([The Museum of Modern Art](#))
- **Closed shape:** A shape with no gaps (like a bubble you could color in).
- **Contrast:** Big differences (light/dark, warm/cool, complementary colors).

## Materials

### Paper

- 9x12 or 12x18 white drawing paper (heavier is better if painting)

### Drawing tools

- Pencil + eraser
- Black marker (fine or medium) for final outline (optional but helps it “pop”)

### Color media (choose what fits your reality)

- **Best brightness:** paint sticks, oil pastels, markers, tempera cakes, or tempera paint
- **Totally fine:** crayons (tell kids to PRESS HARD and layer)

### Optional helpers

- Mirrors, selfie photos, or partner “face observation” (quick and silly)
- Pre-made **half-profile/half-front** example for visual learners

### Prep

- Have a simple teacher sample and a “messy” sample to show it doesn’t need to be perfect.
- If using paint: set up water cups/brushes *before* class (future-you will be grateful).

## Lesson Sequence

## Option A: One 45-minute class

### 0–5 min | Introduction

- Quick Cubism hook: “What if you could see the front AND side of something at once?”
- Show 1–2 Cubism examples (or just explain it simply). ([Tate](#))

### 5–15 min | Guided practice / demo

- Demonstrate face split + simple feature shapes + bold color planning.

### 15–38 min | Independent practice

- Students draw, outline (optional), and color.

### 38–43 min | Clean up

- “Caps on, scraps in, art flat.”

### 43–45 min | Closure

- 2–3 share-outs: “Point to one shape you’re proud of.”

## Option B: Two 30-minute classes

**Day 1 (30):** Intro + full drawing + outline

**Day 2 (30):** Bold color + background + reflection

## Student Art Examples

## Cross-Curricular & Extension Resources

### Resource 1 (ELA / Writing Prompt)

Have students write a 3–5 sentence artist statement:

- “My portrait shows multiple viewpoints by...”
- “I chose these colors because...”
- “Cubism makes me think about...”

Kid-friendly Cubism explanation to pair with writing:

<https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/types-of-art/cubism>

([Tate](#))

## Resource 2 (Social Studies / Art History Connection)

Mini-lesson: Cubism began in the early 1900s and changed how artists represented reality, focusing on geometric planes and flattened space. ([The Museum of Modern Art](#))

<https://www.moma.org/collection/terms/cubism>

([The Museum of Modern Art](#))

## Differentiation Strategies

- 1. Break it into “Draw Day” + “Color Day”**
  - Session 1: head split + features + outline
  - Session 2: bold color + background + reflection  
This helps perfectionists and slower workers feel calm and successful.
- 2. Feature shape banks (for students who freeze)**
  - Give a mini reference strip: 3 eye options, 3 nose options, 3 mouth options (all closed shapes).
  - Their job is to choose, not reinvent the wheel.
- 3. Early finisher upgrades**
  - Add patterned background (stripes, checkerboard, zigzags)
  - Create a second version with a twist: “Only warm colors” or “Only cool colors” or “Complementary pairs”
  - Write an artist statement or title it like a museum piece

## Assessment & Reflection

### Quick Rubric (3-2-1)

Criteria	3 (Yes!)	2 (Almost)	1 (Not yet)
<b>Two viewpoints</b>	Clear half profile + half front	Somewhat clear	One view only
<b>Closed shapes</b>	Features are closed + ready to color	Some open shapes	Mostly open shapes
<b>Bold color choices</b>	Bright, varied, high contrast	Some variety	Minimal variety
<b>Craftsmanship</b>	Careful coloring + clean-ish work	Some rushed areas	Very rushed/messy

## Reflection Option A (super fast, informal)

### Turn-and-talk (1 minute):

- “Point to one shape you like best and tell why.”
- “Where do you see the front view? Where do you see the profile?”

## Reflection Option B (more formal)

### Exit ticket (index card):

1. “Cubism means...”
2. “I showed two viewpoints by...”
3. “Next time I would...”

## Call to Action

If you teach this, I want to SEE it. 🙌

Send photos of students working + a few finished portraits (first names covered, of course), and I'll help you build a little “Cubism Gallery” collection you can reuse year after year.