

1. Lesson Title

Minecraft Self-Portrait Grid Drawing (Colored Pencil Pixel Art) Lesson for Grades 2, 3, 4, & 5

2. Grade Levels

Grades 2–5 (easily scaffolded up/down)

3. Lesson Objective

Students will create a **pixel-style self-portrait** inspired by Minecraft by **drawing on a grid using only vertical and horizontal lines**, applying careful counting, simple symmetry choices, and **neat square-by-square coloring** with colored pencils.

4. NCAS Visual Arts Standards

(Condensed where the same anchor is hit across multiple grades.)

- **VA:Cr1.1.2/3/4/5a:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work (brainstorm / elaborate / multiple approaches / combine ideas). (web.ped.nm.gov)
- **VA:Cr2.1.2/3/4/5a:** Organize and develop artistic ideas and work (experiment, plan, and make). (nationalartsstandards.org)
- **VA:Cr2.3.2/3/4/5a:** Revise and complete artistic work (refine craftsmanship; share finished work). (nationalartsstandards.org)
- **VA:Re7.2.2/3/4/5a:** Perceive and analyze artistic work (describe what you notice; interpret choices). (nationalartsstandards.org)
- **VA:Cn10.1.2/3/4/5a:** Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art (self-portrait + personal identity). (nationalartsstandards.org)

5. Lesson Description

This is a **high-engagement, low-mess** self-portrait that sneaks in a bunch of math while kids think they're "just making Minecraft." Win-win. Students use a provided grid template to build a blocky face using **only straight lines** (vertical/horizontal), then color carefully so the "pixels" look clean and intentional.

Teaching notes (aka: the stuff that saves your sanity):

- This looks best when you **slow them down**: "Color like a printer, not like a race car."

- Have a “**3-square rule**”: before adding new colors, they must fully color **3 squares neatly** to show they’re in control.
- Colored pencil > crayon for neat pixel edges, but crayons work if you lean into “bold” pixel style.

6. Vocabulary

- **Grid**: A set of evenly spaced horizontal and vertical lines that create squares.
- **Pixel**: A tiny square of color that makes up a bigger image (like digital art).
- **Vertical**: Lines going up and down.
- **Horizontal**: Lines going side to side.
- **Symmetry**: When parts of an image match or mirror each other (often left/right). ([khanacademy.org](https://www.khanacademy.org))
- **Proportion**: The size relationships between parts (eyes, nose, mouth).
- **Craftsmanship**: Careful, neat construction and coloring.

7. Materials

For the class (24–35 students):

- **Minecraft self-portrait grid template** (1 per student)
- **Pencils + good erasers**
- **Black fine-tip marker** or black crayon (for bold outlines)
- **Colored pencils** (recommended)
- **Crayons** (okay substitute)
- Optional: rulers (for kids who need extra line support), skin-tone pencil set, pencil sharpeners, scrap paper for “color testing”

Prep:

- Print templates.
- Decide whether you want:
 1. **Everyone uses the same sample face** (easier, faster), or
 2. **Kids customize hair/eyes/shirt** (more personal, best for grades 3–5)

Quick “material care” script for kids:

- “Colored pencils stay sharp = your pixels stay sharp.”
- “Press medium, not *murder-the-paper* hard.”
- “Outline last if you tend to over-erase.”

Affiliate disclaimer (as promised):

Some links in this materials list are affiliate links—meaning I may earn a small commission at no

extra cost to you, and I only share the exact stuff I'd use in my own art room because your sanity (and your supply budget) matters.

8. Lesson Sequence

Option A: One 45-minute class

0–5 min | Introduction

- Show your example (the one you attached is perfect).
- Hook: “Today we’re doing art the way a video game does it—one square at a time.”

5–15 min | Guided practice / Demo

- Model how to:
 - Find the center line
 - Draw a simple block head shape using only straight lines
 - Place eyes evenly (count squares!)
 - Add hair + neck + shirt blocks
- Do a quick class check: “Thumbs up if your left and right eye take up the same number of squares.”

15–35 min | Independent practice

- Students complete drawing + begin coloring.
- Teacher circulates with 3 focus prompts:
 1. “Count your squares.”
 2. “Mirror your sides (if you want symmetry).”
 3. “Color every square evenly.”

35–42 min | Clean up

- “Cap it, stack it, wipe it.” (Simple routines = peaceful endings.)

42–45 min | Closure

- 2-minute gallery walk: “Find one portrait with really clean pixel coloring and compliment it.”

Option B: Two 30-minute classes

Day 1 (30): intro + demo + complete full drawing outline + start coloring (focus: structure)

Day 2 (30): finish coloring + outline + reflection (focus: craftsmanship)

9. Student Art Examples

Show a **range**: one super simple, one medium detail, one very personalized. That helps kids understand there's no single "right" Minecraft face—just different design choices.

Teacher script ideas:

- "Same assignment, *wildly different results*—that's how we know it's real art."
- "Minecraft style is blocky on purpose. Clean squares = chef's kiss."

[INCLUDE A RANGE OF COMPLETED STUDENT EXAMPLES HERE]

10. Step-by-Step Instructions

(These are the "do it with me" steps for your demo.)

1. **Name it** on the back. (Because... elementary.)
2. **Find the center** of the grid lightly with your finger or a faint vertical guideline.
3. **Draw the head outline** using only horizontal/vertical lines (blocky steps are encouraged).
4. **Add the hair shape** on top/sides (also blocky).
5. **Place the eyes**:
 - Mark two equal eye rectangles left and right.
 - Count squares so both eyes match size and placement.
6. **Add pupils/eyebrows** as small rectangles.
7. **Add nose/mouth** (simple rectangle mouth works great).
8. **Add neck + shirt** as rectangles.
9. **Check symmetry (optional)**: Are both sides balanced? If not, do you *want* it that way?
10. **Color neatly** one square at a time:
 - Fill every square fully to the edges.
 - Keep skin/hair/shirt colors consistent (unless you're intentionally doing patterns).
11. **Outline last** with black marker/crayon for that bold Minecraft look.
12. **Final check**: erase stray pencil smudges, sign your name small.

11. Google Slides

Slide-by-slide outline (ready to build):

1. Title slide: "Minecraft Self-Portrait Grid Drawing" + example image
2. Objectives + "What you'll learn today" (grid, pixels, straight lines, neat coloring)
3. Vocabulary (grid, pixel, symmetry, vertical/horizontal)
4. Real-world connection: "Digital art is built from pixels"
5. Materials + how to use colored pencils neatly

6. Rules of the day: “Only straight lines. Count squares. Color like a printer.”
7. Step 1–3: head + hair demo (with simple diagram)
8. Step 4–6: eyes placement + counting squares
9. Step 7–8: mouth + neck + shirt
10. Coloring expectations (good vs. rushed example)
11. Optional challenge: add a background in pixel blocks
12. Clean-up steps
13. Reflection question + share-out

12. Cross-Curricular & Extension Resources

1. **Math (Symmetry + Pixel Art):** Minecraft Education lesson “Symmetry in Pixel Art” (great tie-in activity or station).
URL: <https://education.minecraft.net/en-us/lessons/symmetry-in-pixel-art> (education.minecraft.net)
2. **Math (Line of Symmetry practice):** Khan Academy “Symmetry review / Line of symmetry” (quick practice before or after art).
URL: <https://www.khanacademy.org/math/ka-math-class-6-ncf/x4b7d4eb59323647f:symmetry/x4b7d4eb59323647f:line-of-symmetry/a/symmetry-review> ([khanacademy.org](https://www.khanacademy.org))

13. Differentiation Strategies

1. **Two-template system (instant confidence boost):**
 - Template A: lightly guided face shape + eye boxes already started
 - Template B: blank grid for advanced students
2. **Chunk it into sessions (for slower workers):**
 - Session 1: outline only + start flat colors
 - Session 2: finish coloring + outline + reflection
Early finishers get extension tasks (below).
3. **Early finisher extensions (no extra prep):**
 - Add a **pixel background** (favorite color pattern, “sky/ground,” or a simple scene)
 - Create a second version: “Minecraft You in 20 years” or “Minecraft You as a superhero”
 - Write a 3–5 sentence **artist statement**: “What choices did you make and why?”

14. Assessment & Reflection

Simple rubric (4-point scale)

| Criteria | 4 Exceeds | 3 Meets | 2 Developing | 1 Beginning |
|----------|-----------|---------|--------------|-------------|
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|-------------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Grid accuracy & counting | Features placed accurately with consistent square counting | Mostly accurate; minor placement errors | Several miscounts affect features | Little evidence of grid use |
| Straight-line control | Clean vertical/horizontal lines; strong shapes | Lines mostly controlled | Wobbly/unclear shapes in places | Shapes hard to read |
| Craftsmanship (coloring) | Squares filled evenly to edges; consistent pressure | Mostly even; a few gaps | Many gaps/uneven pressure | Rushed coloring, lots of blank spots |
| Personalization / choices | Clear intentional choices (hair/skin/shirt/background) | Some choices shown | Limited choices | Minimal effort to personalize |

Two assessment options (pick your vibe)

Option A: Quick & informal (5 minutes):

- “Glow & Grow” sticky note:
 - Glow: one thing you did well
 - Grow: one thing you’d improve next time

Option B: More formal (10 minutes):

- Short written reflection:
 1. Where did you use counting or symmetry?
 2. What was your hardest part—drawing or coloring neatly?
 3. What choice makes your portrait feel like *you*?

15. Call to Action

If you try this lesson, **send photos** of students working and a few finished portraits (first names covered is totally fine). I’d love to feature them as real classroom examples so other teachers can see how many different awesome outcomes are possible.