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**Art Masterpiece: *Portrait of Dora Maar\**, by Pablo Picasso**

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**Keywords:** Cubism

**Grade(s):** 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>

**Activity:** Cubist portrait

\*Alternate artwork: *Portrait of Marie-Therese*



**About the Artist:**

- Pablo Picasso was born in Malaga, Spain on October 25, 1881. His father was an art teacher and encouraged him to paint and draw. From the age of seven, Picasso received formal artistic training from his father in figure drawing and oil painting.
- Picasso's father and uncle decided to send the young artist to Madrid's Royal Academy of San Fernando, the country's foremost art school. At age 16, Picasso set off for the first time on his own, but he disliked formal instruction and stopped attending classes soon after enrolment.
- Picasso's painting style changed more over the period of his lifetime than any other artist. He was always trying new and different things.
- Picasso had several different "periods" of painting. His first period was called his "Blue" period. During his "Blue Period" he portrayed blind, poor, and despairing people on mainly blue canvas.

- His next period was the “Rose Period”. During this time he painted harlequins and circus performers in lighter and warmer color schemes.
- Then in 1907 he started the development of “Cubism”. Cubism has been considered the most influential art movement of the 20th century.
- In Cubist artwork, objects are analyzed, broken up and reassembled in an abstracted form—instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.
- Picasso worked with cubism for many years and was always changing it. He took figures from the world and changed them into geometric shapes such as cubes, cones, and rectangular planes.
- Picasso became known for painting people that didn’t look the way they were supposed to look. Picasso was always shocking people by painting people who had noses and eyes in the wrong places!
- The thing that made Picasso such a great artist was his originality. He had the imagination to try new and different things through his entire life. He was a great painter but also made sculptures, prints, drawings, pottery dishes and bowls and even made costumes and scenery for plays.
- The total number of artworks he produced has been estimated at 50,000: 1,885 paintings; 1,228 sculptures; 2,880 ceramics, roughly 12,000 drawings, many thousands of prints, and numerous tapestries and rugs.
- Picasso became more famous in his lifetime than any other artist. He continued to work until his death in 1973 of heart failure at the age of 92.

### **About the Artwork:**

This painting is a portrait of Dora Maar, who was a French photographer, poet and painter. In this portrait, Picasso depicts her simultaneously facing us, and looking within. She is presented both profile and full face. Then, one eye is shown looking inward, toward herself. The eyelashes of this eye are painted to emphasize this inward direction, yet the pupil looks straight out. The other eye, which Picasso has surprisingly painted red, looks out at the world and us; while the red shows intensity, the curves and symmetry of this eye give it serenity.

Picasso was the first painter to show two aspects of a face in this form, simultaneously. Although it first appears odd, soon we can accept the different views, profile and full face, as one face.

Look at the colors of her face: white, yellow, red, blue, green, pink and black. When you smile, the fattest part of your cheek is called the “apple” of the cheek. In Dora’s cheek, there’s a delicate pink “apple” with a small green leaf under the eye. And we can see a small yellow lemon within the apple – maybe her smile is both sweet and tart? Another striking image is the way her sharp red-painted nails are placed against the soft curve of her cheek.

The colors and forms of the body are also interesting. It is difficult to distinguish between the chair and Dora Maar. Her arms are just as black and flat as the chair's, and they have the same shape. . The back of her chair and Dora Maar's torso form one black rectangle with a triangle at its base. The red triangular shape is her red plaid skirt. Arising from the point of the triangle, are radiating black lines which look like a flower bouquet in front of her chest.

### **Possible Questions:**

1. Picasso once said, “I paint objects as I think them, not as I see them.” What do you notice about the way Picasso painted this portrait?
2. Does this realistic to you?
3. Do you see the different perspectives of the same person?
4. Do you see distortion or exaggeration in this portrait? Where?
5. Describe the colors, are they realistic? (Some parts are, like her red nail polish; but not her red eyeball.)
6. What do you notice about the lines in the portrait? (Very thick- to emphasize shapes)
7. Do you see any repetition in the portrait?
8. Why do you think Picasso painted this painting? What do you think inspired it? (He loved Dora Maar; she was his inspiration for this painting and other paintings he made of her.)

**Activity:** Cubist portrait

### **Materials Needed:**

- Black construction paper 9” X 12,” one sheet per student.

- Assorted colors of construction paper cut in half (6" X 9"), two half-sheets per student
- Assorted colors of construction paper (or scraps of paper)
- Portrait templates (at the end of the lesson), cut out of poster board or thin cardboard, six of each set for students to share
- Black medium or large felt-tipped markers, one per student
- White oil pastels or crayons, one per student
- Elmer's glue or glue sticks, one per student
- Scissors, one per student
- Pencils, one per student (students should have their own pencils)

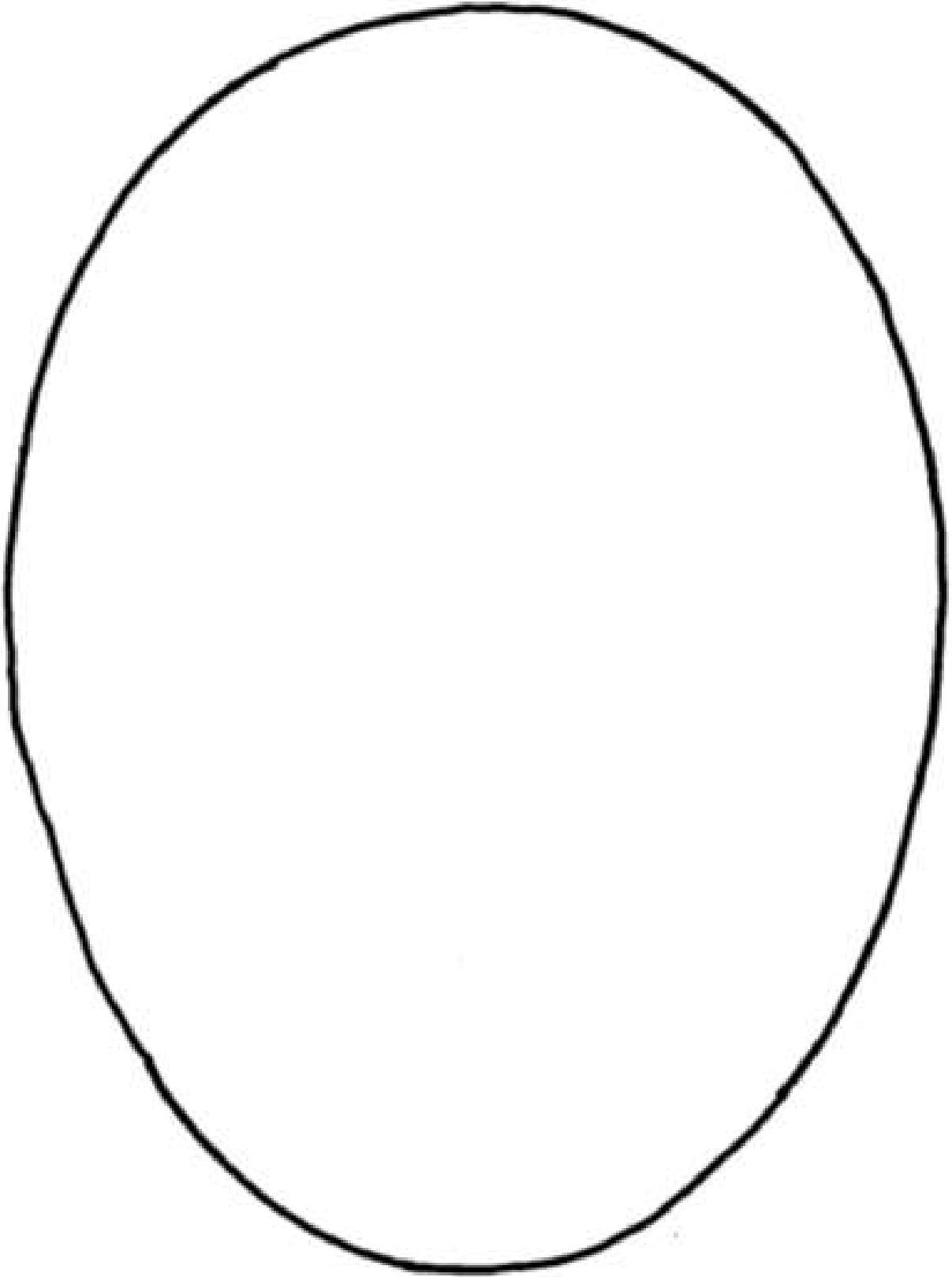
*Prepare ahead:* Print out templates onto poster board or thin cardboard and cut out six sets (one oval face shape and one profile face shape make a "set.") These will be used by the students to trace their Cubist faces. Templates are found at the end of this lesson.

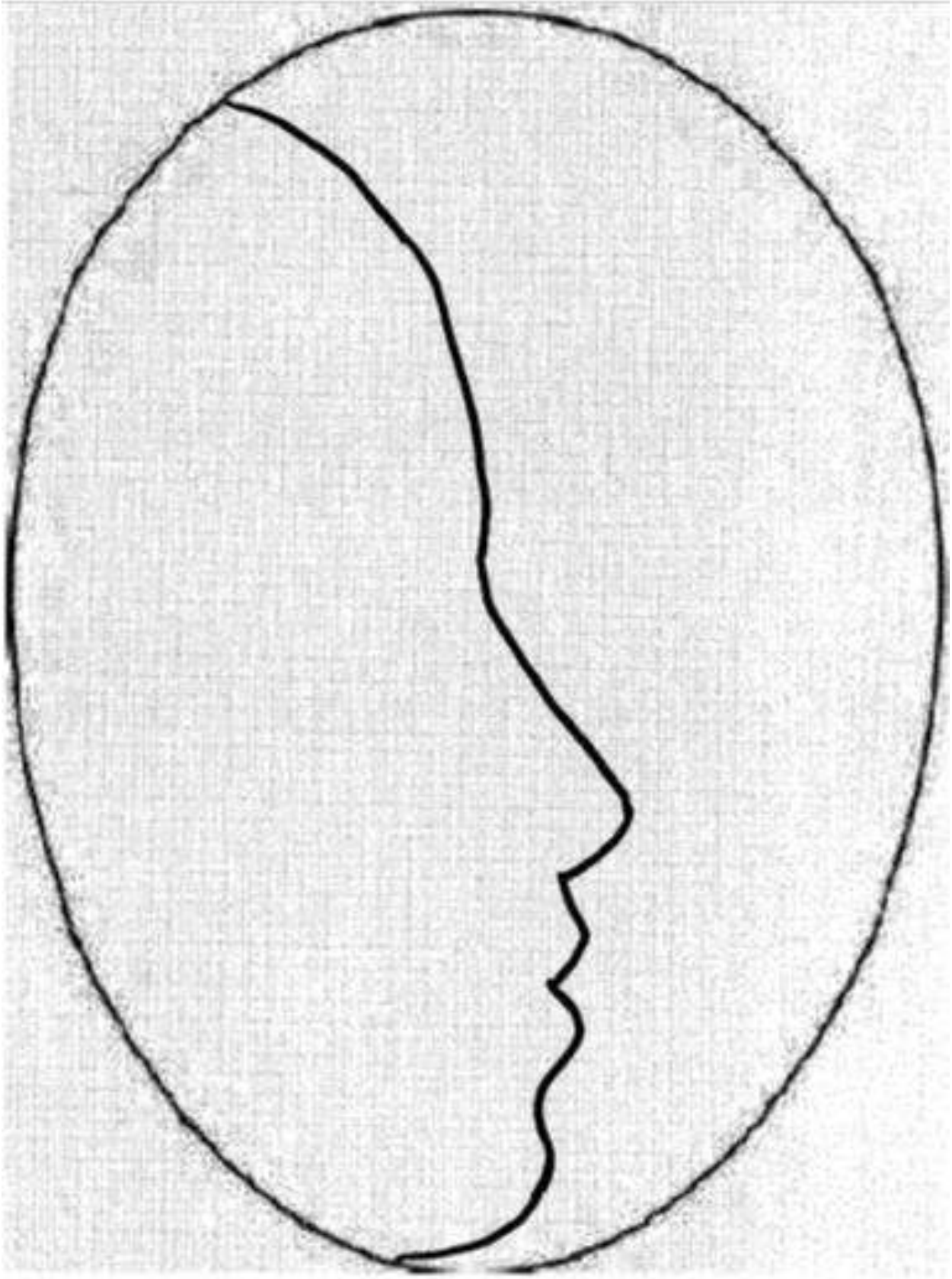
**Process:**

1. Pass out two of the half-sheets (two different colors) to each student. If they want to, they can quickly trade colors with classmates, but they should have two different colors when they are done.
2. Pass out the sets of templates and explain that students must share. Using a pencil, they should trace the outline of the profile face shape on one color, and the outline of the oval face shape on the other. Once they are done with the template, have them pass them along until everyone has traced both shapes.
3. Collect all six template sets. Save them for the next class.
4. Pass out scissors. Have students cut out their two portrait shapes.
5. Pass out the black construction paper and glue. Students should center the oval shape on the black construction paper and glue it in place. Then they can choose if they want the profile face shape to be facing left or right, and have them glue it into place on top of the oval face shape.
6. Next, using the assorted construction papers (or scraps of papers) students should cut out various shapes to add features to their portraits.

- a. It's easiest if they work with one half of the face at a time. For example, if they work on the "forward facing" face first, they can make sure the eye and mouth and ear are also facing forward. Then if they work on the profile "sideways facing" face, they can make sure the eye is facing sideways, and the mouth, etc.
  - b. Using the colored papers, students could make a neck, two different eyes (the "profile" eye needs to be facing in the correct side direction), mouth, ears, hair, eyeglasses, hat, etc.
  - c. Remind them to be creative in their use of colors. The mouth doesn't have to be pink or red; they eye doesn't have to be brown or blue.
  - d. If they use geometric shapes (squares, circles, rectangles, triangles) instead of organic shapes, their portrait will look more "Cubist." They should glue all the features in place.
7. When they are done gluing all the details on their face, have students use the black marker to outline the contours of the facial features. This also helps give their portrait a true "Picasso" look.
  8. Pass out the white crayons/oil pastels and have students sign their name on the front. If they wish, they can also add a title to their artwork.
  9. Hang to display.







Chandler Unified School District **Art Masterpiece Program**, Chandler, Arizona, USA



Examples:



**Parent Note:**

Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973), was a Spanish painter, sculptor, printmaker, ceramicist, stage designer, poet and playwright who spent most of his adult life in France. As one of the greatest and most influential artists of the 20th century, he is known for co-founding the Cubist movement, the invention of constructed sculpture, the co-invention of collage, and for the wide variety of styles that he helped develop and explore.

In Art Masterpiece today, students created a portrait done in a Cubist style.

*Portrait of Dora Maar, 1937*



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*Portrait of Dora Maar, 1937*





**"Good heavens! Pablo got an 'F' in art! . . . Well, I'm just going to go down to that school myself and meet this teacher face to face!"**