

# Micrography Self-Portrait



**Grade:** 5th

**Medium:** Drawing

**Learning Objective:** Students will draw a self-portrait using the art technique of micrography.

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## Elements of Art

**Line:** an element of visual arts; the flat path of a dot through space used by artists to control the viewer's eye movement; a long narrow mark or stroke made on or in a surface; a thin mark made by a pencil, pen, or brush. The repetition of lines (and/or shapes) is used to create texture, pattern, and gradations of value.

## Additional Vocabulary Words

**Contour line:** the line that defines a form or the edge of an objects outline.

**Contour line drawing:** a line drawing that follows the visible edges of a shape or form, both exterior and interior.

**Micrography:** artwork created from text that forms an image when viewed at a distance. An interplay between the text and image.

**Self-portrait:** an image of oneself drawn or painted by the artist.

## Materials & Supplies

- 8.5 x 11" student photographs in black and white
- Pencil
- Eraser
- Fine Point Sharpie
- Ultra-Fine Point Sharpie
- 8.5 x 11" white copy paper
- 8.5 x 11" tracing paper
- Tape for hanging in window while tracing
- Camera
- Printer

## Context (History and/or Artists)

Wikipedia definition: "Micrography, also called microcalligraphy, is a Jewish art form developed in the 9th century, with parallels in Christianity and Islam, utilizing minute Hebrew letters to form

representational, geometric and abstract designs. Colored micrography is especially distinctive because these rare artworks are customarily rendered in black and white."

Micrography draws a design, portrait, or scene associated with the subject by using words composed of tiny letters, whose forms are barely legible to the naked eye. Widely used in medieval Hebrew manuscripts, micrography experienced a revival at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. It has been esteemed by Jews, because it makes it possible to draw a picture of a sacred event without "casting away" the sacred words which describe it in a classical religious text; thus, micrography permits the welding together of the visage of a saint or sage with the very words he uttered or which were written in praise of him.



Image from the Library of Congress: Micrography from the collections of the Hebraic Section. This lithograph of a micrography was completed in 1881 by Moses Elijah Goldstein.

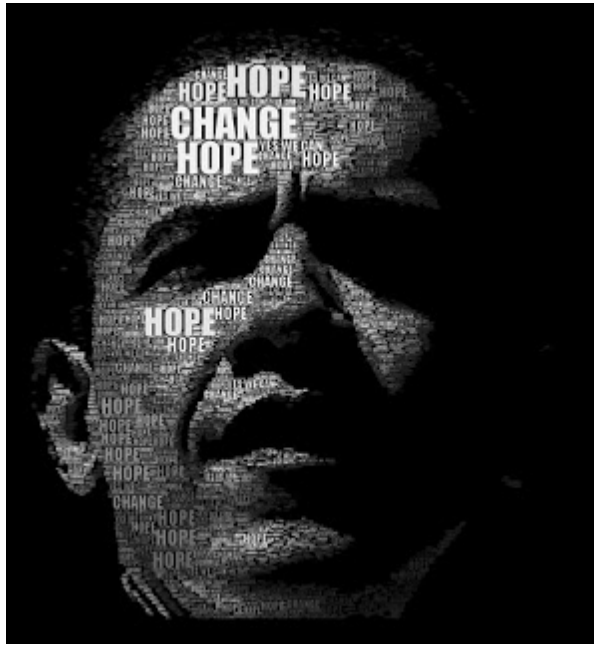


Image from  
<http://gawno.com/2009/05/micrography-text-art-and-typography/>.



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### **Advanced Preparation**

Take black and white photos of each student. The picture should be ahead shot and include the neck and some shoulders.

### **Tips & Tricks**

Since students will be writing positive comments about themselves, you may let the teacher know ahead of time, so students will have many ideas to include in their portrait. Students could write 40 positive comments ahead of time and bring the list to the art lesson.

### **Discussion Points**

- This lesson is inspired by the art form of Micrography. Show the example of the ship. Ask the question, “What is happening in the artwork?” Ask for evidence, “How do you know that?” or “Point to the part you are talking about.”
- Discuss how people used this art form to convey both words and imagery in a single picture. In the ship image, the man in front, is the person who says the words that creates the ship imagery.
- Show contemporary examples of images of Micrography. Discuss the works of art. Ask what type of feeling the artwork conveys.
- Define and discuss different types of portraits and self-portraits. Ask, “Why is it meaningful to make self-portraits?”
- Define contour line. Discuss how the students will use the contour line as one step in their artwork.

### **Reflection Point (Assessment of Learning Objectives)**

- Can the student tell me about micrography?
- Did the student create a line self-portrait using words to portray themselves?

### **Instructions for Lesson**

Demonstrate the process for the class.

1. Each student will start with their black and white headshot.



2. Tape the tracing paper to the picture. Trace very basic outlines of the face with the larger fine tip Sharpie including the neck, shoulders, eyebrows, hairlines. Avoid tracing teeth and do not make a triangle for the nose. Instead make an "L" shape, the bridge and nostrils will work best.



3. Hang the photo page that is now traced with black marker, in a window and tape tracing paper over it. Trace with the large, fine tip Sharpie over the same lines.



4. Hang tracing paper with the Sharpie outline (the contour lines) in window with copy paper on top.
5. Trace the outlines, LIGHTLY with pencil on copy paper.



6. Take the copy paper back to the desk. With the smaller Sharpie (ultra-fine tip) write words or sentences that describe you as you follow the pencil contour lines. Large spaces of hair can be filled in with words or left as an outline. The size of the letters can be stretched bigger to fill in a space like the lips or eyebrows. Docents may want to give prompts to students like favorite color, sport, book or have the students write a list of positive characteristics about themselves ahead of time.
7. Erase pencil lines.





## References and Attributions:

<https://www.incredibleart.org/lessons/high/micrography.html>

<http://art-paper-scissors.blogspot.com/2011/01/micrography-portrait.html>

Images from:

<http://gawno.com/2009/05/micrography-text-art-and-typography/>.

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/a-menorah-and-micrography-judaic-treasures/>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micrography>

<https://blogs.loc.gov/international-collections/2018/02/micrography-in-the-jewish-tradition/>

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## **Notes for Educators**

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Thinking Skills**

Observing – Using your senses to learn about something in detail.

Making connections – Connecting new information with schema.

### **WA State Learning Standards**

(VA:Cr.1.1.5) Creating – Investigate, plan, make. Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for artmaking.

(VA:Cr2.1.5) Creating – Investigate. Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

(VA:Re7.2.5) Responding – Perceive and analyze artistic work. Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery.

### **Arts Integration Opportunities**

Students can write an autobiography; use poetry for the text.