

Americans Who Tell the Truth

Lesson Plan #1:

Who are the AWTT portrait subjects?

Check out and learn about three or more portrait subjects.

Reading Assignment: The Artist's Statement

“Art can transform the way a message is articulated and received. The medium of art is aesthetic, visual, and visceral. Non-verbal. It doesn't attack the viewer but invites inquiry and participation. It gives the viewer space to think, feel, react and respond...or not. The viewer becomes the active participant.

These portraits are dedicated to all those who have fought with such persistence and courage to close the gap between what the United States says about equality, justice, and democracy and what it does. Justice is not guaranteed in our Constitution; it is guaranteed by the love we have for it in our hearts, the truths we are willing to tell, and the degree to which we are willing to struggle for it.

The art of the portraits tries to call us back to essential issues and values, at the same time providing us with models of vision, courage, compassion and citizenship. This art does not insist that you agree with everything it says; it wants you, though, to look it in the eye, to know that what you see is an honest encounter with a real person with real courage working to close the gap between what we say about the common good and what we do. The portraits aspire to be a community of trust. You may disagree with some, but you can trust their intentions. And, in a sense, you could say that all of them are really one portrait, an historical portrait of a country struggling to live up to itself, to discover itself, to become its own dream.” -- Robert Shetterly

Essential Question:

How does art help us see and understand issues and values?

Lesson Description:

Explore the AWTT Website (www.americanswhotellthetruth.org)

- Go to the AWTT website (www.americanswhotellthetruth.org)
- Click on Portraits Gallery tab
- Select five portrait subjects
- Based on the portraits, what are some qualities you think the people might possess?
- Read their biographies
- From these five portrait subjects, select 3 people whose stories you want to explore – one person with whom you are familiar, two whom you don't know.
- Complete the information below about each portrait subject you choose.

Activity:

For each of three portrait subjects, complete the following:

1. What issue did/does this person address? _____

2. What qualities make this person worthy of studying? _____

3. Why do you think Robert Shetterly chose to paint this person? _____

Discussion/Suggested Lesson Expansion:

In a small group (3-4) (This can be done in breakout rooms virtually.):

- Each person shares information about two of their chosen portraits.
- Explain why they think Shetterly chose them and what issues the portrait subjects address.
- As a group, pick two truth tellers to share with the whole class.