

Laura Wheeler Waring

African-American Portraitist



W. E. B. Du Bois (Waring portrait, public domain)

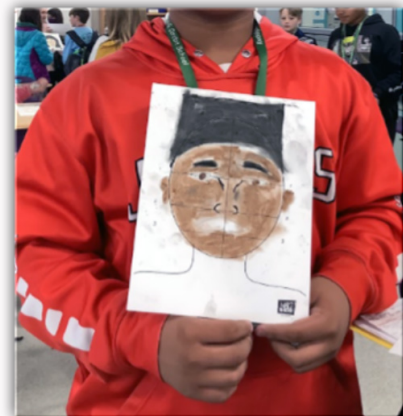
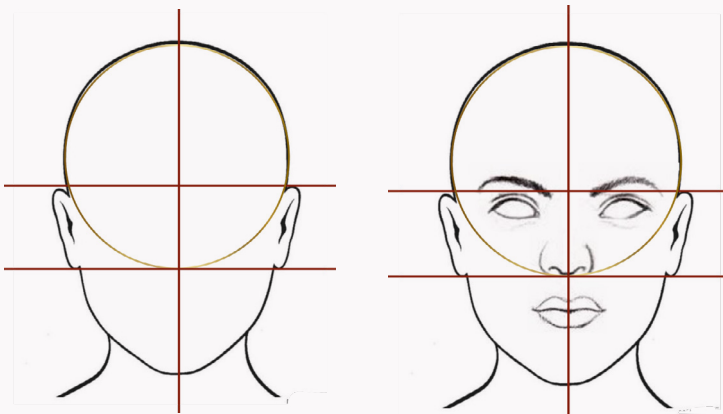
Middle School Activities

WHAT WE LEARNED:

- **Laura Wheeler Waring** was an African American portrait artist. We defined each of those terms.
- The following concepts were introduced: slavery, underground railroad, civil rights, non-violent protests, scholarship, illustration, landscape, portrait
- We identified places important to Laura's life: Hartford, Connecticut; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Paris, France; and Harlem, New York.
- We discussed her role at Cheyney University and her participation in the special Exhibition, *Portraits of Outstanding Citizens of Negro Origin*, sponsored by the Harmon Foundation.
- We were introduced to the following people: Harriet Tubman, James Weldon Johnson, Anna Washington Derry, W.E.B. DuBois, Marian Anderson, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr.

ART ACTIVITY: PROPORTIONAL FACIAL DRAWING

The students used a template to draw a proportionally accurate face of their choice. The students noticed common mistakes and corrected them with knowledge.



FOR PARENTS

February is a good month to learn about African American history. Take advantage of this time to explore the books, videos and concepts that this lesson introduces.



COMFORTS OF HOME

Harriet Powers was a poor daughter of enslaved people born in Athens, Georgia in 1837. As an adult, she made this quilt which is now on display in the Smithsonian Museum.

Can you make your own version of The Bible Quilt by Harriet Powers? This copying activity will help you to notice details that you might otherwise overlook. It is a way of analyzing an artist's work.

Materials:

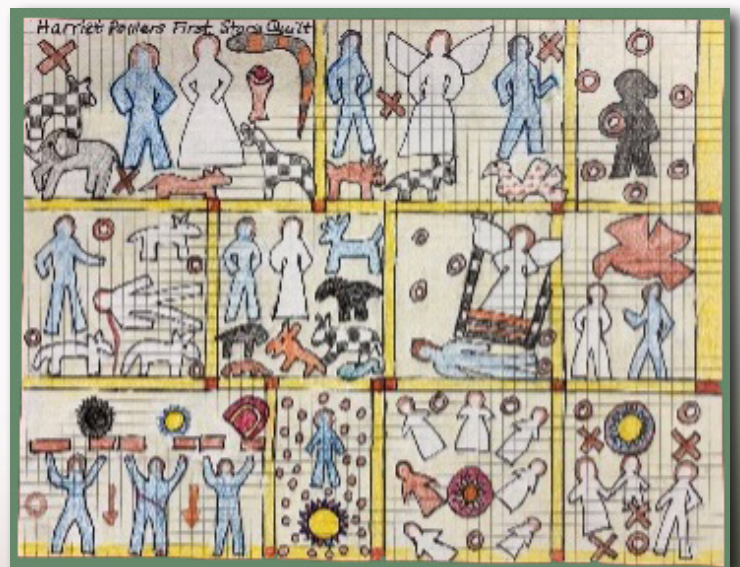
- Piece of Graph paper
- Pencil
- Colored Pencils
- Ultra-Fine Point Black Sharpie
- Piece of matboard or construction paper on which to mount your finished work

More images of Harriet's Bible Quilt can be found [HERE](#).

Directions:

Quilters often work from patterns. For this activity, however, you will look at the finished quilt and then draw a pattern on graph paper.

- With the clear image of the finished quilt, using a pencil, lightly sketch out the lines that separate the scene sections.
- Then, moving scene by scene, sketch out the figures, animals and stars. Notice how large each item is in comparison to the others in the box.
- Using colored pencils, fill in the colors. Outline the whole work with an ultra-fine point black Sharpie for a finished look.



“I’M GONNA LET IT SHINE” COLLAGE OR PAINTING

Alma Thomas was one of the artists that Laura Wheeler Waring painted in the 1944 exhibition, *Portraits of Outstanding Americans of Negro Origin*, for and organized by the Harmon Foundation. Alma was an amazing female artist.

Materials:

- One sheet of 9’x12’ White construction paper or 8 ½”x 11” copy paper
- Brightly colored sheets of construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue stick

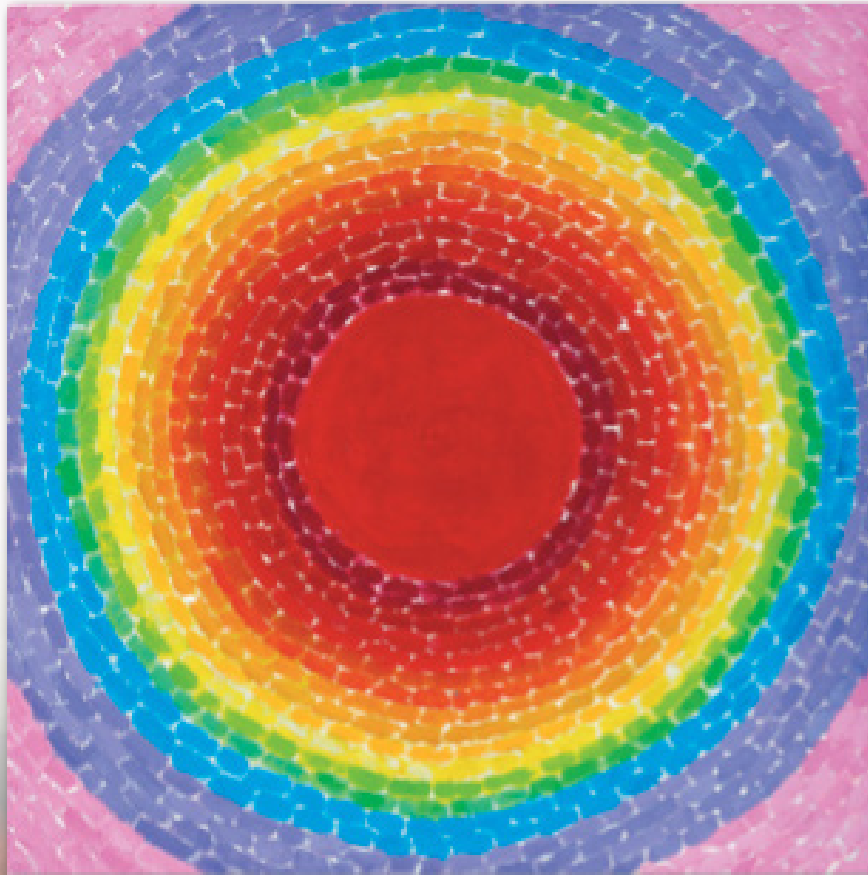
Directions:

Decide if you want to have a solid circle in the center of your work, like some of Alma’s.

- Cut a circle out of the colored construction paper for the center.
- Cut the bright colored papers into ½”x ½” squares or ½” x 1” rectangles.
- Lay out the various colored collage pieces in a design, the way that you like.
- Glue the pieces onto the white piece of paper for the finished design.

Variation: Instead of using paper pieces for a collage, use acrylic paint .

A Fantastic Sunset, Alma Thomas (1970)



FURTHER EXPLORATION

Also see the elementary list for many more fantastic books, including artist-focused books.

African Culture Stories

A Pride of African Tales by Donna L. Washington (Anthology of moral tales)

Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai by Claire A. Nivola

Civil Rights Stories

The Children's Crusade of 1963 Boost Civil Rights by Heather Adamson

The Civil Rights Movement for Kids by Mary Turck

The Woolworth's Sit-In by Rachel Tisdale

Nelson Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom by Nelson Mandela
Abridged by Chris Van Wyk

A Voice of Her Own: The Story of Phillis Wheatley, Slave Poet by Kathryn Lasky

Hidden Figures: Young Readers' Edition by Margot Lee Shetterly

Freedom over Me: Eleven Slaves, Their Lives and Dreams brought to Life by Ashley Bryan

Other Great Stories and Heroes

Heroes in Black History: True Stories from the Lives of Christian Heroes by Dave and Neta Jackson (highly recommended)

Videos:

- [PBS AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: MARIAN ANDERSON](#)
- [WINSLOW HOMER: A VISIT FROM OLD MISTRESS EDUCATIONAL GUIDE](#)
- [JACOB LAWRENCE: THE LIBRARY EDUCATIONAL GUIDE](#)
- [DIGITAL COMIC BOOK ABOUT ALMA THOMAS](#)
- [A RIDE FOR LIBERTY—THE FUGITIVE SLAVES PAINTING BY EASTMAN JOHNSON](#)
- **THE SHAW MEMORIAL, 1897 & 1900**
 - Read about it [HERE](#):
 - Listen to an explanation [HERE](#). (Scroll down to **AUDIO**.)

You may want to check out Danielle Coke's current [INSTAGRAM](#) page. Her art is helping get conversations started for hundreds of people.

Due to the changing nature of web resources, M&G strongly urges you as the parent to preview these sites before your child accesses them. The fact that these sites are available on this handout does not imply that M&G endorses their content from the standpoint of morals, philosophy, theology, or scientific hypotheses.

M&G EDUCATIONAL MISSION

Through tours, events, and publications, the Museum & Gallery seeks to partner with educators in fulfilling all of the National Visual Arts Content Standards. By integrating art into the core curriculum, M&G's goals are to teach children to value the arts, to communicate through the arts, to become creative problem solvers through the inclusion of STEAM-related concepts and fully-developed STEAM units, to understand history and culture in light of the arts, to improve literary interest and understanding through visual storytelling, to critique the arts, and to develop an aesthetic awareness of the arts. Through fulfilling the mission, M&G is able to help develop citizens who have the ability to think, feel, and understand the world in which they live.



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