

Introduction to Voice

Look and think:

Examine a self-portrait by Vincent Van Gogh, a famous artist. Think about how Van Gogh expresses his voice—his style or personality. Look carefully at the details of Van Gogh's self-portrait. You can view several of Van Gogh's self-portraits on any of the following websites:

<http://www.values.ch/vangogh.htm>

<http://www.artcyclopedia.com/VanGogh-SelfPortraitMonk.html>

<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/gogh/self/>

Talk about it:

1. What is Van Gogh saying about himself? Complete these two statements as if you were the Van Gogh of this portrait.

I am...

I feel...

Base your statements on the picture, not your own feelings. Share your statements with the class.

2. How do you know what Van Gogh is saying about himself? What evidence can you find in the picture that supports your statements?

Now you try it:

Think about how you would paint a self-portrait. What colors would you use? What expression would you have on your face? How would you be dressed? What kind of background would you have? Would you have anything else in the picture beside yourself? What would these choices say about you? Make a simple sketch of your self-portrait, and write a few sentences describing what you would like your self-portrait to look like.

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Look and think:

Examine a self-portrait by Marc Chagall, another famous artist. Think about how he expresses his voice—his style or personality. Look carefully at the details of Chagall's self-portrait. You can view two of Chagall's self-portraits at either of the following websites:

http://www.fantasyarts.net/Marc_Chagall_Self_portrait.htm
<http://virtualart.admin.tomsk.ru/chagall/p-chagall7.htm>

Talk about it:

1. What is Chagall saying about himself? Complete these two statements as if you were the Chagall of this portrait.

I am...

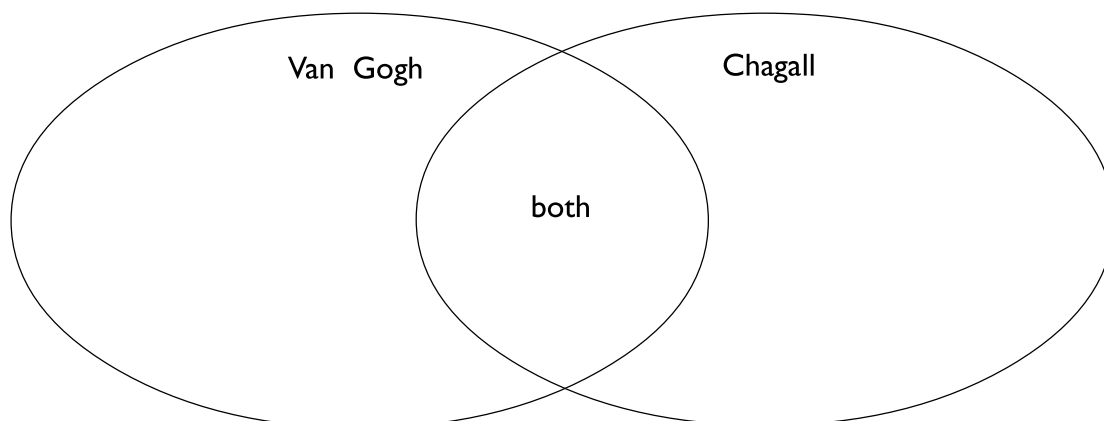
I feel...

Base your statements on the picture, not on your own feelings. Share your statements with the class.

2. How do you know what Chagall is saying about himself? What evidence can you find in the picture that supports your statements? Now consider the question, how does he do that? How does Chagall control voice in his painting?

Now you try it:

Compare and contrast Van Gogh's and Chagall's self-portraits. Use the Venn diagram below to show how they are similar and different. Be certain to focus on the **choices** the artists made.



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Musicians have voice, too. Like visual artists, musicians make conscious choices in order to create an effect. Musicians choose the kinds of instruments they will use, how fast or slow the music is, and whether it is high or low, loud or soft.

Listen and think:

Listen carefully to *Adagio for Strings*, Op. 11 by Samuel Barber or another very subdued instrumental piece, and think about its voice.

Talk about it:

1. What kind of voice does this music have? Pretend the music is a kind of self-portrait. Write two statements that capture the voice of this “self-portrait.”

I am...

I feel...

2. What evidence can you find in the music to support your statements? Be specific. Remember that the composer had choices, and he made conscious decisions.

Now you try it:

Pretend that you are a composer. What kind of music would you write to express your personality? What kinds of instruments would you use? What kinds of rhythm would you use? What about volume? Write a paragraph describing the music you would write to express your personality. What do these choices reveal about you? Think carefully about the choices you would make.