

Year 8 English

Year 8s were given two tasks

1. A series of photographs of people from which they had to create an analysis of 'first impressions' based on their appearance, demeanour and location.
2. A series of famous portraits for which they have had to do roughly the same exercise.

Here is Ava's analysis of Gustav Klimt's Portrait of Adel Block-Bauer



Famous portraits by famous artists: what do they tell us?

Title of portrait selected:

Artist's name: Gustav Klimt: Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer

If there are two people in the painting, note who are you writing about:

What are your first impressions of this 'character'? If you met them, what words would spring to mind?

The woman in the image appears wealthy in my opinion, because of her patterned, seemingly expensive dress. From this, I think that she comes across as confident, regal and self-important.

Describe their appearance as far as you can.

- o The lady is wearing a long, flowing, golden dress, adorned with patterns which make her appearance decadent and expensive. In particular, the pattern down the centre of the dress is a series of triangles which look like the all-seeing eye. This may imply that the lady is wise or possibly that she is being watched.
- o The middle of the floating dress also hugs her figure tightly showing that she is quite skinny. You also see this in her pale, bony arms and accentuated collar bone.
- o The painting also depicts the woman's face, arms, shoulders (etc.) very realistically but her surroundings and dress are not and seem fanciful.
- o I also noticed that she has silver rings around her neck and arms. In my opinion, it looks like a metal collar which is choking her neck.
- o She is also wearing some scruffy makeup which does makes her look older and more manly.

Does the background and lighting the artist chose tell you anything else about this person? If there is no background, why do you think this is?

It is hard to tell whether the lighting is light or dark but in my opinion it likely on the darker side. In the background are more gold, yellow and orange patterns which only surround the woman and not the rest of the image. This may signify that her mind is very busy and full of ideas or thoughts.

Look more closely at their facial expression: which emotions do you think you can read there?

To me, her expression seems melancholy and thoughtful because her eyes seem dark and saddened. Her expression links to some other observations I made: the metal collar choking her neck could show that she feels trapped, the busy background around her could be used to show her confusing thoughts and feelings, the all-seeing eye pattern could show that she feels like someone is watching her, and finally her expression ties this together and in my opinion she looks sad and lost.

Why did you choose this portrait?

I chose this portrait because the decadent and eye catching dress which contrasts with her pale skin and it stood out on the page.

Would you like/not like to meet them in real life? Why/why not?

I do not think I would meet this woman in real life because even though the painting interests me I do not feel that I would need to meet her. However I would like to find out her story and the meaning behind this painting.

Here is Daisy's analysis of David Hockney's Mr & Mrs Clark and Percy

Title of portrait selected: Mr & Mrs Clark and Percy

Artist's name: David Hockney

If there are two people in the painting, note who are you writing about: **The man**

What are your *first impressions* of this 'character'? If you met them, what words would spring to mind?

- He looks disinterested and inattentive.
- He seems very bored and apathetic.
- Self-centred and unaware of others, the way he sits makes it look like he just expects people to come to him and do things for him.
- Relaxed, calm and nonchalant.

Describe their appearance as far as you can.

- His clothes look very nice and quite expensive.
- He has brown shoes which look a little bit like modern-day high heels, but back when this was painted I imagine it was in style for men to wear those kind of shoes.
- He has quite long brown hair
- He has a faint brown beard and moustache.
- One arm is leaning over the back of the chair nonchalantly, and the hand of that arm is holding a cigarette between his fingers.
- It looks like he was an attractive, rich man which might be why he looks quite self-centred.

Does the background and lighting the artist chose tell you anything else about this person?

- It looks like quite a nice house in the background, as there is a balcony, which proves my theory that he is quite rich.
- Although the house looks quite expensive it is also pretty empty and there are a few things just lying around on the floor; the telephone, the lamp. I think this reflects the character of the man; quite empty and plain.
- The lighting is very dull and dim which again makes it seem like the man is quite bored.
- The dull lighting also tells us that the relationship between the man and the woman in the painting might not be a very good one. They also do not look very happy and I think the dim lighting accentuates this.

If there is no background, why do you think this is?

There is a background.

Look more closely at their facial expression: which emotions do you think you can read there?

- The man does not look very happy, he looks bored and uninterested, like I mentioned earlier.
- The other person in the portrait also looks incurious and apathetic, and by the way that the two characters aren't even looking at each other, it makes me believe that they don't like each other very much.
- Their characters look uninterested in each other and what each other are saying and I think their facial expressions show this to me very clearly.
- Although the man looks impassive I think behind his straight face he looks like he could be thinking about something intently, he's just not thinking about what the woman might be saying.

Why did you choose this portrait?

I chose this portrait because it intrigued me, as when I looked it was painted between 1970 and 1971 and the way it is painted kind of looks like a modern day cartoon. I thought it was a very modern painting for its time and I wanted to look more closely into the picture. I also wanted to find out more about the relationship between Mr & Mrs Clark as it doesn't look like they like each other very much and thought studying it would help me understand a lot more about it.

Would you like/not like to meet them in real life?

No, I don't think I would like to meet him or his wife in real life.

Why/why not?

I wouldn't like to meet them in real life because they don't look like very interesting people. I also feel like if I were to meet him and talk to him he wouldn't be listening to what I was saying. However, would like to meet their cat.