



ROYAL  
MUSEUMS  
GREENWICH

# Picture Yourself

The Armada National  
Outreach project

Media activities



## Classroom activity – The Mask of Youth

'The Mask of Youth' is a term given to the portraits and miniatures of Queen Elizabeth I which adopted an idealised image as a template to suspend reality and control her image for propagandistic reasons. She didn't like posing for portraits and 'The Mask of Youth' enabled her to maintain a strong profile of the unmarried and childless queen as still a forceful protector of the land. Her life was spent living behind a mask literally and metaphorically. We know she wore a lot of make-up that contained lead and that would have eaten and damaged her skin over time and led to health issues later in life.

How do we manipulate images in the present day? How do you curate your image to present to the world on social media?

Can we be addicted to presenting an image of ourself that isn't a true representation? Why do we do this? Is it to mask our imperfections and disguise our insecurities, or just to portray a positive image of ourselves? What are the pros and cons? Can it become an addiction?

What is the effect of us only showing one side of ourselves? How does that distort our ideas of everyone's happiness and success? How can that affect us?

Queen Elizabeth I had many faces and the profile she presented to the public would have been different to the one in her private chamber.

As a female queen Elizabeth would have been in a perilous position and may have felt insecure and vulnerable. Despite many challenges throughout her time on the throne, the period of Elizabeth's reign is now referred to as a 'Golden Age'. She was an extremely savvy manager of the royal court and saw England through a succession of religious, economic and political upheavals. Elizabeth modelled to the world the fact that women can cope, and indeed thrive, in power after all.

Explain to your students that they are now going to construct the 'ultimate selfie' of how they think they are perceived by others.

Ask your students to create four portraits of themselves and give each image a hashtag thinking about how:

- Their friends see them
- Their teacher sees them
- Their family sees them
- They see themselves

Ask students to share and present to analyse the content, intention, language and composition of their final pieces.

## Classroom activity – Confronting Stereotypes

'Confronting Stereotypes' is an activity to demonstrate how someone or something represented in the media often appears normal and ordinary and we do not think about their image as being constructed.

**Representation:** The way the media presents events, people and ideas to an audience in the way they choose. When they are repeatedly portrayed in a particular way, we normalise them and they become recognisable and naturalised.

**Prejudice:** When we are offended by feeling judged by those who do not know us or who have preconceived ideas without prior knowledge, e.g., we are ascribed characteristics based on our appearance.

**Stereotypes:** Thinking all people who belong to a certain group are the same and labelling them. People often stereotype someone who might be a member of a group with which they have not yet had first-hand contact. It is a simple way of defining people to exaggerate difference. Making generalisations about groups in society can be a shortcut to fill in the gaps.

Ask your students to discuss what they understand by a 'stereotype'. Can they give examples of stereotypes around class, age gender and ethnicity? Why do we make stereotypes?

**Discuss the following statements:**

- All gay men have great fashion sense
- All young people who wear hoodies are thugs
- All women are bad drivers
- All people with regional accents are less intelligent
- All women are emotional
- Men cannot multitask like women
- All black people are good at dancing and sport
- All disabled people are needy
- All kids are lazy
- The French are always good cooks
- All Asians are clever and good at maths
- All boys who like dancing and theatre are gay
- All blonde women are stupid
- All elderly people are frail and grumpy
- Boys should not cry
- Immigrants are scroungers
- Women do not understand the offside rule in football

**Consider the following questions:**

Did you agree with any of the statements and why?

What do you base your assumptions on?

Should we ever trust a stereotype?

Do stereotypes have any credibility?

Is there ever any amount of truth in the ideology (message) behind a stereotype?

Do stereotypes help us understand the world?

What do you think influenced your decisions?

Can you think of any helpful or positive stereotypes? E.g., you would not ask an old person to help lift a heavy item.

Could we have a world without stereotypes?

Are stereotypes always about a minority group or a less powerful group?

What is wrong with judging people with such little information?

# Classroom activity – The Media as a Powerful Influence

'The Media as a Powerful Influence' is an activity to demonstrate how our attitudes and opinions can be shaped by external influences. The media frequently sensationalises facts. Consequently, the information we receive can be misleading. The media does not invent stereotypes, but by repeatedly using them they can reinforce values and assumptions that we believe are true.

**Discuss how the media can have a powerful influence on our attitudes and how this can impact wider society:**

- How does the media and social media influence our attitudes?
- How does society and the media perpetuate stereotypes?
- What prejudiced attitudes or behaviour could this lead to?
- How do hyped headlines affect readers' views?
- What kinds of attitudes and behaviour can they lead to?
- What problems and behaviour could this create in wider society?

Explain to your students that they are now going to create two headlines about a topic. This could be a topical issue from the day's news or a made-up story.

## **Definitions:**

**Sensationalised headline:** exaggerate the story and try to create a negative headline about the subject matter.

**Factual headline:** base it on facts and aim to provide a balanced view.

Extension: You could ask students to write a news story. Discuss the importance of developing their own understanding and finding out the facts, so they can be confident in their own ideas and opinions.

## **Always remember the FACTS:**

**F:** Find out the facts

**A:** Ask questions

**C:** Challenge what you read or hear

**T:** Think about what you read and hear and form your own opinions

**S:** Share your opinions

## **Classroom activity – Judging a Book by its Cover**

'Judging a Book by its Cover' is an activity to help students appreciate how it feels to be labelled. This activity will enable them to empathise with other groups which can be stereotyped and to challenge the negative labels.

Empathy is both a feeling and the ability to sense another person's emotions as well as imagine what they might be thinking or feeling. Read a topical weighted news report from a newspaper to the class and discuss the following:

- How would you feel to be treated and/or labelled in this way?
- If people respected each other's differences, would they have the same attitudes?
- What could the consequences of pre-judging people be and what are the consequences of these labels?
- How could the prejudiced attitude impact on the individual and group of people?

Explain they now must write an account of the story from the perspective of one of the people involved in the report and create their own version of the story.

Now compare the stories from the same characters and discuss how they are different or similar. How would this change the original story if told from that character's perspective?

Discuss what you think can be done to reduce the influence stereotypes have on societal perceptions of others?

## **Classroom activity – Counter Stereotypes**

'Counter Stereotypes' is an activity to challenge formulaic representations. A countertype goes against a typical idea or image.

Explain to your students they are now going to create a counter stereotype and construct a front cover of a magazine that challenges typical stereotypes, e.g., women used in advertising to promote a commodity. Instead, demonstrate a person doing something different or generate a positive news story about young people doing something unexpected.

Make sure your student identifies the cover lines and sub-headings. The cover line is usually in bold and ties in with the photograph to target the audience. Sub-headings are usually the smaller text positioned above or underneath the cover lines which draw the reader in.

## **Classroom activity – Painting v. Publicity**

John Berger, in his *Ways of Seeing*, described the oil painting as a permanent record. The oil painting and its subjects (the people in the paintings) displayed their possessions and their way of life. They convey the subject in the present tense to the future of their descendants. Whereas the publicity/advertising image reminds the viewer how dissatisfied they feel with their way of life. It uses only the future tense as it speaks to the audience, promising that by using or wearing this product you will become desirable. Your life will be complete and happy in a personal transformation.

We now know more about the symbols used in the portrait of Queen Elizabeth I and how it was a constructed image to project her power. Queen Elizabeth I is seen in the portrait as powerful and wealthy via her clothes, textures and colours and symbolic objects. Her qualities are her own and have been earned, she is not enviable like modern publicity images. The publicity image, in contrast, offers an image of ourselves that is desirable and enviable by the product it is selling. Even so, both images are a construction of self. Queen Elizabeth I was revealing her authority and aspiration for power in the Americas. It expressed her attitude to herself as a leader by radiating an aura and dominating the composition with her physical presence.

In the present day we can draw on parallels with social media using symbols and hashtags to communicate and present ideas.

Explain to your students that they are now a modern media team. Ask them to consider the message and impact that the portrait is designed to have. They need to identify three different elements within the portrait, such as her facial expression, the crown and the globe, and give each one a hashtag and a series of emojis, e.g., #RunTheWorld #OwnTheWorld

The next stage is for them to transform Queen Elizabeth I's portrait into a marketing campaign and create a product that the portrait is selling.



The Armada National Outreach project has been a partnership between Royal Museums Greenwich and Speakers Trust to support secondary schools in oracy and public speaking. The starting point and inspiration was the *Armada Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I* and her Tilbury speech.

