

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: HEROES, VILLAINS, AND YOU

ESSENTIAL QUESTION	Who deserves a look from our critical eye?
GRADES	9–12
TIME	One class period and a preview (to invite students to bring images of today’s famous leaders, politicians, and celebrities to the classroom for inspiration for the project)
CONCEPTS	Politics, identity, and criticism
MATERIALS	Pencils, colored pencils, and drawing paper; and print or digital photos provided by the students. Have the students bring to the classroom an image of a leader, politician or celebrity who they feel strongly about.
TALKING ABOUT ART	<p>View the painting by Georg Scholz, <i>War Veterans’ Association</i> (Kriegerverein), 1921. Make observations using the open-ended phrase, “I see...” Inventory the responses on the board, moving towards more and more detailed responses through close looking.</p> <p>Many of Scholz’s contemporaries favored portraiture. The three gentlemen pictured here are represented with symbols that identify them as individuals who supported the former government of the German emperor rather than the contemporary government of the president. During this interwar period, depictions of people frequently departed from what their subjects looked like in real life in order to convey information about their character and identity. Consider the men’s cartoonish expressions. Why do you think the artist chose to depict them with their eyes closed? How did the artist depict the individuals in a negative light? What symbols do you see that suggest their prosperity?</p> <p>Bars and restaurants are often popular meeting places where people can relax, refresh, and reflect on current events. The pub at the edge of the central square has a banner that reads “To the Iron Hindenburg.” Paul von Hindenburg, a top German field marshal during the World War I, was widely considered a hero; he was later elected as Germany’s second president. The term “Iron” refers to his strength. What other qualities are important for a hero? Do the men in the foreground appear to be “Iron Men?”</p> <p>Much of Germany was reeling from the war’s humiliating defeat, demilitarization, and economic hardships. How do you feel when looking at Scholz’s scene? The artist illustrates the ugly and even the grotesque aspects of life for many in contrast to the power and prosperity marking the lives of the few. How might the artist have chosen which details and features to include, or to not include? Scholz worked as an illustrator and used his imagination to emphasize and exaggerate details in his art. Later, the Nazis deemed his art—which criticized life in Germany—degenerate, even</p>

though he had fought for Germany in WWI and was a wounded war veteran.

MAKING ART

The New Objectivity artists were drawn to current events in post-war Germany, creating both heroic portraits and portraits that were more critical. Angelenos are inundated with images of our leaders, politicians, and celebrities, whether online, in print, or in media viewed throughout the city. Choose someone who you think is influential in Los Angeles.

List some of the defining features of the individual in the image that you have chosen. Include symbols or locations that are not featured in the image but that you think are relevant to this person. Make a quick sketch of the individual referring both to the image and your list of the individual's key attributes.

Now, take a stand and editorialize your thoughts about this individual. Suggest through positive or negative imagery how this individual is a hero or a villain. Use strong lines and bold colors to communicate important positive and negative aspects of the individual you are criticizing or praising. Exaggerate and emphasize important features that will make your depiction of the individual memorable and effective.

REFLECTION

Display the completed artworks in the classroom. Walk around and view each example. Share the story of your artwork or practice using a critical eye by analyzing your classmates' artworks. Are the depictions of the individuals positive or negative? Speak about who you depicted, why you chose that individual, and how that individual is affecting current events of Los Angeles.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.9–12

9–12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own.

9–12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence.