



ACTIVITY 04 | PRIMARY



# Drawing expressions

**KS1**

Art and Design, English, History, Relationship Studies, Science

**First level**

Expressive Arts, Maths, Sciences, Social Studies, Technologies

# Drawing expressions

Leonardo's drawings of faces show a range of expressions, so let's make some masks!

How do our faces look when we are happy or cross?

We will explore muscles and 'pulling faces' into expressions.

As a fun starting point, introduce portrait drawing using Leonardo's rules and get creative at the end; visit [face facts online interactive](#). The 'Vitruvian Man' activity 'Head to toe: Bodies in proportion' can make a good starting point for talking about ideal proportions.



## IN THIS ACTIVITY PUPILS WILL:

**DISCOVER** how to draw a well-proportioned portrait.

**KNOW** what features to look for when interpreting expressions.

**LEARN** how muscles make facial expressions.

**KNOW** how to record movement.

**MAKE** a mask to convey an emotion.

Focus image: [A man tricked by Gypsies, c.1493 \(RCIN 912495r\)](#) 



You could also introduce the idea of drawing bodies in action with our simple fun interactive, 'The Dancing Skeleton' using an interactive whiteboard or tablets.

## STEP 01

### Identify the feeling

Look at Leonardo's satire drawings, such as *A man tricked by Gypsies, c.1493 (RCIN 912495r)*.

Invite discussions over their expressions, then using the interactive whiteboard or a print-out, work together as a class and add:

- Speech bubbles for what they might say.
- Think bubbles for what they may have been thinking.
- Hearts with an emotion for their feelings.

Discuss why these might be different

Then pupils could match a feeling they have identified with one from the 'Feelings and expressions' sheet and act out this emotion in a pair.

*'The muscles which move the lips of the mouth are more numerous in man than in any other animal; and this is necessary for him on account of the many actions in which these lips are continually employed, as in... whistling, laughing, weeping, and similar actions. Also in the strange contortions used by clowns when they imitate faces.'*

A quotation from Leonardo's notebooks, observing how muscles were important for expressions.

## STEP 02

### Choose an expression

Share the 'Feelings and expressions' sheet and ask your pupils to choose an expression they want to make into a mask. When they make their expression, encourage your pupils to use their hands and fingers to feel the muscles in their face working.

Explain the science link about the muscles in your face; muscles can only pull and not push.

Look at Leonardo's drawing showing the muscles on a face, see *The muscles of the face and arm, and the nerves and veins of the hand, c.1510-11 (RCIN 919012v)*.

Can your pupils work out which ones need to move to make certain expressions?

Students could also write a description of which muscles are moving and try to figure out what expression the person would be making if they moved these muscles.

## STEP 03

### Make a mask

Pupils can use a mirror to create their chosen expression ready to be drawn on a mask, drawing from observing their reflection. First, they can work with a partner to take it in turns to guess the expression (use 'Feelings and expressions' as a prompt sheet). They may look for:

- Frowning or an 'open' looking face.
- Wide open or narrowed eyes.
- Shape of the mouth: is it small and pursed or open and laughing?
- Showing teeth like in a growl or by smiling?
- Your class can use their expression masks to welcome visitors to your 'Leonardo: Celebrate and share' event or exhibition opening.



# Resources



## EQUIPMENT

- Leonardo's drawings
- 'Draw like Leonardo: Top tips' poster
- 'Feelings and expressions' sheet
- Science books illustrating muscles of the face, mirrors, drawing materials
- Card cut into mask shapes or pre-made masks; card; elastic or string to fasten the mask
- Scissors

## RESOURCE IMAGES



[Francesco Melzi, A portrait of Leonardo, c.1515–18 \(RCIN 912726\)](#)



[The muscles of the face and arm, and the nerves and veins of the hand, c.1510–11 \(RCIN 919012\)](#)

## FANTASTIC FINISH



Look at a portrait of Leonardo, attributed to his apprentice, Melzi, [A portrait of Leonardo, c.1515–18 \(RCIN 912726\)](#). Using this drawing as a reference point, on the whiteboard pupils can draw their own portrait of Leonardo, half in his style and half their own interpretation, using mixed media.

Or, pupils can paint onto a printed copy of the portrait and copy Leonardo's marks.



[Leonardo's Studies of men in action, c.1508 \(RCIN 912644\)](#)

## More activity ideas



For more formal Renaissance-style realistic drawings and portraits, see Leonardo's diagram drawing: [The fall of light on a face, c.1488 \(RCIN 912604\)](#), where his notes explain shadows and that, in his opinion, scenes should be lit from the side.

Practise drawing movement in your sketchbooks. Use quicker movements with your hand and capture the essence of what you see rather than the detail. See [Leonardo's Studies of men in action, c.1508, \(RCIN 912644\)](#)

## SOME IDEAS FOR DRAWING PEOPLE IN ACTION:

- Take turns to draw each other dancing; perhaps dress up in outfits from fifteenth-century Italy or life today.
- Draw people moving whilst watching a film; you can pause the film when the figure is in an active pose.

# Feelings and expressions



Confused



Happy



Angry



Sad



Curious



Suprised



A man tricked by Gypsies, c.1493 (RCIN 912495)

