



# School Visits

2019–20 Grades  
K–12

Online Learning – DIY:  
Blind Contour Portraits!

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Blind contour drawings are fun and full of unexpected surprises. They challenge our concentration and are a good way to learn how to see details. You must focus on looking at what you are **drawing** and not at your drawing itself. The best part is you can improve quickly with practice. This **step-by-step** mini workshop uses the blind contour technique as a starting point to make a colourful self-portrait.



## About this resource

Thanks for accessing our Online Learning resources! These step-by-step instructions will help you and your family to express their own creativity and build connections to the Ontario Arts Curriculum.

## About us

Harbourfront Centre School Visits is an experiential, hands-on learning program that offers curriculum-focused, inquiry-based programs that explore all aspects of contemporary arts and culture. Every year, we host 26,000 students onsite for meaningful engagements with the arts. We trust you will find the step-by-step guide outlined below will allow creativity to shine through!

## Suggested Grade Range:

Grade 4 and up

## Curriculum Links:

The Arts – Visual Arts

## Key vocabulary words

- **CONTOUR DRAWING:** A line drawing that defines the edges, ridges or outline of a shape or form.
- **BLIND CONTOUR:** In “blind” contour drawing, the artist slowly draws each bump and curve on the edges of an object without looking at the paper.
- **COMPLEMENTARY COLOURS:** Colours that are directly opposite each other on the colour wheel (e.g., red and green, blue and orange, yellow and violet). A secondary colour’s complement is always the primary colour that is not used to create it (e.g., red and yellow

make orange; the only primary not used to create orange is blue, therefore blue is the complementary colour or opposite of orange).

- **WARM COLOURS:** Red, yellow and orange. Think about fire colours.
- **COOL COLOURS:** Green, blue and violet. Think about water and ice.
- **COMPOSITION:** Refers to the placement of all the parts of the picture of the way it is put together.

## Required Materials

- **MIRROR, CELL PHONE OR TABLET ON SELFIE MODE**
- **PENCIL**
- **BOND PAPER, CARD PAPER OR WATERCOLOUR PAPER** (heavier paper may be preferable for the finished portrait)
- **BLACK SHARPIE OR OTHER PERMANENT MARKER**
- **WATERCOLOUR PAINT AND A PAINT BRUSH** (you could also use coloured markers or crayons)



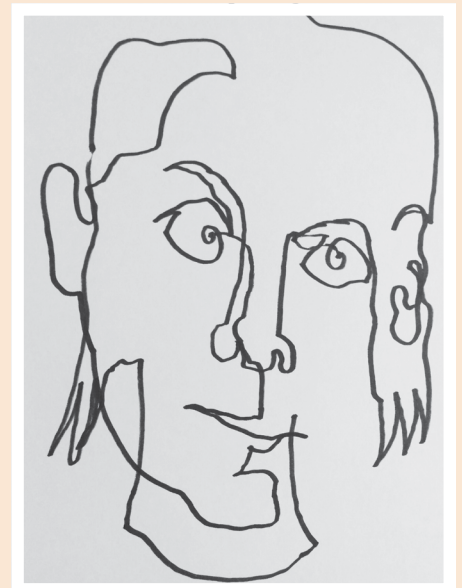
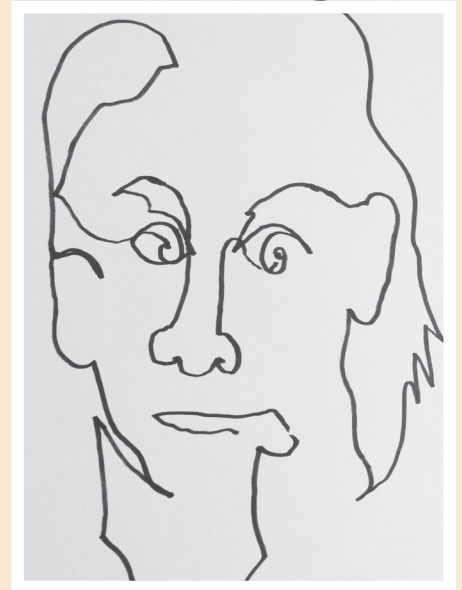
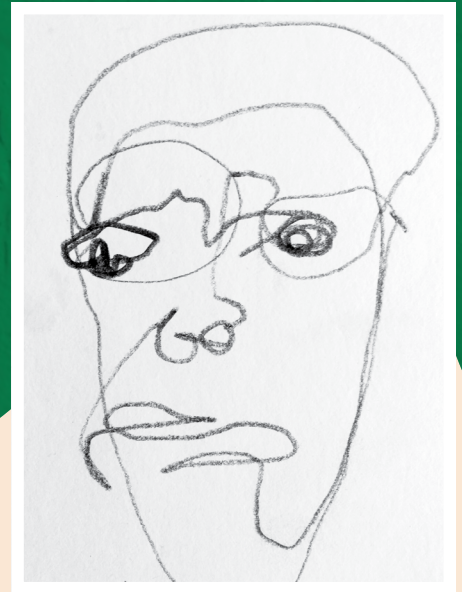


# Step-by-step instructions

## Step 1:

Experiment with **blind contour** portraits.

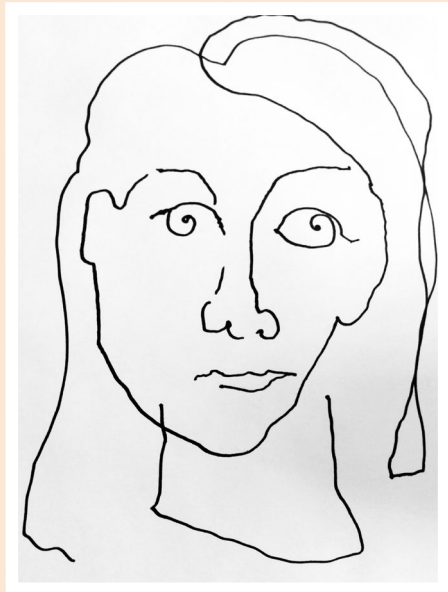
- Set up a mirror or tablet on selfie mode in a vertical or upright position so that you are looking directly at yourself. The idea is to look at your image in the mirror while you draw your portrait without looking at what you are drawing on the paper.
- The term **blind contour** refers to a drawing using a continuous line without looking at what you are drawing (try not to lift your pencil off the paper).
- Imagine your pencil and your eyes are connected, and your pencil is touching the surface of your face. When the eye begins to move around the face, so should the pencil.
- Notice how the portrait looks distorted. The distortion is part of the process and part of the fun. Some of the blind contour drawings are surprisingly funny.



## Step 1: (continued...)

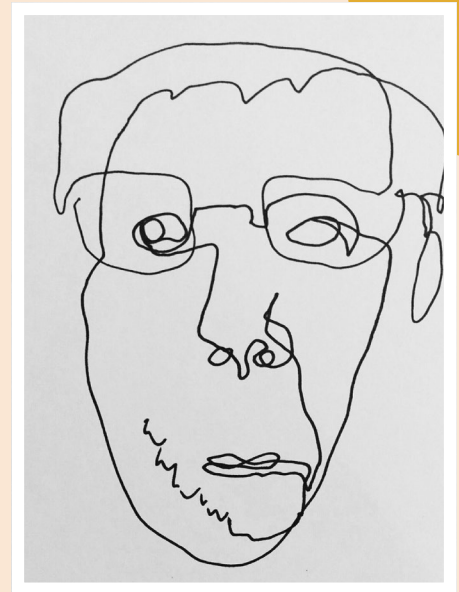
- You will notice in these images that the pencil was lifted off the paper and the line was not continuous – OOOPS! Don't worry if you accidentally lift your pencil from the paper or glance down at your paper. It is difficult to train yourself to focus on the mirror and not to look at your drawing.

Repeat the process, and keep practising and challenging yourself not to peek at your drawing.



## Step 2:

Choose the drawing you feel best represents you, and using a Sharpie, trace the pencil line of your blind contour portrait making the line stronger and darker.



## Step 3:

Imagine two or three things that say something about you. You could choose a favourite animal, an object representing a favourite hobby, sport or activity.

On a separate piece of paper, practice drawing the images a few times using a contour line.

Challenge yourself by trying to draw your images with one continuous line.

Use a Sharpie or black marker so all the lines in your work of art are consistent. Biking and gardening are some of this person's favourite activities.

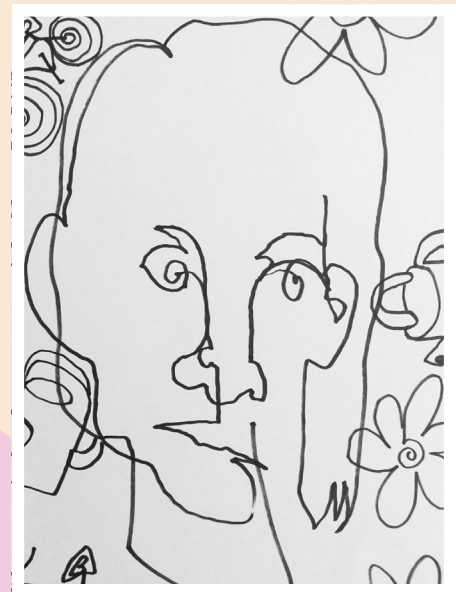
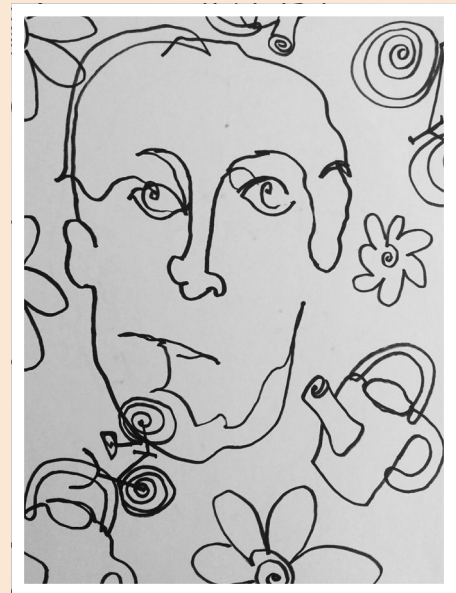


## Step 4:

Redraw the images to create the background design around your portrait.

Notice how the images have been repeated to form a decorative or random pattern. Using a Sharpie, draw your images in an interesting composition. You may want to turn your portrait around so some of your images are drawn upside down.

Have fun with your composition!



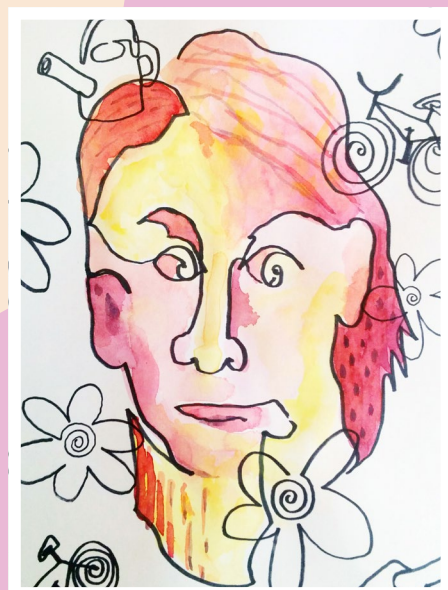


## Step 5:

Add colour to your portrait, using whatever you have at home.

Watercolour paint has been used in the examples, but you can also use coloured markers or crayons. Colours are often used to express emotions.

Choose colours that best express the way you are feeling. You may choose to use warm colours – red, orange and yellow – or cool colours – blue, green and purple – depending on how you feel today.



## Step 6:

Add colour to your background.

The background colour or colours are chosen to contrast with the colours of the portrait so that the portrait stands out from the background.



- Notice green, blue, purple and some red are used to paint this portrait. Purple and yellow are **complementary colours**. When yellow is placed beside purple, both purple and yellow will look more vibrant than they would beside any other colour. Yellow is used in the background so that the portrait stands out.



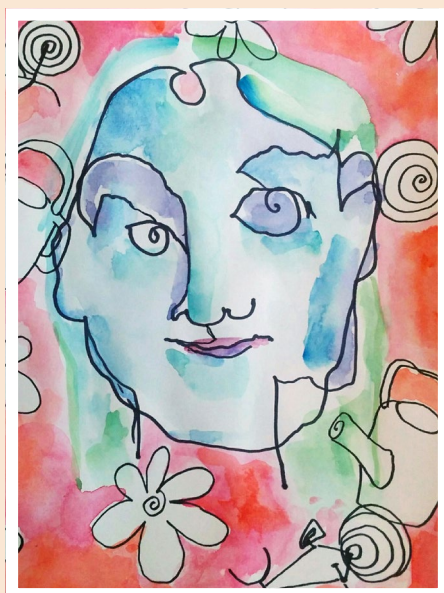
- Notice this portrait is painted with warm colours (red, yellow and orange) and the background is painted with cool blues and greens. The warm portrait stands out from the cool background.



## Step 6: (continued...)

- These two portraits are painted with cool colours (green, blue and purple), which stand out from the warm colours (red, orange and yellow) in the background.

In these examples, the background images are not painted. You may choose to paint your images. It is your portrait.



**Try your own blind contour portrait and have fun!**

## Extensions:

- Experiment using different complementary colours combinations to create a different emotional quality in your blind contour portrait.
- Experiment with different materials (crayons, pencil crayons, pastels, chalk, paint, etc.) to add colour to your portrait.
- Write a story or a poem to go along with your portrait.