



Presidential Silhouette

Topic Area:

Social Studies, Art

Duration:

45 minutes

Difficulty Level:

Easy

Objectives:

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Understand what a silhouette is and how to make a digital rendition.
- Learn more about a particular president by researching and finding images.
- Identify images that are appropriate for a silhouette style of artwork.

Suggested Materials:

- Heavyweight paper such as cardstock or construction paper. Canvas can also be used.
- Smart Removable Vinyl (Black)
- Device with Cricut Design Space Installed
- Cricut Maker 3, Explore Air 3, Joy Xtra, or Venture.
- Weeding tools (if necessary)
- [Example Cricut Project](#)

Background:

- Presidents have been depicted in artwork from portraits to photographs and even NFTs since our very first president, George Washington!
- Silhouettes are a form of artwork where a solid dark shape and outline of someone or something is set against a light background. This style of emerging artwork dates



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back to the 18th century when a French minister, Étienne de Silhouette, made a hobby of cutting paper shadow portraits, though silhouette techniques date back even earlier.

- There are many techniques for creating silhouettes from drawing based on shadows of 3D objects to tracing 2D images. Not all images make for good silhouettes. Images that showcase clearly defined outlines will be better for extracting a clear silhouette.

Introduction:

- Show participants a silhouette image of a president or other individual. Working individually, or in pairs, have participants analyze the image and identify features of the image. You can use the following questions to elicit responses:
 - What do you already know about the image?
 - What do you notice about the image?
 - What does the image make you think about?
 - What characteristics does the image have?
 - Who do you think that is?
 - How do you think this was made?
 - What questions do you have about the image?
- Bring everyone back together to engage in a whole group discussion. If necessary, explain that the image is that of a silhouette and that the silhouette makes up the foreground which rests on the light background.
- Explain to participants that they will be researching U.S. presidents and designing a silhouette representation of them.

Session Activity:

- Provide participants with time to research and locate images of their chosen president.



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- Images should be downloaded as a JPEG, SVG, PNG, DXF, HEIC, GIF, or BMP file to be compatible with Cricut Design Space.
- After locating their images, participants should research their president and identify 2-3 facts about that president or their legacy.
- Participants or the instructor can import presidential images into Cricut Design Space by opening up a new canvas for the project and selecting Import. Add images one at a time. Remove the background and convert the upload to a single layer silhouette.
- Cut out the silhouettes using black vinyl. Distribute silhouettes back to participants. Have them weed the design and apply transfer tape for applying to the chosen background material.
- Once transfer tape has been applied, participants can then attach the silhouette to the background and add any additional design details.

Closing:

- Have each participant present their presidential portrait. Allow the group to try and guess the president. The facts researched during the session activity can be used as clues.

Reflection

- How should participants assess themselves?

Extensions and Customizations:

- As the facilitator, you may choose to assign participants a president or let them choose their own.
- Challenge participants further by engaging them in creating a cameo piece instead of a silhouette.



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- Have participants justify their choice and explain the facts instead of having the group guess.
- Do a gallery walk of all the presidential silhouettes in lieu of a presentation. Participants can place their facts as a sticky note beneath the president as clues.