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# Lesson Plan: Bringing Portraits to Life - The Secret to Proportions

## Materials Needed

- Drawing Paper (Sketchbook or loose sheets)
- Graphite Pencils (a few different hardnesses if possible, like a 2H, HB, and 2B)
- A good eraser (kneaded eraser is great, but a block eraser works too)
- A ruler or straight edge
- A compass for drawing circles, or something round to trace (like a small bowl or cup)
- A few high-quality, clear printed photos of faces looking straight at the camera. You can use magazine cutouts, printed photos of celebrities, or a photo of yourself or a family member.
- A mirror (optional, but helpful for studying your own face)

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## Lesson Details

**Subject:** Visual Arts

**Topic:** Realistic Portrait Drawing (Focus on Facial Proportions)

**Student:** Madison, Age 15

**Time Allotment:** 90 minutes

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## Learning Objectives

Hello Madison! By the end of today's lesson, you will be able to:

1. Apply a foundational artist's technique (the Loomis Method) to construct the basic 3D structure of a human head.
2. Accurately place key facial features (eyes, nose, mouth, ears) using established proportional guidelines.
3. Create a finished, realistic line drawing of a portrait from a reference photo that demonstrates correct proportions.

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## Instructional Sequence

### Part 1: The Warm-Up - Face Mapping (10 minutes)

Let's get your eyes and hands warmed up! This isn't about drawing, it's about seeing.

1. Take one of your printed reference photos.
2. With an HB pencil and a ruler, draw lines directly on the photo to find the key landmarks. Don't worry about making it neat.
3. Draw a straight line vertically down the very center of the face.
4. Draw a horizontal line across the very center of the eyes (through the pupils).
5. Draw horizontal lines at the bottom of the nose, the opening of the mouth, the bottom of the chin, and the top of the head.
6. **Your Goal:** Just observe. What do you notice about the spacing? Are the eyes really in the middle of the head? How much space is between the nose and the mouth? We're training our brains to see what's actually there, not what we *think* is there.

## Part 2: Guided Instruction - The Loomis Method (25 minutes)

Now, let's learn the secret blueprint that many professional artists use to build a head. It's called the Loomis Method, named after an amazing illustrator. It turns something complex (a head) into simple, manageable shapes. We will do this together on a blank piece of paper.

### Step 1: The Ball

Use your compass or trace a circle to draw a perfect circle in the middle of your paper. This isn't the whole head, but the main part of the cranium (where the brain is!).

### Step 2: Slice the Sides

Imagine this ball is a bit squishy, like a tennis ball. Lightly draw an oval on the side of the ball, as if you've sliced a piece off. Do the same on the other side. This flattens the head, because our heads aren't perfect spheres.

### Step 3: Find the Center Lines

Draw a line right down the middle of your shape, from top to bottom. This is your **center line** for the face. Then, draw a horizontal line that wraps around the middle of the ball. This is your **brow line**, where the eyebrows will go.

### Step 4: Add the Jaw

From where your brow line meets the "sliced" side oval, draw a line down to create the side of the face and jaw. The distance from the brow line to the bottom of the chin is roughly the same as the distance from the brow line to the top of the head. Use your pencil to measure this! Draw the chin at the bottom, connecting the two jaw lines.

### Step 5: Place the Features - The Rules of Placement

- **The Eyes:** The eyes go on a horizontal line exactly **halfway down the entire head** (from the very top of the skull to the bottom of the chin). Most people draw them too high! The space between the two eyes is equal to the width of one eye.
- **The Nose:** The bottom of the nose is roughly halfway between the eye line and the chin.
- **The Mouth:** The line of the mouth is about one-third of the way down from the nose to the chin.
- **The Ears:** The ears generally fit between the brow line and the bottom of the nose.

Lightly sketch these guidelines onto your drawing. Congratulations, you've just built the foundation for any human head!

## Part 3: Independent Practice - Your Portrait Project (45 minutes)

Now it's your turn to be the artist. Your mission is to create a proportional line drawing of a person from a photo.

1. **Choose Your Subject:** Select your favorite reference photo. Make sure it's clear and the person is looking mostly forward.
2. **Build the Foundation:** On a fresh sheet of paper, use the Loomis method we just practiced to construct the head. Don't press too hard with your pencil; these are just guidelines you'll erase later. Constantly look back and forth between your drawing and your photo. Does the person you're drawing have a rounder jaw? A taller forehead? Adjust your blueprint to match.
3. **Place the Features:** Lightly draw in the shapes of the eyes, nose, mouth, and ears using your guidelines. Remember the placement rules! Check your reference photo constantly.
4. **Refine and Detail:** Once the placement feels right, you can start refining the shapes. Draw the curve of the eyelids, the shape of the nostrils, and the line of the lips. Add the eyebrows and the hairline.
5. **Final Touches:** Erase your construction lines carefully. Darken the lines that you are confident about. Add the neck and shoulders. Don't worry about shading today—our goal is a clean, proportional line drawing.

## Part 4: Closure and Reflection (10 minutes)

Let's take a look at your amazing work. Place your finished drawing next to your reference photo.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What is one part of the drawing you feel is the most successful? Why?
- Did using the Loomis method help you avoid any common mistakes you might have made before?
- What was the most challenging feature to place correctly?
- If you were to do this again, what is one thing you would try to improve?

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## Differentiation and Extension

- **For an extra challenge:** Try this same exercise with a photo where the person's head is turned slightly to the side (a 3/4 view). The Loomis method still works, but your center line will now be a curve that wraps around the sphere.
- **Next Steps:** Our next lesson can focus on how to add value and shading to this line drawing to make it look three-dimensional and even more realistic!

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## Assessment Checklist

We can use this checklist to see how well we met our goals for today.

1. **Foundation:** Is the underlying structure (the "ball and slice") visible in the final proportions?
2. **Eye Placement:** Are the eyes located on or very close to the halfway point of the head?
3. **Feature Spacing:** Is the spacing between the eyes, nose, and mouth logical and proportional according to the guidelines?

4. **Overall Likeness:** Does the final line drawing capture the general proportional accuracy of the reference photo? (It doesn't have to look exactly like them, but the proportions should match).

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