

# Art & Storytelling

Museum of Texas Tech University

Dalhart Windberg (born 1933)

**Way of Life, 1970**

Oil on canvas

*Gift of the Diamond M Foundation*

This portrait, a somewhat unusual subject matter for this Texas landscape painter, discloses a sense of personal history; a bit of nostalgia pervades the image of this elderly man. The close up of his weathered face juxtaposes with the modest fruits of someone's, perhaps his, labor: a fence and a modest dwelling in the not-too-distant background. Perhaps as a reminder of the passage of time, one bird sits on a fence post as another flies away. Stories of the American West are often presented as a narrative of the strong, determined, and hard-working men. In this case the story is "written" toward the end of a life, weighing the results of his efforts.

---Peter Briggs, Curator of Art



**Collection:** Art, from the Diamond M Foundation

**Grade/Ages:** Child through Adult

**Focus:** Storytelling, autobiography, self-portrait, portrait

**Subjects:** English, Visual Art

**TEKS: Fine Arts, Art : FA.A,HS.L2: Creative Expression**

**FA.A.4: Creative Expression**

**FA.A.5 – Creative Expression**

**FA.A.MS1: Middle School, Creative Expression**

**FA.A.MS.2 – Creative Expression, Fa.A.MS.2C**

**8<sup>th</sup> Grade English, Reading (ELAR): English, 8.5:**

**Comprehension 8.5E: , 8.5D, 8.6E**

**High School English: E1: English 1**

**E1.2, E1.4E, E1.9.Composition, E1.9B.ii,E2.9B, E2.9B.ii**

**E3, E3.4E,**

**E3.9: Composition, E4.4E, E4.9, E4.9B**

## **To begin...**

Take a few moments to look at this painting.

What do you see?

What is going on?

How would you describe this painting to someone who cannot be with you in the gallery?

## **What do you learn from...**

- what the man wears?

- how the building looks?

- the weather?

- the landscape?

- the expression on the man's face?

**At Home or School Activity: SELF-PORTRAIT (Visual Art)**

**Age:** Targeted TEKS include grades 4, 5 8, and High School levels for Art and English. Could be adapted though for other ages, and adults.

**Materials:**

Paper (such as printer paper, back of a grocery paper bag, back side of wrapping paper, etc.)

Pencil, pen, crayons, or markers

The painting, *Way of Life*, by Dalhart Windberg

**Time needed:** 30 minutes, or longer as desired...

**Goal:**

This activity is intended to provide the participant with a sketch of their own likeness, which is called a *self-portrait*.

**Sequence:**

Using Windberg's painting as a guide, talk about differences between a photo and a drawing or painting. A photograph (such as a school id or a driver's license) can tell us what a person looks like. But a portrait, or a self-portrait, tells us more than just what a person looks like—it tells us something about the person, who they are, where they are from, what they like, or what they have experienced.

For example, the portrait of the man in the Windberg painting is more than just the man's face: we can see what he wears, what the expression is on his face, and what is around him, and these tell us about who and what the man is.

Sketch yourself in a self-portrait. (Talk about the way a sketch is a quick illustration, not a finished drawing.) Place yourself in a setting that tells about you. What objects, clothing, or buildings would tell others about who you are? Will you draw yourself at the park, where you live, someplace special? Do you have someone special with you? A pet, perhaps? What are you doing in your self-portrait that will tell us more about who you are? Are you playing baseball? Making art? Playing games on the computer? Think about what you want to 'tell' about yourself and then decide on the things you can include that will help to tell your story.

**To try...**

After you sketch your self-portrait, try to sketch a portrait of someone. And, just as you did in your self-portrait, be sure to include things that tell about who the person is as you create their portrait.

**Resources:**

Provide a few examples of photographs, portraits and self-portraits, for example, a school or work id, a few family photos, and some self-portraits by artists such as Frida Kahlo, Rembrandt, Vincent Van Gogh, Norman Rockwell. You can find such paintings in books, post cards, and on the web. Talk about what we learn about individuals from such documents

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Continues...

Way of Life, 1970, continued...

**For older students:**

This activity could be expanded into a full-color drawing or painting using any preferred color media, including digital media. Further, this activity could be an introduction to learning about human anatomy and facial construction in art. If only the head is used as the basis for the self-portrait, or portrait, this activity could be a foundational activity before exploring the use of color and how to use it to convey, for example, emotion in a painting.

**At Home or School Activity: SELF-PORTRAIT (English & Writing)**

**Age:** Targeted TEKS include grades 4, 5 8, and High School levels for Art and English. Could be adapted though for other ages, and adults.

**Materials:**

Painting by Dalhart Windberg, Way of Life

Paper and pen or pencil, or computer

The label text written by the Curator of Art, Peter Briggs

A variety of portraits in various media (photography, painting, drawing, etc.)

**Time needed:**

Suggested, one week to allow for first attempts and re-writing, but the time allowed is up to the instructor/parent or the participant.

**Goal:**

This activity is intended to provide the participant with a written 'label' for their imagined portrait, just as a 'label' is provided for a painting. Activity can explore TEKS standards in reading, comprehension, writing, personal experience, etc.

**Sequence:**

Examine several portraits of famous and not so famous people. How do artists "share" information about individuals through their work of art?

Is it through what is worn? Where the person is located? What they are doing? The mood, perhaps, that is created with color, black and white, lighting, weather, or something else?

Imagine that a portrait will be created of you. The finished piece will tell viewers about who and what you are, but not through words. Viewers will have to look at and explore the finished portrait to learn more about you are, what you do, what you value.

However, you will be asked to provide the 'label text' that will hang next to the finished work of your portrait.

Using Windberg's painting as a guide—as well as the companion label text—think about what the label adds to the understanding of the painting. What has the curator provided to the

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viewer so that more can be understood about the painting? What does the curator use to write the ideas that he presents?

In this activity, in which you imagine that an artist has created a portrait of you, what else would you want to share in the label text to share more about who you are?

You could do a quick sketch of what you imagine your finished portrait would look like. (This may help you to write the label text....)

**To try...**

Locate some photos of people who are not well-known. These could be photos of unnamed individuals.

Then imagine that you are challenged to create a label that will go next to the photo of that person. What would you write about that individual? What can you utilize from the photo to inform yourself about who and what that person is or was?

**Resources:**

Old photos can also be purchased at thrift stores, antiques stores, but are easily found in old books and from various sources online.

Students may also want to look at portraits that can be found by searching online collections from various museums, in addition to searching by individual artist name online.