



Self-portrait A: Kathe Kollwitz. Charcoal on brown laid paper. National Gallery of Art



Self-portrait B: Egon Schiele. Crayon and watercolor on buff paper. Galerie St. Etienne

Sample Questions for Visual Arts

Students were asked a series of questions related to two self-portraits shown here, one by Kathe Kollwitz (A) and one by Egon Schiele (B). These questions required students to apply their knowledge of aesthetic properties to the two artworks and to consider the relationships between these properties and the expressive qualities of each work. Students were then asked to create a self-portrait of their own.





SAMPLE QUESTION: Recognizing a Technical Similarity Between Two Self-Portraits

The sample question below asked students to recognize a technical similarity between the Kollwitz and Schiele self-portraits. In both works, expressive, loose lines are combined with precise drawing.

In 2008, thirty-seven percent of students correctly identified this common feature of the two artworks (choice B). This was not found to be significantly different from the 36 percent who answered correctly in 1997. Choices A, C, and D do not accurately describe technical similarities between the two works.

Which statement describes a technical similarity between self-portraits A and B?

- (A) The figure in each work is seen from the same point of view.
- (B) Both works combine loose gestural lines with careful drawing.
- (C) The compositions in both works are symmetrical.
- (D) Both works rely on light and shadow to emphasize depth.

Percentage of students in each response category at grade 8: 2008

Choice A	Choice B	Choice C	Choice D	Omitted
8	37	8	46	#

Rounds to zero.
 NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2008 Arts Assessment.

SAMPLE QUESTION: Characteristics of Charcoal

The sample question below asked students to describe characteristics of the medium of charcoal visible in the Kollwitz self-portrait. Student responses for this question were rated using three scoring levels: Acceptable, Partial, and

Unacceptable. Examples of Acceptable and Partial responses are shown here. Responses rated as Unacceptable did not describe characteristics of the medium of charcoal evident in the self-portrait.

This sample response was rated **“Acceptable”** because it demonstrated the student’s knowledge of charcoal as a medium. The student expressed what Kollwitz was able to accomplish with charcoal in her self-portrait. Thirty-four percent of eighth-graders received a rating of “Acceptable” on this question.

Self-portrait A is a charcoal drawing. Describe two characteristics of charcoal that you see in self-portrait A.

1. Charcoal can get very dark when you press harder than normal.
2. It leaves little white specks because it doesn't fill in every little bump or spot on the page.

This sample response was rated **“Partial”** because it provided only one example of how charcoal was used in the self-portrait. The student recognized that pressing harder on charcoal results in a darker mark, as is evident in the Kollwitz self-portrait. However, the second part of the response did not describe another characteristic of charcoal as a medium. Thirty-eight percent of students’ responses to this question were rated “Partial.”

Self-portrait A is a charcoal drawing. Describe two characteristics of charcoal that you see in self-portrait A.

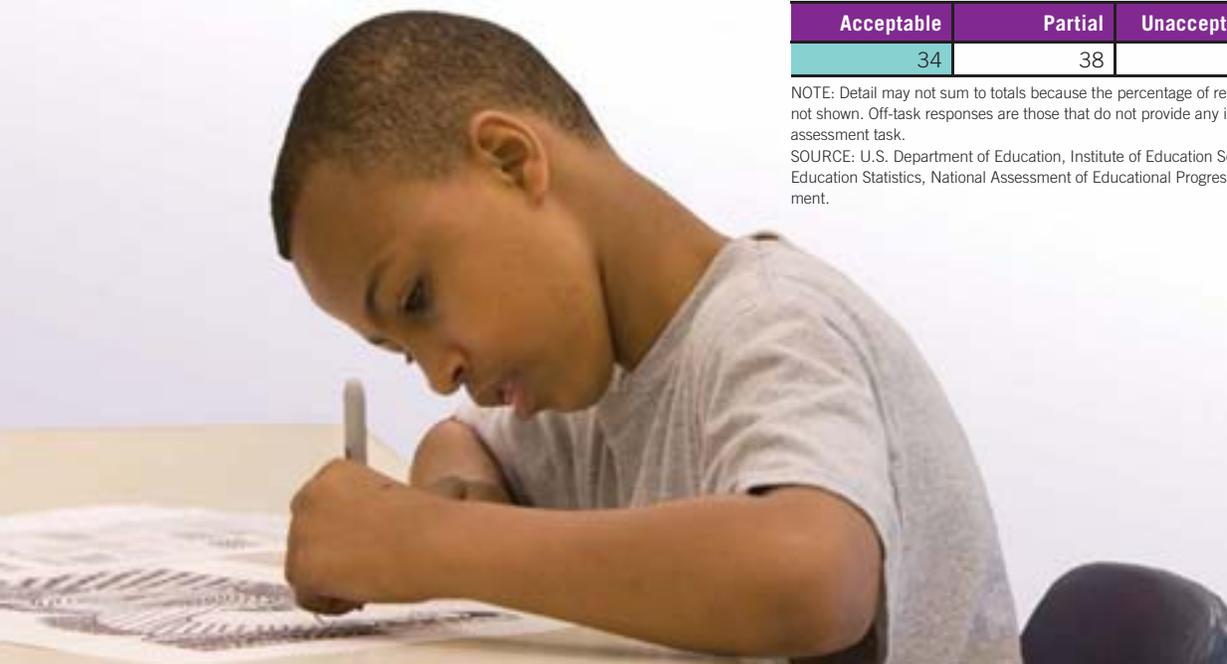
1. One is the harder the charcoal is pushed down, the darker the markings will be.
2. It is not drawn straight but, like it was colored in.

Percentage of students in each response category at grade 8: 2008

Acceptable	Partial	Unacceptable	Omitted
34	38	27	1

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because the percentage of responses rated as “Off-task” is not shown. Off-task responses are those that do not provide any information related to the assessment task.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2008 Arts Assessment.



SAMPLE QUESTION: Relationship Between Technical Approach and Meaning

The two-part sample question below required students to analyze and interpret the Kollwitz self-portrait to explore relationships between technical approach and meaning. Part A of the question asked students about the work's formal characteristics, while part B asked them to connect those characteristics with what the artist was attempting to communicate. Student responses

to each of the two parts were rated separately using three scoring levels: Acceptable, Partial, and Unacceptable. Examples of Acceptable and Partial student responses for each part of this question are shown here. Unacceptable responses for the question neither addressed differences in the way the parts of the self-portrait are drawn nor offered interpretations linked to observations.

Both parts of this sample response were rated **“Acceptable.”** This response accurately described the differences between the parts of the drawing and then used these observations to offer an insightful and plausible interpretation of the reasons for those differences.

Fifty-three percent of students received a rating of “Acceptable” for part A, and 19 percent received an “Acceptable” rating for part B. Students who received the “Acceptable” rating were able to both comprehend the formal characteristics of the self-portrait and discuss the relationship between those characteristics and the artist’s possible expressive goals.

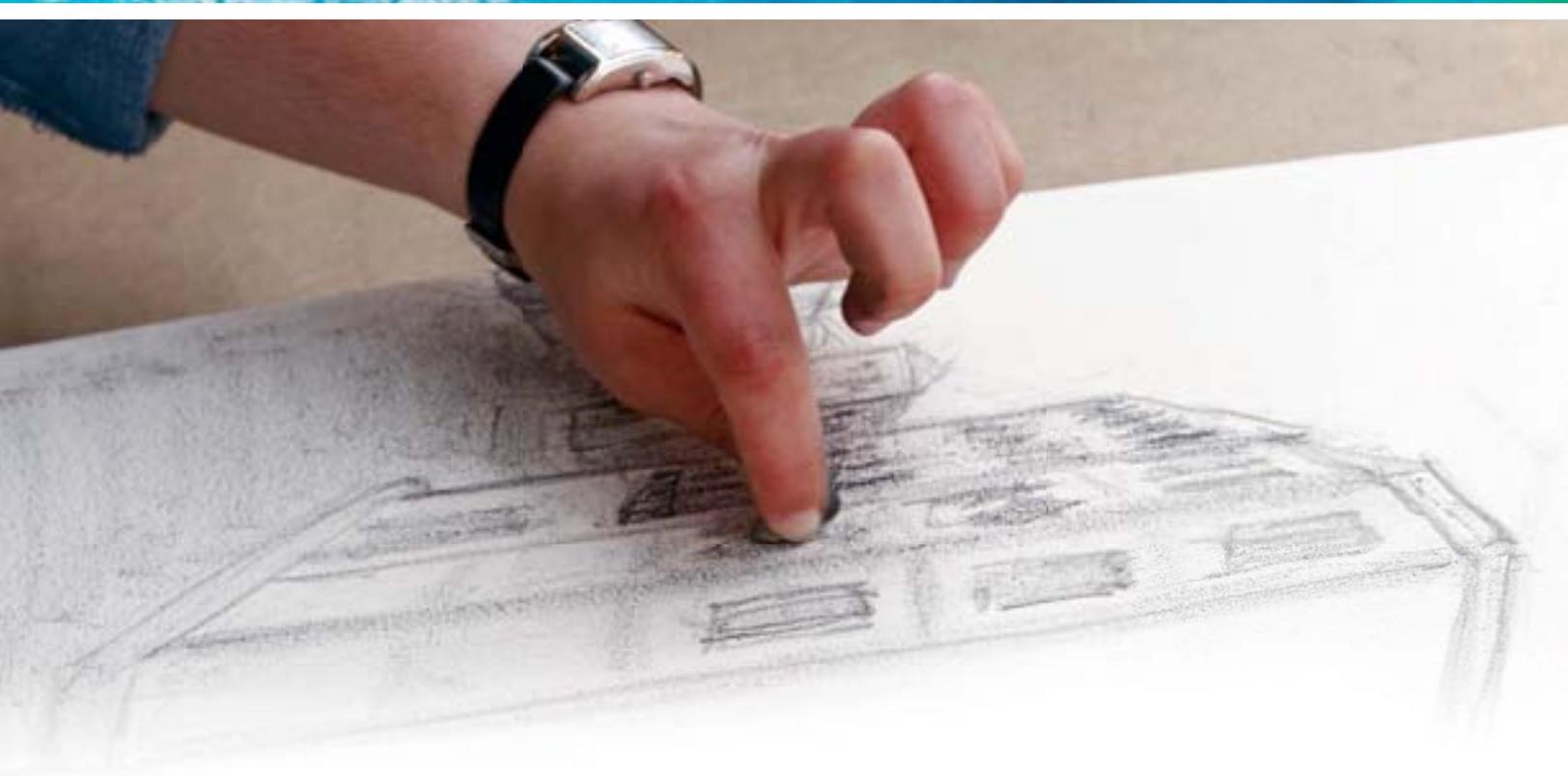
Look at self-portrait A. Compare how Kollwitz has drawn her head and hand with the way she has drawn her arm. Be specific.

A. Her head and hand are drawn carefully. They have shadings and fine details while her arm is a dark thick scribble.

Explain what you think Kollwitz may have been trying to communicate about herself by drawing these different parts of her self-portrait in different ways.

B. She was showing expressions on her face & that even though her body is weak, all she needs is her head & hands to keep drawing.





Both parts of this sample response received a **“Partial”** rating. This response accurately described the way the arm is drawn but did not specifically address the ways in which the head and hand are drawn differently from the arm. “Partial” credit was given for recognizing some characteristics of the artwork. While a few plausible interpretations about what Kollwitz was trying to communicate are provided in the second part of the response, none of these is clearly linked to the descriptions offered in the first part.

Fifteen percent of the student responses were rated “Partial” for part A, and 52 percent were rated “Partial” for part B.

Look at self-portrait A. Compare how Kollwitz has drawn her head and hand with the way she has drawn her arm. Be specific.

A. Her arm is darker and it looks like she just scribbled it in the portrait.

Explain what you think Kollwitz may have been trying to communicate about herself by drawing these different parts of her self-portrait in different ways.

B. Shes trying to say she old, and that she is a good artist, and concentrates very well when shes drawing.

Percentage of students in each response category at grade 8: 2008

Part A

Acceptable	Partial	Unacceptable	Omitted
53	15	31	2

Part B

Acceptable	Partial	Unacceptable	Omitted
19	52	25	3

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because the percentage of responses rated as “Off-task” is not shown. Off-task responses are those that do not provide any information related to the assessment task.

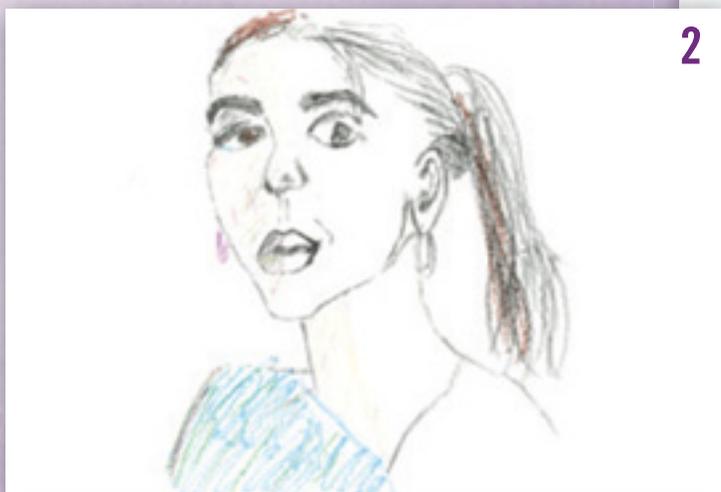
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2008 Arts Assessment.

SAMPLE QUESTION: Creating a Self-Portrait

After students had observed the Kollwitz and Schiele self-portraits and studied relationships between the technical and expressive qualities of the two artworks, they were asked to create a self-portrait of their own. Students were given a set of 12 Cray-pas (colored oil pastels), a charcoal pencil,

a mirror, and a sheet of 12-inch by 18-inch white drawing paper and were asked to use these tools to create a self-portrait that would express something important about their personalities. These self-portraits were rated using four scoring levels: Sufficient, Uneven, Minimal, and Insufficient.

Characteristic of works rated “**Sufficient**,” both of the students’ responses presented here showed clear and specific observations that communicated something important about the artist. They incorporated identifying detail in terms of personal features and, in student response 1, an activity (art making). The self-portraits showed purposeful use of compositional elements and sophisticated use of materials. For example, in student response 1, the smudging of Cray-pas created an affinity among the head, arm, and hand, and loose, well-placed lines added definition to the body.



Both works also showed very good use of proportion, color, and line, and were fully developed and individualized. For example, in student response 2, the student skillfully used color to emphasize and create contrast between specific parts of her self-portrait. Both student responses 1 and 2 also showed evidence of the students having spent time observing the Kollwitz and Schiele self-portraits. Four percent of students’ self-portraits were rated “Sufficient.”

Percentage of students in each response category at grade 8: 2008

Sufficient	Uneven	Minimal	Insufficient	Omitted
4	25	57	14	#

Rounds to zero.

NOTE: Detail may not sum to totals because the percentage of responses rated as “Off-task” is not shown. Off-task responses are those that do not provide any information related to the assessment task.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2008 Arts Assessment.



Works at the “**Uneven**” level made some specific observations. They sometimes employed pertinent compositional elements, gave attention to details such as facial features to convey expression, and/or effectively used materials to communicate. However, “Uneven” works were typically inconsistent or incomplete in parts.

In the sample presented here, the student gave her work individuality by vivid use of color, facial expression, and the symbols incorporated in her jewelry and the background. However, elements of her work seem inconsistent and lacking in deliberation, such as the placement and rendering of the symbols and colors in the background. Twenty-five percent of students’ self-portraits were rated “Uneven.”



As with many works rated at the “**Minimal**” level, in the sample self-portrait shown here, efforts at specific observations were apparent but relatively minimal (the red lines in the eyes). Compositional successes may seem more accidental than deliberate, and use of materials was unskilled. For example, while this student may have been attempting to convey some sense of an individual person by emphasizing only his eyes and mouth with color, he lacked the skill to make this choice distinctive enough to convey his message. Fifty-seven percent of students’ self-portraits were rated “Minimal.”

Most self-portraits rated “**Insufficient**” were generally so schematic as to convey little or nothing about the student. Like the sample self-portrait shown here, they showed unspecific observation, little awareness of composition, and highly unskilled use of materials. In contrast to the “Minimal” response, there were no features in this self-portrait that conveyed anything specific about a person, and it remained at a general level. Fourteen percent of students’ self-portraits were rated “Insufficient.”

