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## Create a Collage Portrait

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### About Portraits

Artists throughout time have been fascinated with visually representing the people around them, whether to create portraits of royalty, religious or historical figures, or to represent people without power and privilege. Examples include universally known portraits like the Mona Lisa, a portrait painted by a family member, or an image posted on Instagram, an ID card, or passport. The Individual Portrait is one type of portrait. There are other types of portraits, such as family portraits, group portraits, wedding portraits, animal portraits, and self-portraits (even selfies). A portrait may serve to capture someone's appearance or to portray the person's personality, as a way to express and reveal personal identity, to reflect the subject's communities and cultures, and to illuminate the current political and social climate. Portrait artists make choices that express how they perceive the subject, and the viewers bring their own perspectives to interpret who and what they think about the person in the portrait.

Throughout much of U.S. history, women's stories were marginalized, and their contributions were ignored. Portraits often portrayed narrow definitions of womanhood, such as an object of beauty. As women's rights have expanded, so has the representation of their identities in portraiture. This broader vision of women—artist, activist, engineer, published author—deepens our understanding of this country's past and our appreciation of women as equal humans in the present.

We often give whole countries a personality, summing up a nation's culture as a limited number of common traits – stereotypes. In reality, individuals come together with their regional and cultural norms to create the picture of the nation. Portraits can reflect and build regional and national identity. The exact definition of "American" identity is fiercely debated, as is the identity of the American "West." American identity is complex because its people bring together many national and cultural identities. Each individual, culture, and community contributes to American identity.

In *The Protagonist of an Endless Story*, artist Angel Rodríguez-Díaz combines qualities of his subject, Sandra Cisneros, along with the author's fictionalized character, Inés Alfaro, to portray individual, artistic, and national power, while challenging stereotypes of Chicana and American culture. Color, perspective, vantage point, proportions, pose, references to artworks in history, and scale are all deliberate artistic decisions to communicate this information to the viewer.



Angel Rodríguez-Díaz, *The Protagonist of an Endless Story*, 1993, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase made possible in part by the Smithsonian Latino Initiatives Pool and the Smithsonian Institution Collections Acquisition Program, 1996.19.  
© 1993, Angel Rodríguez-Díaz

Now make your own collage portrait! [Materials and Instructions](#) ↓

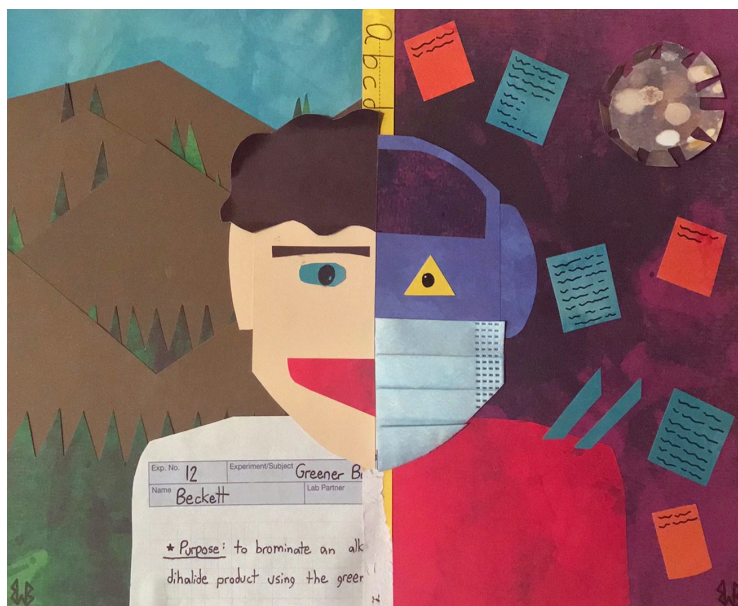
# Create a Collage Portrait

## Materials

- One piece of paper for your background
- Collage materials:
  - Colored paper
  - Patterned paper
  - Book pages
  - Newspaper
  - Repurposed or recycled papers/receipts/wrappers etc.
- Scissors, or X-acto knife and cutting surface
- Glue stick or rubber cement

## Instructions

Create a collage portrait of someone in your life in a way that reflects more than one aspect of identity— either individual, cultural, or national. Select details to include in your portrait to show these identities. Pay attention to color, scale, pose, proportions, and background to communicate your ideas.



Project idea and art example created by Beckett B., Idaho State University student