



# RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

## Telling Stories in Art

### MODULE ONE - GOVERNOR GENERAL RAMON BLANCO: WHO AM I? EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH PORTRAITS

Governor General Ramon Blanco (1894)

Juan Luna (1857-1899)

Oil on canvas

138.7 x 86.4 cm

#### About Juan Luna

Juan Luna was born on October 23, 1857 in Badoc, Ilocos Norte. He has six other siblings, including General Antonio Luna. He attended Ateneo Municipal as a child and then later completed his study at the Escuela Nautica de Manila. While working as an apprentice officer travelling to different ports in Asia, he found time to take painting lessons at the Academia de Dibujo y Pintura of Agustin Saez. Seeing Luna's artistic talent, Don Lorenzo Guerrero, one of Luna's first tutors, persuaded his parents to send him to Spain to take advanced lessons in painting. In 1877, he left for Barcelona and enrolled at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid, where he won his school's only academic prize, even only after a year. While at school he also took private art lessons under the then famous contemporary painter, Alejo Vera.

Luna gained international fame when his work, "Spoliarium", won one of the three gold medals in the 1884 Exposicion General de Bellas Artes in Madrid. Fellow Filipino artist, Felix Ressureccion Hidalgo, also won a silver medal at this exposition.

On December 7, 1899, Luan died in Hong Kong after suffering a severe heart attack.



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## About the Artwork

"Governor Ramon Blanco" is one of Luna's commissioned works for the Spanish Government during a four-year stint as a pensionado under the Ayuntamiento de Manila. The other two works he created for them includes "The Blood Compact," which is now part of Malacañang's collection and "Don Miguel Lopez de Legazpi", which was burned during the war.

This type of art work is called a Portrait. A representation of a person, a portrait can be a painting, drawing, sculpture or photograph. A portrait may show the person's whole body or only half of his/her body, in either frontal or side view. A portrait usually gives clues about the subject or the person whose image the viewer sees, who s/he is and when s/he lived through objects, symbols or attributes and even the background used by the artist. A self-portrait is created by the artist themselves.

Attributes are symbols or objects that are directly associated with certain individuals. In Christian iconography saints have specific attributes that help us identify them.

Some symbols are culture-based and may not always mean the same for all people at all times. In the Philippine flag, the 13 rays of sun symbolize the first provinces that supported the revolution against Spain while the three stars represent Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.

Christianity has given us the dove as symbol of the Holy Spirit and the cross, the symbol of the Passion of Christ. The crescent and the star have become symbolic of Islam.

There are also symbols that are understood across cultures and time. Examples of these include justice (blind-folded woman holding a scale), school (structure with a flag), church (structure with a cross or dome with crescent), medicine (staff with snake) doctor (stethoscope), king (crown).

Below is National Museums Liverpool's interactive website on exploring portraits:

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/nof/portraits/>

## About Governor Blanco

Governor Ramon Blanco y Erenas was born in San Sebastian, Spain in 1883. He served as Spain's colonial administrator in the Carribeans, Cuba and Santo Domingo before becoming the 111th Governor General of the Philippines in 1893. A Governor General was the title of the chief political executive during the Spanish and American occupation in the Philippines.

It was during his term that the Philippine Revolution against Spain broke out. Complaints about Blanco's conciliatory attitude towards revolutionary Filipinos reached Madrid, leading to Blanco's replacement as governor by Camilo Polavieja on December 13, 1896.

Target group

Grade four students

Duration of module

This module will require two one-hour class sessions

Materials needed

Magazines

Scissors

Glue

Pencil

Paper

Procedures

Show the reproduction of the art work to class, but before sharing the information about it, ask the class the following questions to encourage them to look closely at the work. It is recommended that open ended questions are used. Teachers must also encourage children to use more descriptive words in answering as this will also help in improving their vocabulary.

- 1) What do you see in this painting?
- 2) Who do you think is the person in this painting?
- 3) Why do you think that?
- 4) Do you think that he is from the present time, past or future? Why do you think so?
- 5) How old do you think he is?
- 6) What are the clues in the painting that gave you that idea?
- 7) Look at his face and the expression he has on. What does his expression tell you? Can you imagine what he is thinking?
- 8) Now look at the way he is standing. Why do you think his posture is like that? Can you stand as straight as he does?

Ask the class to stand in the same way the Governor is standing. Then explain that unlike photographs, painted portraits usually take many hours to complete requiring the subject to sit or stand for a long time.

- 9) How long do you think you can stand like that?
- 10) Look at the clothes he is wearing. Do we still wear clothes like this now?
- 11) What else do you see in the painting?
- 12) Can you guess reasons why a person would want to have their portrait done?
- 13) Where else do you see portraits?

Artists bring to your attention things like that by means of the elements of art such as lines, shapes, forms, colors, etc.

- 14) What are the different types of lines that you see in this painting?
- 15) Where do these lines lead to?
- 16) What shapes do you see? Natural and unnatural shapes? Where do you see these shapes?
- 17) What colors do you see? Where are the colors concentrated on?

Share the background information about the art work. Commend observations that point to correct information, such as those indicating that this is a man from the military, he lived in the past, he is an important person etc.

Tell the class about Juan Luna. Ask them to point where on the Philippine map Badoc, Ilocos Norte is. Then ask them to look for Madrid and Paris on the globe.



Go back to the painting and tell the class that the person in the painting is Governor Ramon Blanco. Share information about Governor Blanco then continue class discussion by asking the following questions:

- 1) What clues did Luna include in the painting that tell us who or what this person is?

Answers may include:

Uniform/ clothes

Medals

Sword

Helmet

- 2) Can objects and symbols help identify who the person is even if his/her face is not shown? How?

Explain the concept of attributes and symbols. You can show one image and ask the class what the possible meaning the image has for them. To emphasize that symbols are culture-based, you can show that apart from the meaning the image has for the class, in the certain time and place, a certain culture, this image means something else.

- 3) If an artist were to paint your portrait, what would you wear? What pose would you take?

- 4) Would your family and friends be able to recognize you when they see your portrait? What objects, colors, or symbols would you ask the artist to include so that your classmates and friends will know that it's you in the portrait?

## Activity

Divide the class into groups composed of five students. Each member of the group will pick out at 2 objects (or symbols/attributes) one associated with themselves and the other, with their group. Have them place these objects in the center of the circle and moving clockwise, each group member will try to guess which objects are associated with each of the members and which objects are associated with the group itself. How many guessed correctly? How many guesses were incorrect? You can go into a discussion of identity (individual and group). You can also discuss reasons for the similarities/differences in the meaning seen by people, in the objects they have chosen to symbolize themselves and their group.

## Session Two

The students will now create 9 X 12 “self-portraits” that do not include their faces and instead only have the object/symbol that can be used to identify them. The students may use cut-out pictures from magazines to make a collage. They may also draw the objects themselves. By allowing them to use symbols to create their “portraits”, students who have limited drawing skills are not disadvantaged.

### Follow-up activity

After collecting the works, teachers will post 5 works on the board and then ask the class to identify whose “portraits” those are. The teacher may also post the portraits on the classroom walls or the bulletin board.

### RBEC Addressed

#### Makabayan (Sining)

### I. PANDAMA SA KAGANDAHAN (AESTHETIC PERCEPTION)

A. Naipamamalas ang kaalaman at pag-unawa sa mga elemento o sangkap ng sining

1. Naipapakita ang kaalaman at pag-unawa sa linya
  - 1.1 Nakakakilala ng iba't ibang uri at katangian ng linya
  - 1.2 Nakakalikha ng dibuhong nagpapakita ng iba't ibang katangian ng linya
2. Naipapakita ang kamalayan, kaalaman at pag-unawa sa likas at di likas na hugis

### II. MALIKHAING PAGPAPAHAYAG (CREATIVE EXPRESSION)

A. Naipahahayag ang kaisipan, damdamin, kalooban at imahinasyon sa pamamagitan ng iba't ibang gawaing sining

### III. PAMANA NG SINING (ART HERITAGE)

#### D. LIKHANG SINING

- 1 Naipagmamalaki ang mga ipinintang larawan ng mga dalubhasang pintor ng bayan
  - 1.2 Naiisa-isa ang mga bagay na nakikita sa larawan