

## Lesson 3: Mary Church Terrell and Politics of Black Femme Style

### Does hope triumph over despair?

<p><b>Objective/Rationale</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>Examine</b> the ways people of color used fashion as a form of liberation and resistance.</li><li>● <b>Evaluate</b> the style of Mary Church Terrell during her life span.</li><li>● <b>Analyze</b> past and present photos of women activists such as Mary Church Terrell.</li></ul>	
<p><b>Materials</b></p> <p>Links and or printouts, paper &amp; pencil for students to take notes and or screens--depending on the classroom structure-online, hybrid or in person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Portraits of Mary Church Terrell</li><li>● one (1) portrait of Senator Kamala Harris</li><li>● Brittany Packnett</li><li>● Ayanna Pressley</li><li>● Stacy Abrams</li><li>● Alexandra Ocasio Cortez (if your students are predominantly Latinx please feel free to include the indomitable Alexandra Ocasio Cortez in conjunction with one of the African American women political figures.)</li></ul> <p><b>Suggested biography</b> <a href="https://www.loc.gov/collections/mary-church-terrell-papers/about-this-collection/">https://www.loc.gov/collections/mary-church-terrell-papers/about-this-collection/</a></p>	
<p><b>Resource Links</b></p> <p><a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M0frbuenLyusw0H8CsYq4StSp7gyGj8qTky69Rhrf9w/edit?usp=sharing">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M0frbuenLyusw0H8CsYq4StSp7gyGj8qTky69Rhrf9w/edit?usp=sharing</a></p> <p><a href="https://edited.com/resources/black-cultures-influence-on-fashion/">https://edited.com/resources/black-cultures-influence-on-fashion/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/black-fashion-designers-history#slide-1">https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/black-fashion-designers-history#slide-1</a></p> <p><a href="https://ocasio-cortez.house.gov/about/biography">https://ocasio-cortez.house.gov/about/biography</a></p> <p><a href="https://whatkamalawore.com/">https://whatkamalawore.com/</a></p> <p><b>Smithsonian portrait analysis guide for teachers --</b> <a href="https://npg.si.edu/learn/classroom-resource/reading-portraiture-guide-educators">https://npg.si.edu/learn/classroom-resource/reading-portraiture-guide-educators</a></p>	
<p><b>Essential Question:</b></p>	
<p>Is Black Femme style revolutionary?</p>	

## Teacher/Facilitator

**Introduction:** Teacher please **read and distribute** the bio on Mary Church Terrell (use active reading strategies in accordance with your students levels and needs).

**Distribute, read and discuss** the Mary Church Terrell bio and explain that Terrell was an African American activist who lived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who was very well-known for her gorgeous portraits. Today we are going to look at some historic images to try and understand who Terrell was.

We will look at her choice of style and try to figure out what she was trying to do with the pictures she sat for. We will think about the choices people make when they present themselves to the public.

Why do people dress in different ways to go to different places? We will examine these and the choices that other powerful Black women and women of color are making right now about how they are seen in public and why.

By conducting portrait analysis of Terrell and contemporary Black women political figures, you will start to interrogate not just the past but the present. You might also start asking questions about the future: about the choices we make when we freeze ourselves in time using pictures.

## Suggested Activities:

Note: This is a suggested list of activities which students can complete to explore this issue.

1. **Interactive vocabulary**-To create shared language and basic understanding, students should work with the list of terms--read the definitions, use them in complete sentences, look up the definitions on their phones, learn them for spelling etc. the day before or right before the class starts.
2. **Create a Portrait Analysis**-Students should have already reviewed the terms the day before. Discuss the terms relating them to contemporary examples of selfies.

**Thirty second look:** Explain that you will now start analyzing Terrell's portrait. This process will take place in stages--quick look then a deeper look. Have the first image of Terrell posted on the teacher screen or distributed to the students. Allow students to look for thirty seconds--count down or run a timer. Discuss--identify and describe the elements the students saw. This is quick and intentionally superficial. Reveal the portrait again this time, ask students the meanings of the elements.

3. **Watch/log** into the site to learn the difference between a primary and secondary source. (Primary Source Link Below)

(Primary Source Link Below)

<https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/?&loclr=reclnk>

4. **Transcribe:** Students will transcribe primary documents from Terrell’s archives at the Library of Congress. Please walk students through the process of logging on to *We the People* and follow the directions to begin transcribing. (Link Below)

After transcribing, discuss the experience. What did you learn about segregation in education? What do you believe and why? Explain.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** How to transcribe

<https://crowd.loc.gov/help-center/how-to-transcribe/>

### Summative exercise/homework

**Pick** a fashion era and **prepare** a presentation on the politics of Black femme or femme style in that era.

Students will **discuss** the style choices Terrell made and contrast and compare them to those made by the women of their choice in the public eye.

Students will **identify and explore** the choices Terrell and the women made in the ways they dressed and the images they circulated and resisted. **Students will be able to integrate** elements of portrait analysis in their writing, engaging in a compare and contrast critical inquiry with key terms and incorporate their own argument about the the essential question: Is Black femme style revolutionary?

### Link to Post-Lesson Feedback Form

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1PBkoZrVOBAi2uSX7WjlNo7RxiOdZ8skhuNwJtLj0Gz8/edit>

### Vocabulary/Terms

1. **Portrait**--a likeness or an image-painting, photograph of a subject or person
2. **Symbol**--something (an object) that represents something or someone else
3. **Subject**--the person or people in a portrait
4. **Facial expression**--the emotions of the subjects face and or body language
5. **Pose**--how the subject is positioned in the portrait-standing, sitting,
6. **Setting**--the objects and or scene of the portrait/the background
7. **Objects**--the things in the setting and on the subject-eg a book, jewelry, a pen

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|  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>8. <b>Scale</b>--the size of the subject and objects in the setting</li><li>9. <b>Medium</b>--what the artist used to create the picture or painting-photo, paint</li><li>10. <b>Message</b>--what is the artist and subject trying to tell you, the intended meaning of the portrait</li></ol> |
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