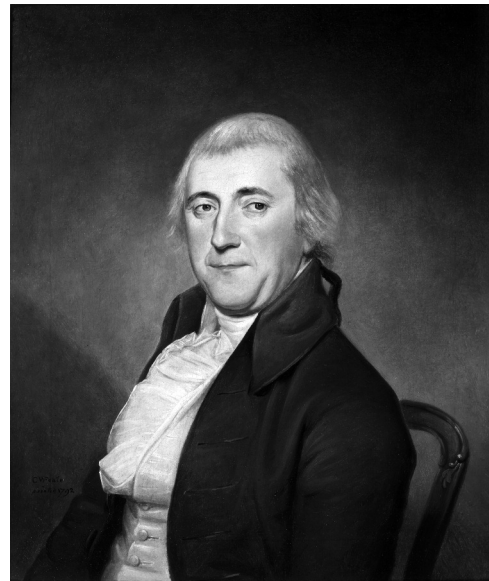


## HISTORICAL PORTRAITS

Artists have been making portraits for thousands of years in sculpture and painting. A **portrait** is a work of art, created by an artist, which represents a unique individual. You will see many portraits in the houses that you visit for History Hunters. These portraits are very important because they give us another view of history. They can be read, just like primary source documents, and help us to understand individuals that lived in the past. Many portraits show us not only what the **sitter** looked like but also about their social status, hobbies, and profession. Some of the most important features of portraits are the sitter's gestures, facial expressions, clothing, and **props** which often give clues about the sitter's life. Looking at all of these things together helps us to know more about the person pictured in the portrait and the time in which it was painted. Other types of portraits that you will see on your museum visits are **self-portraits** and **silhouette** profile portraits.

Some questions to ask yourself when you are looking at portraits:

- What do you see?
- What is the **sitter** doing/wearing in this portrait?
- Are there any clues that tell us about the sitter's life? If so, what are they?
- What are some things that you can learn about the sitter from this portrait?



Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827)  
David Gelston, 1792  
Oil on canvas, La Salle University Art Museum

### Vocabulary words:

Portrait: A work of art, created by an artist, which represents a unique individual or group of people.

Props: Objects or scenery in the painting that might help us to learn more about the sitter.

Self-Portraits: Artworks where the artist creates an image

of him/herself.

Silhouettes: A form of portraiture that shows only the outline of a person's facial profile.

Sitter: The person or group of people featured in a portrait.