



## National Portrait Gallery Washington, D.C.

### Introduction and Instructions

While the Smithsonian Institution is commonly associated with its more famous history and natural science museums, they also administer the National Portrait Gallery. It is the only museum in the United States dedicated entirely to portraiture and contains portraits of many famous and notable figures from American history, including official portraits of U.S. presidents. In addition to any prior knowledge you may have, use your research skills and the resources provided here to answer the questions below.



Learn about the history of the Portrait Gallery and the building where it is located.  
EXPLORE: <https://siarchives.si.edu/history/national-portrait-gallery>

1. What year did Congress officially establish the National Portrait Gallery?

2. What were the two main objectives for the gallery based on its congressional mandate?

3. What are the guidelines for accepting portraits?

4. How did Congress increase the Portrait Gallery's ability to add to its collections in 1976?

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5. The gallery moved from the Arts and Industries Building in 1967 to its present location in the historic Patent Office Building. Summarize the building's history and describe its architecture.



What connection do the Washington Wizards basketball team have to the National Portrait Gallery?  
READ: <https://wamu.org/story/17/08/23/washington-wizards-saved-national-portrait-gallery/>

6. What was happening in April of 1968 that made the opening of the National Portrait Gallery challenging?

7. Why do you think the article is titled, "How the Washington Wizards Saved the Portrait Gallery"?

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## WHAT DO YOU THINK? *This is your chance to share your opinions, make connections, and apply what you've learned!*



Watch this student orientation video about the National Portrait Gallery.  
WATCH: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkAfjRoINCI>

1. What are some of the important rules to keep in mind when you are visiting the museum?



Explore the current and permanent exhibitions at the gallery.  
EXPLORE: <https://npg.si.edu/whats-on/current-exhibitions>

2. Choose three exhibits that you are interested in seeing and explain why they interest you.



**CONSIDER:** "To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and its highest values and truths," *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* by Carol Duncan.

3. After exploring the exhibitions, what American values and truths do you think visitors to the National Portrait Gallery discover from visiting the museum? Justify your response.

4. On the second floor of the gallery, there is an exhibit that showcases a period in our history called "The Struggle for Justice" that highlights men and women who struggled to achieve civil rights. If you could add an exhibit showcasing another event, group, struggle, or triumph in our nation's history, what would it be? Whose portraits would be on display? Explain your choices.