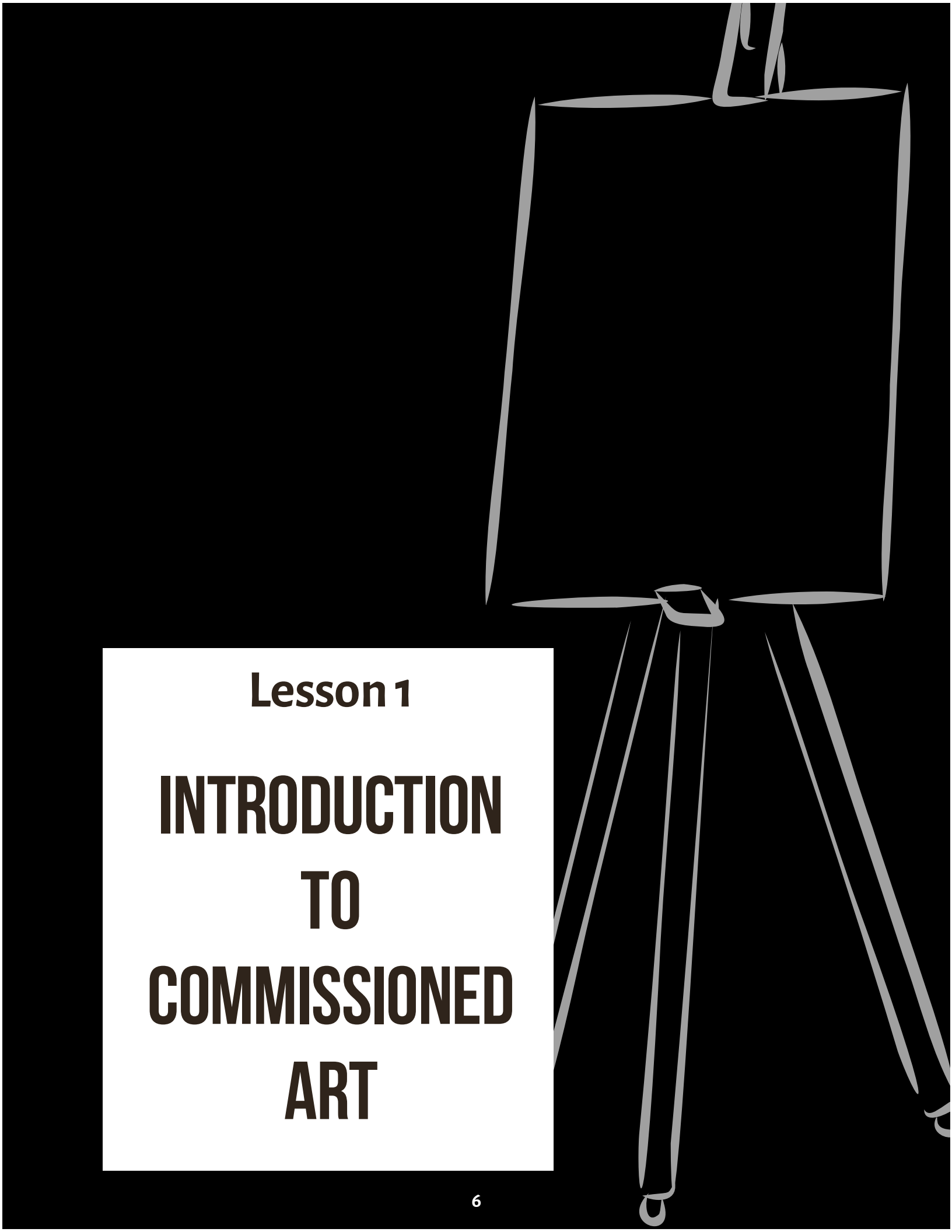


Lesson 1

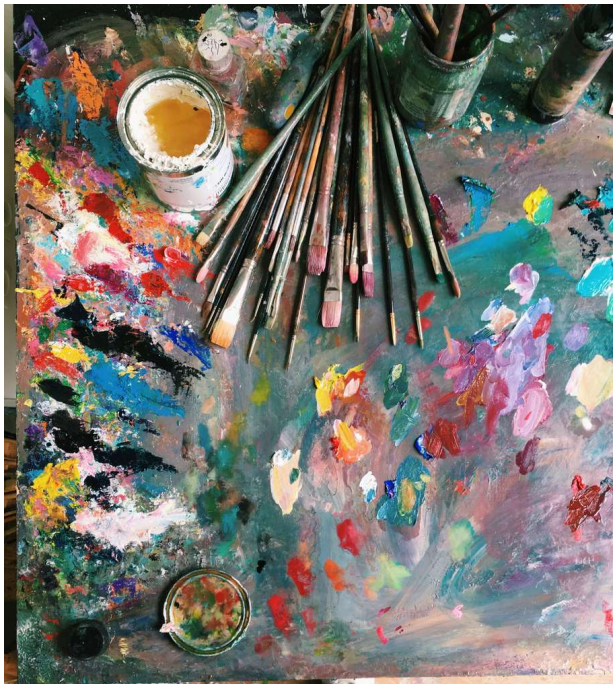
INTRODUCTION TO COMMISSIONED ART

Lesson 1: Introduction to Commissioned Art

GRADE LEVEL: HIGH SCHOOL

DURATION: 60 MINUTES

OBJECTIVE:
Students will understand what commissioned art is, its historical and modern significance, and how commissioned works contribute to the art world.



MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Projector/Computer for visuals
- Printouts or slides of famous commissioned artworks (e.g., Renaissance portraits, modern commissioned pieces)
- Chart paper/whiteboard
- Art supplies for exploration (optional)

WARM-UP ACTIVITY:
"WHAT IS COMMISSIONED ART?" (10 MINUTES)

Goal: Activate prior knowledge and set context.

Instructions:

- Ask students: "What do you think commissioned art is? Have you seen any examples before?"
- Write down their answers and thoughts on the board.
- Provide a brief definition: "Commissioned art is artwork that an artist is hired to create based on a client's request. It can include portraits, murals, sculptures, and more."
- Discuss examples students might know, such as personalized portraits or public murals.

CLASS DISCUSSION:
THE ROLE OF COMMISSIONED PORTRAITS IN THE ART WORLD (15 MINUTES)

Goal: Explore why commissioned portraits are significant.

Discussion Points:

- Historically: Commissioned portraits were used to celebrate wealth, power, and legacy (e.g., royal families, aristocrats).
- Culturally: They provide historical documentation of fashion, culture, and society.
- Present Day: People commission art for personal reasons, such as commemorating loved ones, and institutions commission art for public spaces.

Example Questions to Prompt Discussion:

- *Why do you think artists are commissioned to create art?*
- *What kinds of people or groups commission art today?*

Lesson 1: Introduction to Commissioned Art

ACTIVITY:

ANALYZING FAMOUS COMMISSIONED PORTRAITS (20 MINUTES)

Goal: Recognize famous examples of commissioned works and analyze their styles.

Instructions:

- Show 3-5 examples of commissioned portraits:
  - *Example: Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa (a commissioned piece for Lisa Gherardini's family).*
  - *Example: Diego Velázquez's Las Meninas (commissioned for the Spanish royal family).*
  - *Example: Kehinde Wiley's portrait of Barack Obama (modern commissioned work).*
- For each piece, analyze:
  - *Who commissioned the work?*
  - *What is the style (e.g., realism, impressionism, modern)?*
  - *What materials or techniques were used?*
  - *What purpose did the work serve (e.g., political, personal, cultural)?*
- Allow students to share their thoughts about what stands out to them.

EXPLORATION:

STYLES AND MEDIUMS IN COMMISSIONED ART (10 MINUTES)

Goal: Expose students to diversity in commissioned art.

Instructions:

- Briefly discuss the variety of mediums used in commissioned art (e.g., oil painting, digital art, sculpture).
- Show examples of how artists express commissioned works in different styles (e.g., hyperrealism, abstract portraits, street art murals).
- Encourage students to think about their favorite style and why it appeals to them.

CLOSING REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION: (5 MINUTES)

Goal: Reinforce learning and promote creative thinking.

Reflection Questions:

- What did you learn about commissioned art today?
- If you could commission an artwork, what would it be and why?
- Do you think commissioning art impacts an artist's creativity?

Lesson 1: Introduction to Commissioned Art

FOR DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING

SIMPLIFIED CONTENT (FOR STUDENTS NEEDING EXTRA SUPPORT):

- Provide a simplified definition of commissioned art: "Art created because someone asked for it and often paid for it."
- Use visuals of modern, relatable examples like family portraits, pet portraits, or murals.
- Offer handouts with bullet points summarizing key points instead of long explanations.

PRE-SELECTED EXAMPLES (FOR STUDENTS WITH PROCESSING CHALLENGES):

- Limit the number of portraits analyzed to 2 instead of 3-5. Use clear, large visuals and walk through each piece step-by-step.
- Provide focus questions on slips of paper to help guide attention (e.g., "Who is in this portrait? How do we know this is a commissioned piece?").

ADVANCED LEARNERS:

- Ask students to research a modern commissioned artist or piece outside of class and prepare a short presentation.
- Challenge them to consider how commissioned art impacts the creative freedom of artists.
- Introduce deeper analysis questions: "How do political or cultural factors influence commissioned art?"