Activity: Frame Your Portrait
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago, Department of Museum Education

Introduction
When photography was new, many people, including the famous abolitionist Frederick Douglass, wanted to have their portraits made. Douglass had this daguerreotype taken while he was on a speaking tour. To protect them, daguerreotypes like this one were placed in metal frames with covers.

Discussion Questions
• How do you think Douglass was feeling when this portrait was made?
• How can you tell?
• How can you tell that this is an old photograph?

Activity
Make a frame case for a photograph of yourself.

Materials Needed:
• Poster board or thin cardboard cut 10" x 7"
• Construction paper cut 4 1/2" x 6 1/2"
• Aluminum foil
• Glue
• Camera and film
• Paper
• Colored pencils

Steps:
1. Cut an oval out of the center of the construction paper.
2. Fold the cardboard in half so that it forms a 5" x 7" frame with a cover. Cover the cardboard completely with aluminum foil. You may need to use glue to secure the edges.
3. Sit in a chair and strike a serious pose like Douglass. Ask a friend or family member to take your photograph and then have it developed into a 4" x 6" print. As an alternative, use an existing 4" x 6" photograph or a draw your own self-
4. Glue the photograph or drawing to the inside of your foil case. Center the construction paper over the photograph and glue it in place.

Glossary

abolitionist *(n; adj)*

a person who spoke, wrote, or fought against slavery. Some abolitionists were free African Americans, others were escaped slaves, and many were Caucasian; of or relating to the anti-slavery movement

daguerreotype *(n)*

invented in France in 1839, one of the two original forms of photography. Daguerreotypes are unique, non-reproducible images produced on copper plates coated with silver that has been made sensitive to light. Daguerreotype images are remarkably clear and detailed, which makes them perfect for portraits.

Frederick Douglass *(1857-1895)*

black American ex-slave whose speeches and writings brought him to the forefront of the American abolitionist movement. Douglass became the first black citizen to hold high rank in the U.S. government as minister and consul general to Haiti.

portrait *(n)*

the likeness of a person (especially a face) in a work of art, such as a painting, drawing, sculpture, or photograph

self-portrait *(n)*

a portrait of oneself done by oneself