Family Activity: Make a Mighty Portrait
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

Introduction
In his portrait *Lady Sarah Bunbury Sacrificing to the Graces*, 1763-65, the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds included many objects and elements drawn from ancient Greece and Rome in order to highlight and compliment Lady Sarah’s attributes. For example, Lady Sarah is depicted worshiping the Three Graces, ancient Roman symbols of elegance and beauty and attendants of Venus, the goddess of love. By doing this, Reynolds points out Lady Sarah’s grace and beauty.

Discussion Questions
• Have you ever had your portrait taken, perhaps at school or at a portrait studio?
• What did you wear?
• What were you doing in your portrait?
• How did you pose?
• How does this compare to what you see in Lady Bunbury’s portrait?

Activity
Enhance a portrait with symbols of Greek and Roman gods and goddesses.

Materials Needed:
• 5” x 7” color or black-and-white photo of a person you know well (or a magazine or newspaper picture of someone well known)
• 8 1/2” x 11” sheet of construction paper, any color
• printout of symbols of gods and goddesses
• two 8 1/2” x 11” pieces of cardboard
• utility knife
• dry macaroni pasta
• metallic paint
• paintbrush
• glue or rubber cement
Steps:

1. Think of a person you know well, such as a family member, friend, or yourself! This person is called “the sitter.” Ask your parents to help you find a picture of this person, or find a picture of someone well known in a magazine or newspaper.

2. Set the portrait in the center of one of the sheets of cardboard and lightly trace the portrait’s outline onto the cardboard with a pencil. Remove the portrait and ask an adult to help cut out the center. Cut out the center slightly smaller than the traced outline by about 1/8” on each side. This larger piece of cardboard will be the frame for your portrait.

3. Glue the portrait to the center of a sheet of construction paper, then put glue on the other side of the construction paper. Attach the paper to a sheet of cardboard.

4. Think about particular aspects of this person’s personality. Is he or she funny, brave, quiet, athletic?

5. Examine the symbols of the attributes of gods and goddesses and pick a couple that also describe your sitter. Print and then cut out these symbols and glue them onto the cardboard frame.

6. Glue the cardboard frame over the portrait.

7. Decorate your frame by gluing dry macaroni noodles to the cardboard in a design or pattern.

8. Let the portrait and frame dry completely.

9. Paint the frame with metallic paint, being careful not to cover the symbols.
helmet - Minerva is the ancient Roman goddess of wisdom. If your sitter is smart or wise, show him or her with a helmet.
laurel wreath - Apollo is the ancient Greek god of truth. If your sitter is honest and is good at keeping secrets, adorn him or her with a wreath of laurel leaves.
**doves** - Venus is the ancient Roman goddess of love. If your sitter is caring or affectionate, include a pair of flying doves in your portrait.
**dogs** - Artemis is the ancient Greek goddess of children. If your sitter likes to play or babysit, accompany him or her with dogs.

**club** - Hercules is the ancient Roman hero who accomplished 12 difficult tasks. If your sitter is strong and athletic, portray him or her holding a club.

**trident** - Poseidon is the ancient Greek protector god of those at sea. If your sitter enjoys the water, have him or her hold a three-pronged spear, or trident.

**wings** - Nike is the ancient Greek symbol for victory. If your sitter is successful, portray him or her with a pair of wings.