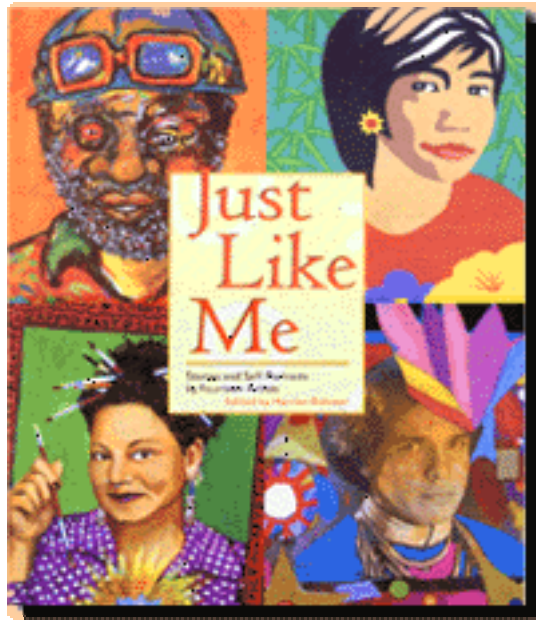


READING COMMUNITIES: CBP TEACHER'S GUIDES

Just Like Me:
Stories and Self-Portraits
by Fourteen Artists

Edited by **Harriet Rohmer**



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Just Like Me features the work and words of fourteen outstanding visual artists from African American, Asian American, Chicano, Native American, and Jewish communities in the United States and Mexico. In this anthology, unforgettable images and words illustrate the diverse paths the artists took from childhood to adulthood.

Each two-page spread presents a self-portrait, a statement by the artist, and photographs of the artist as a child and an adult. The stories accompanying each piece explore the artists' inspirations, communities, and visions of themselves and their work. Through their words and their art, the artists share their memories and their visions for the future. Enrique Chagoya writes, "Art for me is an act of freedom, an act of intuition, an act of trust in myself. Art is also a way for me to express my concerns, dreams, and hopes for the society in which we live." And Michelle Wood helps us to understand her portrait with the words, "My character is a strong, fearless woman symbolizing the well-being of my people. I am free of fear, read to forge ahead, hand in hand with my ancestors."

Just Like Me is also a rich classroom resource for teachers wishing to inspire the future writers and artists in their own classrooms. The stories serve as models for the autobiographies the children themselves may write, encouraging them to reflect on their past and look toward their future. The diverse artistic styles illustrate the many different forms that outstanding art, and lives, can take. Because many of the artists emphasize the importance of their families and their communities, the book can be connected to a wide range of themes in social studies and language arts.

COMMUNITY: Multicultural: Includes artists from the African American, Asian American, Jewish, Latino/Chicano communities, and Native American communities

THEMATIC UNITS

Life stories: Autobiography; Memoir; Life Paths

Visual Art: Artistic Styles and Influences; Communicating through Images

Personal identity: Ethnicity; Community; Family; Vocations and Occupations

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Each of these fourteen award-winning artists has created the art for one or more of Children's Book Press's multicultural picture books. Dedicated to sharing their creative visions, many of the contributors also lead workshops for children and families through Children's Book Press Community Programs in schools and libraries. Harriet Rohmer, the founder of Children's Book Press, worked closely with all of the artists on the books they illustrated. These collaborations inspired her to create an anthology celebrating their lives and work.

GETTING THE CLASSROOM READY

Self-Portrait Gallery



Reproductions of self-portraits (photocopied or printed from the Internet); posterboard

- Designate a corner of the room to be the self-portrait gallery. Hang self-portraits by a variety of artists in that space. (See the Resources section at the end of the guide for images in recommended websites and books).
- Create empty “frames” from pieces of 9”x12” posterboard, cutting out 8”x10” rectangles from the center of each sheet. Create one frame for each child in the classroom and hang the empty frames in the portrait gallery areas. Tell students that these are the spaces for their own masterpieces.
- As your students create self-portraits of their own, add their work to the gallery.

GETTING READY FOR READING

Autobiography

Students identify the elements of an autobiography and understand what makes their own life stories unique.



45 min.



whole class and pairs



Blackboard and chalk or flipchart and markers.

- If necessary, begin by introducing the class to the concept of an autobiography. Explain that it means a story you write (“graph”) about your life (“bio”) yourself (“auto”).
- Ask the class to brainstorm a list of questions they think an autobiography should answer. Record the group’s ideas on the blackboard or flipchart.
- Divide the class into pairs. Ask the students to use the list of questions on the board to tell their own life stories to their partners. Let them know that they’ll have to be brief; each narrator has only three minutes. After the first three minutes, let the pairs know that it’s time to switch roles.
- In a large group, have the students share their reactions to the exercise. Was it hard to tell their stories in such a brief amount of time? What parts of their lives seemed to be the most important?
- Show the students a copy of *Just Like Me*. Tell them that it’s a collection of artist’s self-portraits and stories about their lives. Show them how short each piece of writing is. Tell the students that these stories are similar to the three-minute autobiographies they just told. Ask them to make predictions about the writing.

Self-Portraits

Students respond to and compare self-portraits by well-known artists of color.



30 min.



large group

CA Visual Arts Standard 4.0: Students analyze, assess, and derive meaning from works of art, according to the elements of art, principles of design, and aesthetic qualities.



Reproductions of “Self-Portrait with Monkey,” by Frida Kahlo, “Self-Portrait as a Heel Part Two,” by Jean Michel Basquiat, and “Self-Portrait,” by Jacob Lawrence (see *Resources* section for websites with these images); blackboard and chalk or flipchart and markers

- Show the students the self-portraits, one at a time. Ask them to brainstorm words that each image inspires. Explain that these words should respond to the art: How does the art make them feel? What does it make them think about? How would they describe the style of the picture? List the words they brainstorm on your flipchart or blackboard.
- Once you have repeated the exercise with all three images, compare the lists. What do they have in common? How are they different? Students may suggest, for example, that while both the Kahlo portrait and the Lawrence portrait are calm, one seems happy and one seems sad.
- Using the students’ comments as a springboard, guide the students into a discussion about different ways that artists communicate their ideas and feelings. What kinds of colors might they use to show an emotion? How did the colors in the portraits affect the students? Why were the three lists different?

EXPLORING THE BOOK

Diving In



20 min.



large or small groups

Introduce the book to students in a large or small group. The focus of this first reading should be reading for pleasure—encourage students to enjoy the beauty of the book and the story it tells. In order to foster this enjoyment, consider some of the following activities:

- Discuss the cover, the title, and the illustrations. Look at the structure of the book, how it is set up in two-page spreads made up of self-portraits and personal statements. Ask students what they think the book is about. What do they think will be more important, the words or the images? List these predictions and ask students to check them after the reading is complete.
- Read sections aloud to the group or have students read the book on their own, in pairs, or in small groups.
- Encourage students to further explore the book actively by finding their favorite picture and reading the story next to it. Ask them to compare favorites and discuss why they chose the piece they did.

FIRST TIME AROUND: VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Words of Art

Students learn words they can use in their descriptions of and responses to visual art.



20 min.



whole class

CA Visual Arts Standard 1.0: Students perceive and respond to works of art. They use the vocabulary of the visual arts to express their observations.



Flipchart or butcher paper and markers

- Ask students to look carefully at the self-portrait by Daryl Wells on page 25 of *Just Like Me*. Talk with them about the differences between the four pictures. How can they express what makes each picture distinct? If students struggle for words, read Daryl’s statement on page 24 with the class. Explain to the students that the material an artist uses is called a “medium.”
- Start a list on the board of different kinds of media. Begin with those that Wells uses: oil paints, watercolors, colored pencils, colored inks, oil pastels. Ask students to add more types of media that they are familiar with (e.g., crayons, clay, pencil drawings, pen and ink).
- Explain to students that art has its own vocabulary. In the same way that special words are used to talk about math, there are special words for art. The list of media offers examples of this vocabulary.
- Tell students that color is very important in talking about art. It’s important to use words that communicate specifically what colors are. For example, to describe red, you can use the words *crimson* or *scarlet* or *blood-red* or *cherry-red*. Start a list titled “color” next to your list of media, and ask students to brainstorm good color words.
- Another important type of art vocabulary describes its subject. Explain to the students that *subject* refers to what the art is depicting. Some common subject words include: portraits, still lifes, landscapes, and abstract works. Make a *subject* list next to your other lists.
- Post these lists in your classroom for students to reference as they discuss the art in *Just Like Me*. As you use new words, add them to the lists.

SECOND TIME AROUND: READING COMPREHENSION



20 minutes



individual

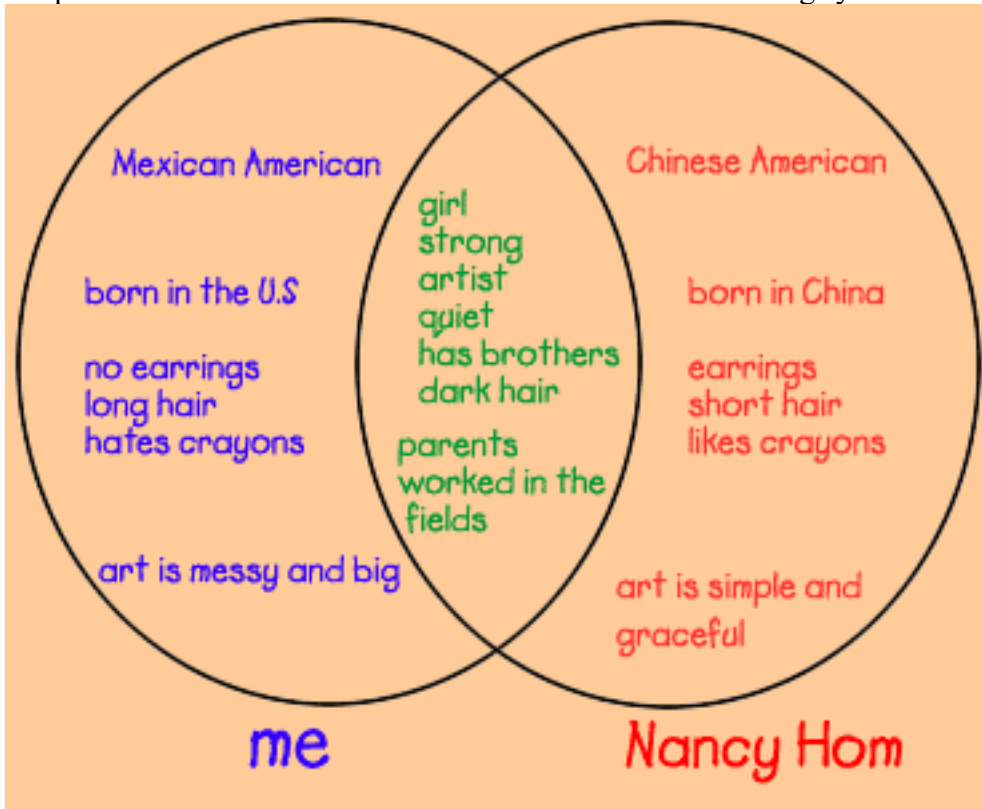
CA Reading Standard 2.0: Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material. They draw upon a variety of comprehension strategies as needed (e.g., generating and responding to essential questions, making predictions, comparing information from several sources).



Butcher or chart paper; magic markers

- Ask students to pick one artist from the book, using either the artwork or the writing as the criterion for their choice.
- Show students the handout with the Venn diagram. Explain that the diagram is a way to compare two different things. Venn diagrams demonstrate which qualities are

unique and which are shared in common between the two things you are comparing.



- Have the students carefully read their chosen artist's statement and look closely at the self-portrait. Ask them to complete a Venn diagram that compares the artist to themselves. Remind them to use clues from both the words and the pictures as they make comparisons.

AFTERWORDS: LITERARY RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS

Images and Words

Students analyze the self-portraits and artists' statements and share their insights with the rest of the class.



40 minutes



small group

CA Reading Standard 3.0: Students read and respond to a wide variety of significant works of children's literature. They distinguish between the structural features of the text and literary terms or elements (e.g., theme, plot, setting, and characters).

CA Visual Arts Standard 4.0: Students analyze, assess, and derive meaning from works of art.

- Divide the class into reading groups of four students each. Assign or let each group choose several focus artists, in a way that divides the book evenly among the groups.
- Tell the groups that it will be their job to be the expert on their assigned artists. As a group, they will look carefully at each self-portrait and read each artist's statement. How do the two go together? What do the images and words make them think and feel? What do they think the artist wants them to know about him- or herself? Does the artist tell them these things directly, or are these things they have to search to find? What's the most important thing to remember about this artist? Would they like to hang this picture in their house? Why or why not?
- Let the groups know that they'll be sharing their conclusions with the rest of the class. Make sure they assign a note-taker and a reporter for the discussion of each artist. If there are differences of opinion, encourage the group to explain them.
- Bring the class back together. Ask each group of experts to present their artists and their conclusions to the whole class.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Just Like Me

Students write essays comparing themselves to an artist of their choice. See Art activity for an extension of this project.



2 hours (can be over several sessions)



individual

CA Writing Standard 1.0: Students write clear and coherent sentences and paragraph that develop a central idea. Their writing shows they consider the audience and purpose. Students progress through the stages of the writing process.



Pre-Writing and Drafting Worksheets (at the end of this document)
For an example of one student's essay, please view the online version of this guide.

Plan

- Ask students to look through the book to identify three artists that interest them. Have them read the essays by these artists carefully.
- Give students the pre-writing worksheet and tell them to complete the chart based on their three artists.

Draft

- In this activity, students will compare themselves to one artist. Remind the students that there are many different ways to resemble someone else: you might share an interest, you might look like each other physically, you might live near each other, or you might speak the same language, for example. Ask them to carefully review their notes on each artist. Have each student pick one artist that appeals to him or her.
- Ask students to complete the drafting worksheet, thinking carefully about how they are like their artists. Remind them to write in full sentences and to think about how their thoughts will work together to make a paragraph.

Revise

Now it's time to move from the writing worksheet to a full paragraph. Students take their initial sentences and develop them further in second drafts, using lined paper or a

computer. Remind students to explain their thoughts clearly in full sentences and to make connections between their ideas.

Edit

Ask students to edit their second drafts for publication, checking spelling and punctuation. Read through the drafts and mark errors. Encourage students to use a word wall, a dictionary, or other classroom reference tools as they correct their work.

Publish

Publish the essays by posting them in the classroom under the students' self-portraits.

OTHER WRITING ACTIVITIES

- *Comparing Lives.* Ask students to compare and contrast two different artists in the book, commenting on both the artwork and the text. How are the artists' lives similar or different? How are their artistic styles similar or different? Tell students to imagine themselves talking to the artists. What would they be like as people? How would the conversations with the two artists be different? (pairs or small groups)
- *Art Critics.* Ask students to write reviews of the art in the book. Tell them to pretend that the pieces in the book are hanging in a museum and that they are reporters assigned by their newspaper to review the exhibit. How would they use words to describe the images? What would they want somebody else to know about the art hanging in the museum? Would they recommend that others go to the exhibit? (individual)

SOCIAL STUDIES

Just Like My Folks

Students identify artists' communities and explore the impact of identity on individuals' art and lives.



2 hours



large groups

CA Social Studies Standard 3.1: Students describe the physical and human geography and use maps, tables, graphs, photographs, and charts to organize information about people, places, and environments.



World map; butcher paper or flipchart and markers

- Choose one focus artist from each ethnic community. Base your choice on the artists' essays and your students' responses to the artwork. As you choose, try to achieve a range of geographic representation, based on where the artists currently live or where they spent their childhood. Some good focus artists might include: Carmen Lomas Garza (Mexican American), Nancy Hom (Chinese American), George Littlechild (Canadian First Nations), Rodolfo Morales (Mexican), Mira Reisberg Australian and Jewish American), JoeSam. (African American), and Michelle Wood (African American).
- On your world map, use pins to mark the places highlighted in the artists' essays and biographical information.
- Read the focus artists' essays as a class. Have students list the facts they know about each artist.
- Talk with your students about the many aspects of identity. Explore the following ideas: We each have a personal identity. Our identities are affected both by circumstances that are individual (specific to our lives) and based on our communities (shared by people who have things in common). Brainstorm a list of different kinds of communities: ethnic or racial, geographic, professional, and so on.
- Ask students to identify the different communities these artists belong to. Use a chart to compare your lists of facts about each artists. Ask the class: What about this artist's experience is individual? What do all the artists have in common? What might the artists have in common with other members of their ethnic communities?

Carmen Lomas Garza	Nancy Hom	George Littlechild	Mira Reisberg	JoeSam.
Mexican American	Chinese American	Canadian	Jewish	African American
Born in Kingsville, Texas	Born in Toisan, China	Fist nations	Australian American	
Born in Kingsville, Texas	Born in Toisan, China	Born in Edmonton, Canada	Born in Melbourne, Australia	Born in Harlem, NY
Taught herself how to draw	Likes to draw simple shapes	His art shows his different moods	Being an artist brings her happiness	Uses lots of colors in art

- If you can, use this exercise as the starting point for a more extended research project about different communities. Begin by comparing the self-portraits with other artwork from these communities.

OTHER SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITIES

- *When I Was Your Age. . .* Have your students research what life was like when the artists were their age. Ask students to pick an artist and use his or her birthdate to calculate the year when the artist was the student's age. What was life like in the artists' communities when they were children?

ART

Just Like Me

Students create their own self-portraits in the style of a favorite artist.



1.5 hours



individual

CA Visual Arts Standard 1.0: Students apply artistic processes and skills, using a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original artworks.



Drawing paper (preferably 12”x18”); pencils and erasers; oil pastels, crayons, or colored pencils.

For an example of one student’s artwork, please view the online version of this guide.

1. Ask students to identify a favorite artist from the book. Tell them to pay special attention to the *artist’s* style as they choose. If your class has completed **the *Just Like Me*** writing activity, have students choose the artists they featured in their essays.
2. Tell students that they are going to draw a self-portrait—in the style of the artists they have chosen. When they are done, their picture of themselves should look like a portrait the artist might have drawn. A student may even choose to replicate the artist’s self-portrait, replacing the artist with him- or herself.
3. Have students plan out their drawings by sketching them in pencil on a small piece of paper. Tell students this is the rough draft of their art, just as they have rough drafts of their writing.
4. When students are ready, ask them to redraw their self-portraits in pencil on their large pieces of drawing paper. Then they may color their work, using the medium of their choice.
5. Share the work by posting it above the students’ ***Just Like Me*** essays. Put the finished work in a special gallery corner of your classroom.

OTHER ART ACTIVITIES

- *Photographic Self-Portraits:* Read aloud Maya Christina Gonzalez’s essay on page 8 about her self-portrait. Point out to the students that Maya made her picture by painting over a photograph of herself. Take a photograph of each student and enlarge it on a photocopier, making the image fill the 8.5”x11” paper. Have students use oil

pastels to color themselves in, encouraging them to use colors that surprise them or express their feelings. If you wish, create posterboard frames and ask students to decorate the frames with words that describe themselves, using handwriting or collage.

MATH

Picture Geometry

Students use the self-portraits to identify and compare geometric shapes.



30 minutes



whole class

CA Mathematics Standard Measurement and Geometry 2.0: Students describe and compare the attributes of plane geometric figures



Paper and pencils; blackboard and chalk or flipchart and markers

1. Break the class into small groups and assign each group one of the following shapes: circles, squares, rectangles, triangles, and polygons. Tell the groups that it is their job to find these shapes in the book.
2. Ask the groups to keep lists of where they see the shapes in the art. Tell them that if they can't find the exact shape they're looking for, they should look for a form close to their assigned shape.
3. Bring the groups together. Tell each group to share two or three examples of their findings with the class. Ask the students to explain why these are good examples. What makes this shape in the art look like a circle? What are the characteristics of a circle? Keep notes for the group on the flipchart or blackboard. After each group's presentation, ask other students if they have characteristics to add to the list. Supplement the students' lists as appropriate
4. Ask the students who researched squares and rectangles to compare their lists. Is there any overlap between the two lists? What makes something a square rather than a rectangle? Why might it be hard to find a perfect square in a work of art?

RESOURCES

Related Titles from Children's Book Press

Honoring Our Ancestors: Stories and Pictures by Fourteen Artists. Edited by Harriet Rohmer.

Other books illustrated by the artists in *Just Like Me* (see page 32 of the book for an initial list or search the CBP website for updated information)

Books from Other Publishers

Bell, Julian. *Five Hundred Self-Portraits*. Phaidon 2000.

Baumbusch, Brigitte. *The Many Faces of the Face (Art for Children Series)*. Stewart Tabori & Chang, 1999.

Just Like Me Artist Websites

This is a partial list of websites that feature the work and words of artists from Just Like Me. Links through galleries are subject to change, so use your search engine to check for current information.

- *Tomie Arai*
http://www.vkp.org/onsitecontent/artiststmts/tomie_arai.html
<http://www.printshop.org/artists/arai/arai1.html>
- *Enrique Chagoya*
<http://www.segura.com/Chagoya.html>
- *Carmen Lomas Garza*
<http://www.carmenlomasgarza.com/>
<http://nmaa-ryder.si.edu/webzine/carmen1.htm>
- *Maya Christina Gonzalez*
<http://www.mayagonzalez.com>
- *Nancy Hom*
http://www.aawaaart.com/Pages/V_artists/Hom.html
- *George Littlechild*
<http://www.willockandsaxgallery.com/twillock/littlec1.htm>
<http://www.conexus.si.edu/teepee/changing/littlechild.htm>
- *Stephen Von Mason*
<http://home.earthlink.net/~rubenz/mag/current/mason/>
- *Rodolfo Morales*
http://www.indigoarts.com/gallery_oaxaca_morales1.html
<http://artofoaxaca.com/rodolfodies.html>
- *Mira Reisberg*

<http://www.mirareisberg.com/>

- *JoeSam.*

<http://www.joesam.com/>

- *Elly Simmons*

<http://www.ellysimmons.com/>

- *Daryl Wells*

<http://www.etaoin.com/abc07.htm>

Selected Self-Portraits

The following websites have high-quality images of artists' self-portraits. Many, but not all, also include biographical information about the artists or selected other works. In some cases, you may have to search the site for the self-portrait by title.

- *Palmer Hayden, "The Janitor Who Paints"*

<http://www.stanford.edu/~tshih/Hayden.html>

- *Jacob Lawrence, "Self-Portrait", 1977*

<http://jacoblawrence.org/art04.html>

(For more on this work and excellent resources on Jacob Lawrence, see http://www.whitney.org/jacoblawrence/art/self_portrait.html)

- *Jean Michel Basquiat, "Self-Portrait as a Heel Part Two"*

<http://www.artsy.com/artist/basquiat/basquiat.htm>

- *Vincent Van Gogh, selected self portraits*

http://www.vangoghgallery.com/painting/main_se.htm

- *Frida Kahlo, selected self-portraits*

<http://members.aol.com/fridanet/artwork.htm>

- *Yolanda López, "Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe"*

http://mati.eas.asu.edu/ChicanArte/html_pages/lopez11.html

- *Richard Ray Whitman, "Man Form Indian Self"*

<http://www.vkp.org/artworks/26.jpg>

Other Resources

- *"Lesson Plans—American Identity"*

A series of lesson plans exploring racial and ethnic identity through art, with several lessons focused exclusively on self-portraiture. This curriculum comes from Visual Knowledge Products, the education and outreach program of the New Museum of Contemporary Art.

<http://www.vkp.org/library.cfm?kid=8>

- *The Getty Museum's arts education resource page*

<http://www.getty.edu/artsednet/>

CONTRIBUTORS

Linda Fox, Bree Picower, and Carrie Secret participated in a Children's Book Press LitLinks project at Prescott Elementary School in the 2000-2001 academic year. Linda, Bree, and Carrie used *i see the rhythm* to teach thematic units in African American history. Prescott serves a diverse group of students in West Oakland, California, and is nationally recognized for its innovative and culturally relevant curriculum and instruction.

Maya Christina Gonzalez serves as LitLinks Artist-in-Residence at Prescott Elementary School. Maya has illustrated eight books for Children's Book Press.

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TIPS FROM THE PROS

Please share your own ideas for how to use *Just Like Me* in the classroom. We'll be pleased to post your work on the web site for other teachers to use. Email us your lesson plans at communityprograms@cbookpress.org.

Just Like Me Pre-Write

Artist	Born (when and where)	Lives	Your Thoughts
<i>Tomie Arai</i>	<i>New York, 1949</i>	<i>New York</i>	<i>I love to look out the window like she does. I love walking around cities also, looking at the people. I admire the way she put the little picture of the skyscrapers in the corner, like she's dreaming. I really like the red she uses in her art, too.</i>

Just Like Me Draft

Your Name: _____

Write something here that shows what the artist did as a child that you also like to do.

_____ is **just like me** because

Write something here that shows how you want to be like the same artist when you grow up.

I am **just like** _____ because

Draw a picture of you here that looks like your artist's picture.

