

History Standards: Students understand political, religious, social, and economic institutions that evolved in the colonial era.  
Analysis skills: Historical interpretation  
Language Arts Standards: Reading comprehension; literary response and analysis; writing applications

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## ***Using Primary Sources***

***Mrs. James Smith's (Elizabeth Murray) Portrait  
(1769)***

***Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston***

Before the invention of photography, the main way to preserve a person's likeness was to have a portrait done. Yet very few people in colonial America had their portraits painted. There were not very many artists who were good at painting realistic images of people. Also, portraits were expensive, a luxury good. One famous artist in Boston, John Singleton Copley, painted the portraits of many well-to-do colonists, including famous Revolutionary leaders like Paul Revere. In that portrait, Revere holds a silver teapot, an example of his skill as a silversmith. Other men were painted with account books or other objects that suggested their occupations. In the late summer of 1769, soon after her husband James Smith had died and before she went to England, Elizabeth Murray sat for this Copley portrait, which now hangs in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

**Directions: Look at this portrait carefully and answer the following questions using your historical inference skills. Use a separate piece of paper to give good, complete answers to these questions.**

1. How would you describe Elizabeth's clothing?
2. What can you tell about her social class? (gentry class, middling sort, indentured servant) What clues help you to infer her class status?
3. How conservative or revealing is her dress? How does clothing of the 1700s compare with clothing today?
4. How would you describe Elizabeth's expression?
5. Look at her hair. How would you describe her hairdo?
6. What do you think is the significance of the fruit in the portrait?
7. If you had a portrait painted of yourself, what objects would you want to include in it to tell people about you? What might you wear? How would your hair be fixed? What expression would you have?
8. Why do you think this picture was painted?