

Sculptures as Characters: Creating Three- Dimensionality

Grade

● 6–8

Teacher-In-Residence

● Mora Harris

Subjects

● Playwriting, Literary Arts,
Creative Writing, Language
Arts

Carnegie
Museum of Art

Goals

- Writers will use skills in observation to identify ways to express character beyond dialogue.
- Writers will collaborate with each other to create new characters inspired by works of art.
- Writers will practice incorporating physicality and three-dimensional space into their playwriting.

Objectives

- Writers will examine the idea of “showing instead of telling” by engaging with a silent piece of sculpture and identifying characteristics the artist is conveying through the figure’s posture, expression, and physical characteristics.
- Writers will consider the ways in which an actor is like a sculpture, in the way they take up three-dimensional space and conveys personality, expression, and tone without dialogue.
- Writers will connect these concepts to their own playwriting practice.

Standards

Common Core

Arts & Humanities

- **9.1.8.A** Know and use the elements and principles of each art form to create works in the arts and humanities.
- **9.1.8.B** Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts.
- **9.1.8.C** Identify and use comprehensive vocabulary within each of the arts forms.
- **9.1.8.F** Explain works of others within each art form through performance or exhibition.
- **9.3.8.A** Know and use the critical process of the examination of works in the arts and humanities.
- **9.3.8.B** Analyze and interpret specific characteristics of works in the arts within each art form
- **9.3.8.E** Interpret and use various types of critical analysis in the arts and humanities.

ELA Standards

- **CC.1.4.8.M** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events.

- **CC.1.4.8.N** Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters.
- **CC.1.4.8.O** Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, description, reflection, and pacing, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters; use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

National Core Arts Standards

- **TH.Cr2.8a** Articulate and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research, and historical and cultural context to the development of original ideas for a drama/theatre work.
- **TH.Cr2.8b** Share leadership and responsibilities to develop collaborative goals when preparing or devising drama/theatre work.
- **TH.Pr4.1.7a** Consider various staging choices to enhance the story in a drama/theatre work.
- **TH.Re7.1.6** Describe and record personal reactions to artistic choices in a drama/theatre work.
- **TH.Re7.1.7** Compare recorded personal and peer reactions to artistic

Standards

choices in a drama/theatre work.

- **TH.Re7.1.8** Apply criteria to the evaluation of artistic choices in a drama/theatre work.

- **TH:Cn10.1.7.** Incorporate multiple perspectives and diverse community ideas in a drama/theatre work.

Materials

- Journals or writing paper
- Pencils
- Printed or projected photos of artwork from multiple angles
- Open space for movement
- Optional: Costume pieces, e.g. coats, hats. Students can also use their own clothing/items.
- Optional: Camera/phone for photographing student sculptures/vignettes for use on a second day of lesson.

Vocabulary

- Perspective
- First person
- Inner monologue
- Vignette
- Scene
- Character
- Dialogue

Artworks



Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *The Puritan*, 1883–1886, cast 1899, Purchase, 19.5.1



Reinhold D'Haese, *What Do You Say? (Que Dites-Vous?)*, 1968, Gift of the Hillman Foundation, 70.46.6
© Reinhold / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

Lesson

Introduction

- 5–10 minutes: Examine Augustus Saint-Gaudens' sculpture *The Puritan* as a class asking “What do you see?”, “What do you think?”, and “What do you wonder?”
- 3 minutes: In groups of three, tell students to use one of their group members as a model and recreate the sculpture. They can use designated costume pieces or textbooks, their own clothing, or other materials around the room to make their human sculpture as accurate as possible in 2 minutes.
- 5–10 minutes: When the timer ends, ask the models to position themselves where the rest of the class can walk around them and examine them.
- Questions for Discussion:
 - What do these human sculptures have in common?
 - What aspects of the sculpture felt the most important to try to preserve when you only had two minutes to recreate it?
 - Models, how did it feel to be the sculpture?

Transition

- 5–10 minutes: Have everyone in the room imitate the pose and expression of the figure together. What can we infer about the man in the sculpture just through the way that he stands and the face he is making?

Main Activity

- 15 minutes: In your notebooks, answer the questions below in the first person from the perspective of the man Saint-Gaudens sculpted for *The Puritan*, creating three possible inner monologues for the character.
What brings you the most joy?
What is your greatest fear?
What is your deepest secret?
- 10–15 minutes: Share and discuss answers.
- 10 minutes: Examine and discuss the photo of *What Do You Say?* by Reinhold D’Haese using the See/Think/Wonder format. Students will likely notice that this sculpture has less specific detail about who the man is—we don’t have clothing, facial details, or a descriptive title to go on. As a class, imitate the figure’s pose and expression. Discussion:

Lesson

What sort of personality or emotion did you feel coming through doing this pose?

might you give the audience a sense of a character's personality, status, or emotions before they even start speaking?

- 10 minutes: In groups, revisit *What Do You Say?* What if you added additional characters to the scene? Using everyone in your group, create a frozen vignette incorporating the *What Do You Say?* pose. Give the characters names and decide what their personalities are like. Think about how you can indicate each character's personality through the way they are posed in relationship to the other characters.

- 10–15 minutes: Share and discuss as a class.

- 10–15 minutes: In groups, write a scene in which each of the character's speaks at least twice.

- 10–15 minutes: Share and discuss as a class.

Questions

- What similarities can we see between an actor onstage and a sculpture in a museum? What about differences?
- When you are writing a play, how

Lesson Extensions and Modifications

1. Thinking about the play you are working on right now, if you had to create a sculpture of your main character, what kind of pose would you put them in? What sort of face would they be making? Draw or use your body to create this sculpture.
2. Visiting the museum: Discuss what you as a group may have missed about these figures when you were only looking at them as photographs. Does your perspective on the characters change seeing them in person? How is this similar or different to seeing a play versus a recording of a play?