

## Lesson 3- Let's Look at Saint-Gaudens' Sculpture

- What are some of the pieces that Saint-Gaudens created?
  - How do you analyze a piece of sculpture?
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### Goals:

- To identify specific works of art produced by Augustus Saint-Gaudens.  
To show how and why Saint-Gaudens' work was important to the history of America and to show the relevance of his work today.
  - To understand the power of art to illustrate and commemorate significant individuals and historical events.
  - To give students the tools to gather visual information and express what they see.
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- Students will view images of selected sculptures to see the scope of the sculptor's work.
  - Students will observe, describe, and analyze a work of sculpture using photographs from this lesson.
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### Materials to be provided by the teacher:

- Images with program text (at the end of the lesson)
  - Copies for each student of the "Let's Read Sculpture" worksheet
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### Instructional Strategies:

1) **Images and Text:** Screen the images in order to make the sculpture as relevant to the student experience as possible. At least one example of each type of sculpture is included: in the round, relief, a frieze, a portrait relief, and a portrait bust.

2.) **"Let's Read Sculpture:"** This art history activity involves observation, writing skills, and analysis. This activity builds on visual literacy and language arts. Let the students know that to appreciate a work of art, it is important to develop good observation skills and an inquiring mind. Desiring to know who the artist is, or the title and date of a sculpture, comes only after engagement with the piece of art has developed.

- a. Divide your students into working groups of 2 or 3; give each group an image of one of Saint-Gaudens sculptures.
- b. Using their worksheets, they will observe and describe the sculpture. In a real sense, this is detective work in which they will gather evidence from what they see and make deductions.

# Let's Read Sculpture Worksheet

When you look at sculpture, it helps to consider a couple of questions to help understand and appreciate the work. At first you don't even have to know anything about the artist or subject. **Just use your eyes.**

**DESCRIPTION:** Imagine you are writing to a friend who has never seen this piece of sculpture. First, read through the list of questions below, and then put your answers to these questions into writing as you describe the sculpture to your friend.

- 1) **What is the subject?** Is it an event, an allegory, a character from a story, a poem, or a portrait of a real person? Why do you think this?
- 2) **What kind of sculpture** is it (relief, in the round)? Describe what overall shape it is. Do you know its size? What material is it made of?
- 3) **How many people** are in the composition?
- 4) **What activity** do you see?
- 5) **What else is in the composition?** Describe the details like clothing, furniture, props, and other objects that you see.
- 6) **Is this sculpture telling a story?** If so, what do you think it is?
- 7) **Describe the body language** such as the gestures, pose, or facial expressions that you see. Does this tell us anything about what the subject is thinking or feeling?
- 8) **How does this work make you feel?** What do you think the artist wanted you to feel about this sculpture? How does the artist do this?
- 9) **IDENTIFICATION and RESEARCH: Do you have more questions of your own about this piece of art?** How can you find out the answers to your questions? Suggest a plan to your friend about how you and he/she could get the whole story. If you were in a museum, you could find a label on, or near by, the sculpture that would tell you:  
Title of sculpture \_\_\_\_\_  
Artist's name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date it was made \_\_\_\_\_

You can look up other facts about the event or person(s) featured in the sculpture on the internet or in an encyclopedia.

# Images and Text

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The following 18 images have been selected to illustrate the variety of Saint-Gaudens' work. Before showing the images, please **read the "Let's Read Sculpture" Worksheet** which is a general guide to looking at sculpture. The text here gives background information. You are encouraged to engage students in discussing the images: what do they see? Following this program, students will be given photos and will be asked to analyze one of Saint-Gaudens' sculptures using the "Let's Read Sculpture" Worksheet.

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Augustus Saint-Gaudens' impact on the cultural tastes of the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was a profound one. Though his training was primarily based in Europe, his work took on bold new strides reflecting the many changes taking place in the United States at the time.



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### Image 1- Mary Queen of Scots cameo, 1873

Saint-Gaudens' first known works were created during his teenage years while growing up in New York City. He was apprenticed to a cameo cutter for six years. Cameos were very popular during this era and were usually set into jewelry such as pins, earrings, or bracelets. Though small, these cameos were intricate in detail and provided the young Augustus with much of the skill he would need for his later portrait reliefs. This piece measures only 1-1/2" high.

- ◆ **A cameo is a small carving done from stone or shell.**



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### Image 2- Bernard Saint-Gaudens, bronze, 1867

This portrait bust is of Saint-Gaudens' father and is the first piece of sculpture Augustus did. He was nineteen years old and he modeled his father just before leaving to study sculpture in Paris.

- ◆ **A portrait bust: shows the figure from the head to the shoulders.**



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### Image 3- Eva Rohr, carved marble, 1872

The subject here is Eva Rohr who was studying opera in Rome where she met Saint-Gaudens. We can start to see the sculptor's love for details in the dress and her braided hair. Though much of Saint-Gaudens' fame would come from his use of bronze casting in creating sculpture, many of his earliest works were in marble. His years in Rome were spent carving marble portrait busts, both copies of classical works as well as original pieces, which he could sell to wealthy Americans who were traveling in Europe.



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### Images 4 and 5- Admiral David Glasgow Farragut, 1876-81

Augustus returned to the United States in the mid 1870s and found the country attempting to heal the wounds left from the Civil War, which was still so vivid in the people's minds. Cities began commemorating the leaders of that struggle

by erecting public monuments in their honor. The time was ripe for Saint-Gaudens to make his mark on the American scene. With a stroke of good fortune, he won the commission to create a monument to the naval hero, Admiral David G. Farragut. This work was **Saint-Gaudens' first public statue** and became a model for American sculpture well into the next century. Unveiled in Madison Square Park in New York City in 1881, the figure was immediately praised for its impressive likeness of Farragut, and its bold modeling in a new naturalistic style. People could relate to the realistic details found in the clothing of this sculpture. With this work, Saint-Gaudens became one of the leading sculptors of the time and many more commissions poured into this studio. Before beginning a large monument, he liked to study and know the character and personality of his subject. This is one reason why his portraits are so realistic.

- ◆ **You might flip back and forth between images 4 and 5 to illustrate how Saint-Gaudens liked to work.**
- ◆ **Ask the students to look closely and describe what they think this man was like.**
- ◆ **You can see this piece in New York City today as well as a cast at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish, New Hampshire.**



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#### **Image 6- *Standing Lincoln*, bronze, 1884-1887**

When Saint-Gaudens spent his first summer in Cornish, New Hampshire, a promise was made that he could find “many Lincoln-shaped men” in the area who could pose as his model. He did find his model in Mr. Langdon Morse of Windsor, Vermont and began to model this heroic-size sculpture. With the aid of photographs and his personal impressions of Lincoln after having seen him as a young boy in New York City, he created his Standing Lincoln. Even today it is still recognized as one of our nation’s finest portrait statues.

- ◆ **You can find this monument in Lincoln Park in Chicago, Illinois and a reduction at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site in Cornish, New Hampshire.**
- ◆ **Heroic size: larger than life.**
- ◆ **Reduction: smaller than life.**



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#### **Image 7- *General William T. Sherman*, gilded bronze, 1892-1903**

Saint-Gaudens created six monuments to Civil War leaders. Marching down Fifth Avenue in New York City, this is Saint-Gaudens’ tribute to General Sherman. The artist felt that it was the challenge of every sculptor to create an equestrian statue. Led by the **allegorical** figure representing **Victory**, this monument took 11 years to complete before its unveiling in 1903. It is shown here just after it was freshly gilded.

- ◆ **Ask students how old they are? This probably took their lifespan to finish!**
- ◆ **Equestrian statue: shows a figure on a horse.**
- ◆ **Gilded: bronze covered with thin (like Kleenex) sheets of pure gold.**

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#### **Image 8- *The Shaw Memorial*, plaster, 1884-1897**

This is a very complex structure involving twenty-six figures and a horse! The relief shows ranks, two to four soldiers deep, and goes from very low to very high relief. The monument illustrates one of the first black regiments to fight in the Civil War. Robert G. Shaw, a young, white colonel, led them. Almost half of the regiment that fought in the Battle of Fort Wagner on

July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1863, including Shaw, was killed. This memorial may be considered one of Saint-Gaudens' most important works and illustrates the emotional power of sculpture.

- ◆ Ask students what type of sculpture this is. It is a relief and a frieze, showing a procession of soldiers.
- ◆ Each soldier is a portrait. Ask students what these figures might be feeling, even the horse.
- ◆ The angel holds an olive branch and is an allegory for their destiny, death.



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**Image 9- Monument to James A. Garfield, bronze sculpture on stone, 1895**

Garfield was the 20<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. He was assassinated after serving only a few months. Altogether, Saint-Gaudens modeled a total of five of our nation's Presidents: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Garfield, Chester Arthur and Theodore Roosevelt. This monument combines a **portrait bust** of Garfield with an **allegorical** figure representing *The Republic* below.



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**Image 10- Dunrobin, 1884**

Saint-Gaudens loved animals, especially dogs. This is a relief portrait of his own pet whose name was Dunrobin. The story is that the sculptor thought the Scottish deerhound was the most beautiful animal he had ever seen.



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**Image 11- The Schiff Children, bronze, 1884**

Saint-Gaudens was one of the leading sculptors of his time and he often received commissions from wealthy families for **relief** portraits. In fact, he created over eighty such portraits. This panel shows two life-size figures, brother and sister, walking to the right. Look who is behind the children...Dunrobin!

- ◆ Ask three student volunteers to copy the stance of the children plus dog. See how much depth they take up, but the panel is barely six inches deep, which illustrates Saint-Gaudens skill in compressing figures for his relief modeling.
- ◆ Relief: in which the subject is barely raised from a background. It is the hardest kind of sculpture to do well, and Saint-Gaudens was a master of this art.



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**Image 12- A Bride (Bessie Smith White), marble relief, 1884**

A wedding present! Saint-Gaudens modeled this relief portrait as a gift to his good friends the Whites. Stanford White, a famous architect, and Saint-Gaudens worked together on over twenty projects. White would design the settings for Saint-Gaudens' sculptures.



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**Image 13- The Gilder Family, plaster, 1879**

Another portrait relief, this panel shows three figures in a very formal arrangement facing each other. These figures are barely ½" deep and yet they look like regular three-dimensional bodies. How does the artist do this? He relies on natural light to cast shadows across all the modeled details; it is the shadows that create a sense of volume.

- ◆ Review the process of modeling: the figures are first modeled in clay, but because clay dries out and becomes fragile, a mold is made which covers the

clay. The clay is then scooped out, but then fresh plaster is poured back into the mold. When you remove the mold, you find an exact plaster copy of the original clay piece.



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**Image 14- Masque Plaque, bronze, 1905-06**

Have you ever been to a surprise party? Do you remember what fun it was? Saint-Gaudens modeled this plaque as a “thank you note” to the seventy adults and children who put on a surprise pageant and party in his honor. The pageant celebrated his living in Cornish, New Hampshire, for twenty years. This plaque shows the stage set (a temple with columns), an angel with a harp flanked by trees and two smiling masks, which are theatrical symbols of comedy. The sculptor made small casts, which he gave to each one of the actors.



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**Image 15- Gravestone of Dennis Bunker, marble, 1897**

**Here’s another important use of sculpture- as a memorial in a cemetery.**

Bunker was an artist friend of Saint-Gaudens who died at an unusually young age. Saint-Gaudens designed his tombstone.



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**Image 16- Amor Caritas (also known as Angel with Tablet), gilded bronze, as seen at Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site**

Saint-Gaudens and angels...the sculptor was fond of the subject of angels and reworked this figure many times, especially in cemetery memorials. Saint-Gaudens won first prize for this work in the great Universal Exposition of 1900.



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**Image 17- Bates Fountain, bronze, located in Chicago, Illinois, 1886-87**

**Fountains are sculptures too.** Sculptors are often commissioned to design garden pieces for fountains like this one. This is a close-up showing children holding fish. When turned on, water spouts from two birds and the fish in this playful fountain.



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**Image 18- Liberty (\$20 gold coin), 1907**

President Theodore Roosevelt asked Saint-Gaudens to design some new coins for the United States and it became one of his last projects. Both he and the President admired the Classical coinage of ancient Greece and Rome and wanted to produce attractive coins for the U.S. too. Before this, the National Mint engravers usually designed the U.S.’s money. This became one of the first times an artist was commissioned to produce coins. It is an example of art serving a popular need, because everyone uses money. Saint-Gaudens designed a female figure, liberty, walking quickly forward and holding an olive branch, a sign of peace, with the sun’s rays behind her. The coin is highly prized by coin collectors for its great beauty.

- ♦ **We often overlook the fact that coins and medals are a type of sculpture. Ask the students what type of sculpture they are. (Relief.)**