

SOVIET SOCIALIST REALISM

ARTIST: Prince Paolo Petrovitch Troubetzkoy (1866 - 1938) Russia/Italy

TITLE: *Portrait of Leo Tolstoy* 1899

MEDIA: bronze cast

SIZE: 14 1/2 x 10-1/2 x 11-1/2

Courtesy of a private collector

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Prince Paul Petrovitch Troubetzkoy, a Russian sculptor (1866-1938), was born in Italy. In 1884 he was working under various Italian sculptors in Milan, but by the following year, he had his own studio. The next year, 1886, Troubetzkoy exhibited his work in Italy, France and the United States.

He moved to Moscow in 1887, where he taught at the Moscow College until 1906. He also spent some time living in St. Petersburg. From 1899 he exhibited with and became an honorary member of the Wanderers' group of young artists who sympathized with the plight of the downtrodden and deliberately used art in an attempt to produce social reformation and helped create 'Social Genre.'

Then Troubetzkoy left Russia to live in Paris from 1906 to 1914. From there he visited Italy, Russia, England, and the United States. During those years, he spent time at

Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy's estate, where he did a number of drawings and busts of Tolstoy. Troubetzkoy died in Italy in 1938.

His sculptures clearly show the manipulation of the original clay, which is achieved with a light, dynamic touch. The resulting lively, fluent surface shows the influence of Rodin's impressionist style.

Troubetzkoy exhibited his work extensively. In addition to exhibiting with the Wanderers, he won honors at the Paris International Exhibition in 1900, and his work was included in Diaghilev's exhibition of Russian art at the 1906 Salon d'Automne in Paris. In 1932, he was made a member of the Milan Academy. His work depicting an Indian leader is currently being exhibited at the Gezira Museum in Cairo and *Portrait of Leo Tolstoy* is in the Springville Museum of Art.

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), who is depicted in the sculpture by Troubetzkoy, was a Russian writer considered to be one of the greatest novelists in the world. He was also known as a religious thinker and a social reformer.

He was born at his family estate, Yasnaya Polyana, near Tula. Both his parents died when he was young. Tolstoy received his early education from foreign tutors, and he entered the University of Kazan in 1844. He was bored at the University and in 1847 returned to Yasnaya Polyana to manage the family estate. He spent considerable time as a young man among the high society of Moscow and St. Petersburg but also became dissatisfied with this life.

Tolstoy served in the Crimean War (1853-1856) and distinguished himself for bravery. After he retired from the military in 1856, Tolstoy made two trips to western Europe where he became interested in educational methods.

Upon returning to the family estate, he organized a school for peasant children and wrote several readers to be used for educating children.

In 1862, Tolstoy married Sonya (Sofia) Andreyevna Bers, with whom he had 13 children. Theirs was a happy marriage at first but became troubled when in the early 1870s Tolstoy began to be plagued by questions about the meaning and purpose of his life. Because of his religious convictions, which caused his excommunication from the Russian Orthodox Church, he longed to give up all his estate and belongings and live like a peasant. However, he compromised by deeding his worldly goods and the copyrights to his writings published before 1880 to his wife to be held in trust for his children.

Tolstoy is best known for two novels, War and Peace and Anna Karenina. He also wrote numerous short stories, fables and tales for children, religious and philosophical essays, and some plays.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

(History, aesthetics, criticism)

How does the media used in this bust (bronze) affect the message of the work and what we feel about the subject of the work? What would this work be like if done in another media? What message would other media give about the person being portrayed?

What is the intention of the artist in creating this work of art? Does it honor the person portrayed? Is this good art?

What does the pose of Tolstoy tell us about him? How would you characterize him? Is he friendly, happy, approachable, stern?

ACTIVITIES

Art--Making

Objective: Students will create a family crest or coat of arms depicting their family.

Discuss heraldry and family crests (or coats of arms) with students. Heraldry is described by the Encyclopedia Americana as a "(h)ereditary system of identification using visual symbols according to certain conventions. The term is commonly accepted as pertaining to the devising, granting, and use of coats of arms or armorial bearings." Show students the Troubetzkoy family crest included in this packet and talk with them about the things shown on the crest and what these things say about the Troubetzkoy family. Have students create their own family crest or coat of arms.

Two books that can help students are Design Your Own Coat of Arms: An Introduction to Heraldry by Rosemary A. Chorzempa and The Heraldic Art Source Book by Peter Spurrier. Other books giving the history of heraldry are also available.

Art--Perceiving

Objective: Students will be able to compare the works of two artists and identify similarities and differences between these works.

Troubetzkoy was influenced by the work of Rodin. Show students the images of sculptures, *Portrait of Leo Tolstoy*, by Troubetzkoy and *The Man with the Broken Nose*, by Auguste Rodin (from History of Art [Second Edition] by H. W. Janson, published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, 1977: page 502).

Review the characteristics of Rodin's style. Ask students to compare these two works, noting the similarities and differences. Students should be able to identify ways in which they think the Troubetzkoy work shows the influence of Rodin.

Extension: Have students look at other sculptors and compare their works with the two discussed above. Ask students to prepare a report about the life of one of the artists.

Library Media

Objective: Students will appreciate and respond to children's literature.

Leo Tolstoy is best known for War and Peace and Anna Karenina, but he also wrote many children's stories including four books to be used to teach children to read.

Have students select, read, and respond to samples of Tolstoy's children's literature or fables: Twenty-two Russian Tales for Young Children by Leo Tolstoy from Simon and Schuster, and What Men Live By: Russian Stories and Legends by Leo Tolstoy from Pantheon Books. These or other titles should be available at your local library.

Extension: Students will write a report comparing different stories by Tolstoy to each other and/or comparing Tolstoy's stories with each student's favorite children's story.

Theater

Objective: Students will be able to plan and improvise a play based on assigned literature.

Working in pairs or small groups, have students choose one of Tolstoy's stories, and select and develop the characters in the play, the environment in which the action takes place, the situations that will be portrayed, and how the characters will interact with each other. Have students improvise the action of the play by having one student begin with an action. Another student can then respond to that action. In this activity, students will concentrate on planning the actions of the characters and how the other characters respond to those actions and not necessarily create dialogue unless it is required for the action.

Student groups may be assigned the same story or different stories to use to complete this assignment. The plays created will be presented to the class.

Extension: Using the characters, environment, and situations developed above, have students plan and record dialogue for the characters that make sense given the specific story. Have students perform this play for the entire class.

Social Studies

Objectives: Students will better understand the events of the War of 1812 and Napoleon's invasion of Russia.

Tolstoy's best-known work is War and Peace, which is set during the War of 1812. Have students research the War of 1812 focusing specifically on Napoleon's invasion of Russia. Some specific areas of investigation are why Napoleon invaded Russia, what he hoped to gain, how he was stopped, or what impact the geography and the weather had on the invasion.

Students should prepare either a written or an oral report. Either all students can research the same general subject, or a variety of subjects can be assigned to the students and the results reported to the class as a whole. Students should be encouraged to voice opinions about the invasion based on their research.

Extension: Have students research Hitler's invasion of Russia during World War II and compare it to Napoleon's invasion of Russia during the War of 1812. Students should look at the similarities and differences of the two invasions and theorize how to successfully invade Russia based on the problems encountered by Hitler and Napoleon. Students should not forget to factor in the will of the people in defending their homeland. (See The Impassioned Years: The Partisans of Pskov, by Rotnitsky, this packet)