

Who is Cyrus Dallin?

Cyrus Edwin Dallin (1861-1944) Springville, Utah
Portrait Bust of Oliver Wendell Holmes, No. 1 1883
Sculpture-plaster cast, 24" x 9"

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING (History, Aesthetics, Criticism)

Background information on Dallin and Oliver Wendell Holmes can be found at the end of this lesson.

Look at Cyrus Dallin's sculpture of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Holmes was an American jurist and associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court for 30 years (1902-1932). He was very learned, had good judgement, had a great talent with words and expressions, and was even said to have a good sense of humor. Can you see any of these characteristics in his face? (His steady gaze and furrowed brow may indicate intelligence and good judgement, his tight-lipped expression may indicate a no-nonsense attitude rather than a sense of humor. The students may not see evidence of humor in his face.)

Sculpture is an ancient art. The sculpture you are viewing is made of plaster. It is called a bust, and it is almost like viewing a living person because it has all of the person's sides. Plaster is not as strong as bronze or even fired or baked clay, but it works well for artworks. Just-mixed plaster, with a texture like soft ice cream, can be cast into different forms and left to harden, or hardened plaster blocks can be carved. Since ancient times, people have made sculptures of people, animals, and other objects. Why do you think people have always made sculpture? (Adults and children like to create and express themselves by making things. Sculpture is a way to honor, remember, or commemorate important people or events. Sculpture passes on cultural and moral values to future generations. Many societies use sculpture in connection with their religion or mythology.) Do you think that people long ago made busts of people they wanted to

remember? Why? (The camera is a relatively recent invention. As far back as we can go in history, there is evidence that people tried to keep records. A bust is a way to remember how someone looked.) What kind of material is this sculpture made of? (Plaster.)

ACTIVITIES

1. Visual Arts-making

Objective: The students will demonstrate their understanding of human head proportions and will explore plaster as a medium by forming and then carving a head in plaster.

Show *Oliver Wendell Holmes*. After viewing the image, have the students list the basic features found on the human face. Then have the students look around at classmates to observe similarities and differences in specific features. Have them discuss the variations and then draw a simple face using common proportions to place the eyes, nose, mouth, ears, and hair on their pictures.

Materials: Plastic bucket for mixing Plaster of Paris, plastic funnel, large balloons (do not attempt this activity with a balloon any smaller than 5"-6" in diameter deflated).

Procedure: TEACHER: Make one of the plaster shapes ahead of time to get an idea of the time frame for this part of the activity.

1. Mix plaster. Be sure dry Plaster of Paris is free of lumps; lumps indicate the plaster has absorbed moisture and is unfit for use. Mixing containers must be clean and free of hardened plaster. Have the water at room temperature. Add plaster to the water, sifting the plaster through fingers and discarding any small lumps. Set mix aside for two or three minutes before stirring. To retard setting, add a bit of vinegar to the water before mixing. To speed up the setting, add a pinch or two of salt.
2. Put the funnel inside the lip of the balloon, and slowly pour the plaster in the balloon.
3. When the balloon is filled 4/5ths of the way, remove the funnel and tie a knot on the top of the balloon.
4. As soon as the plaster in the balloon begins to feel warm and "slushy," have the students form the balloon to the desired shape, using their drawings for reference, and adding indications of features such as eyes, nose, lips, etc.
5. Set plaster-filled balloon on a ring (a piece of paper towel tube) until the plaster has set. (Allow a few days.)
6. When the plaster has hardened, peel balloon off the sculpture. The sculpture will have a very smooth surface.

7. Using spoons, popsicle sticks, dull knives, forks, wire, ceramic or sculpture tools etc., carve details such as textured hair, eyelashes, nostrils, lips, etc.
9. Using the towel tubes for stands, display the objects to the class and have the students discuss the textures, proportions, shadows, balance, and other features of the works.
10. Display the sculptures in the room or a display case in the school.

2. Social Studies

Objective: The students will demonstrate through writing an understanding of the contributions of Supreme Court judges in the United States. They will be able to explain why sculptures are made of people like Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Method: Show *Oliver Wendell Holmes*. Present information from Holmes' biographical history at an age-appropriate level. Explain to the students that part of the role of the Supreme Court is to interpret the meaning of the Constitution, one of the documents they will begin to become familiar with in the fifth grade. Explain to them how these documents affect their lives.

(For instance, *Brown v. Kansas City*, in 1954, resulted in a decision to integrate the American school system. It ended all "Jim Crow" or "separate but equal" schools and facilities. Because of that 1954 decision, all people are treated more equally in the United States. People of any color or nationality have equal rights and access to restaurants, churches, schools, and any other public facility or occupation.)

Activity: Using library resources, or a CD-ROM, have the students choose Supreme Court members and write reports on their important contributions to the United States. After the papers are written, have the students share the contributions and have a student list those items on the board and discuss what might have happened if those decisions had not been made.

Ask the students why artists want to sculpt people like Holmes and the other judges.

3. Mathematics

Objective: The students will demonstrate that they can determine how to use measuring tools and then measure and calculate accurately.

1. **Student Problem Solving:** Place paper, yardsticks or rulers, string, scissors, tape, a spotlight, and stool on a table in front of the students. Ask how they might use these items to measure a silhouette projected on the wall. Discuss and determine a method.
2. Project the shadow of a student on a classroom wall where the students can hang a large piece of white paper. Have each student first estimate the distance around the perimeter of the outline of the student. Write down that estimate someplace where it will not be lost. Working in pairs, the students will draw around the silhouette on their white

paper. Using string, the students will work together to outline the drawn silhouette and then measure the string accurately.

3. After the measurements are completed, discuss the estimated perimeter and the measured perimeter. The concepts of estimation and measured data can be discussed.

4. Language Arts-writing

Objective: The students will gain a knowledge of contractions and personal pronouns and demonstrate this by writing a paragraph about themselves containing contractions and personal pronouns.

Method: Show the class *Oliver Wendell Holmes*. Explain to the students that when Dallin invited Holmes to sit for a portrait, Holmes declined. Dallin, determined to make a sculpture of Holmes, created the bust from photographs. Later, when Oliver Wendell Holmes noticed the finished bust at an art workshop, he exclaimed, "Why, it's no other than myself!" (Source: "A Skillful Sculptor" Salt Lake News.) Have the students study the expression on the bust. Ask if they can imagine Holmes making that remark based on his facial expression. Have them support their comments with reasons for thinking what they do.

On the board, write Holmes' comment without any punctuation. Add the correct punctuation together as a class. Discuss the concepts of contractions and pronouns.

Personal Pronouns: In English, nouns are stars that have stand-ins to take their places sometimes. Their stand-ins are pronouns. The personal pronoun indicates the speaker (first person), the person spoken to (second person), or the person, place, or thing spoken about (third person).

1. Subject of predicate Noun (Nominative Form):

	Singular Plural	
First Person	I	we
Second Person	you	you
Third Person	he	she
	it	they

2. Object of a verb or a proposition (Objective Form):

	Singular Plural	
First Person	me	us
Second Person	you	you
Third Person	him	her
	it	them

3. A "possessive:"

	Singular	Plural
First Person	my, mine	our, ours
Second Person	your, yours	your, yours
Third Person	his, her hers, its	their, theirs

Many people have trouble deciding on the correct personal pronoun to use before and after and. You should not have any difficulty if you try using the pronoun by itself. For instance:

The disc jockey played the record for Ruth and me (. . . for me).

(Source: English Made Easy: Junior Series. By Jack E. Venema and John Waldman. U.S.A.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960.)

Contractions: Contractions are verbs that have been shortened by the omission of one or more letters. The omission of the letters is indicated by the use of an apostrophe.

Examples:

don't
shouldn't (not should't)
doesn't (not does'nt)
o'clock
we've
you'll I'm
they're Henry's here
I'm Everybody's gone

Caution: Do not confuse these pronoun contractions with their "sound alike" personal possessive pronouns.

<u>Pronoun Contractions</u>	<u>Possessive Pronouns</u>
it's = it is or it has	its = belonging to it
who's = who is or who has	whose = belonging to whom
you're = you are	your = belonging to you
they're = they are	their = belonging to them

The possessive pronouns are already possessive, and so nothing else--not even an apostrophe--is needed to make them possessive.

Assignment: The students are to write a one-page paragraph describing an event in their lives using a variety of personal pronouns and contractions. After they write the

paragraph, have them go back and underline the pronouns in blue and the contractions in red.

Extension: Show *Oliver Wendell Holmes*. Put his sentence on a transparency. Discuss the contraction and pronoun. The teacher can lift some of the correct and incorrect sentences from student papers, make transparencies, and the students can discuss the concepts again and correct their own writing.

Additional Information about Dallin's *Oliver Wendell Holmes*:

In the summer of 1883, Cyrus Dallin gave up his Pemberton Square studio in Boston and turned to sketching and reading. Traveling in New England with friends that summer, he made some oil sketches, the first since his attempts at painting the previous summer. (Francis 13) "Upon his return to Boston, Cyrus rented space in the Studio Building at Tremont and Bromfield streets." (Francis 13) "[The] room may have become available. . . because of the untimely death on 21 July 1883 of Dallin's associate, Martin Milmore, who had a studio there" (Francis n. 80, 204).

In addition to three small equestrian statuettes, *Cowboy*, *Indian Chief*, and *Greaser* (also called *Mexican Lassoing a Steer*), the productive sculptor made a bust of *Oliver Wendell Holmes* from photos inasmuch as the famous man declined Dallin's invitation to sit" (Francis 13). The Caproni Brothers' foundry cast the bust. "Caproni Brothers reproduced the bust of *Holmes* in two styles. In the first, the judge is wearing a coat and tie. In the second, his shoulders are bare" (Francis n. 83, 204).

Biographical Information on *Oliver Wendell Holmes*:

Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1841-1935, was an American jurist, associate justice of the United States Supreme Court (1902-1932), who was distinguished for his great legal learning, sound judgement, humor, and power of expression.

Holmes was born in Boston and given the same name as his father, the writer (and physician). After graduating from Harvard College, he served for three years in the American Civil War, fighting with the Union army at Ball's Bluff, Antietam, and Fredericksburg, and attaining the rank of captain. In 1867, he was admitted to the bar and began to practice law in Boston. He edited the American Law Review from 1870 to 1873. In 1880, he was a lecturer on common law at the Lowell Institute in Boston. His lectures, collected as The Common Law (1881), became internationally renowned.

Holmes became famous for his liberal interpretations of the U.S. Constitution and was known as the "Great Dissenter" because of his disagreement with the views of his colleagues on the Court. He was later supported in his minority opinions by Justice Louis D. Brandeis. His Collected Legal Papers was published in 1920 and The Dissenting Opinions of Mr. Justice Holmes, in 1929.

(Source: "Holmes, Oliver Wendell (1841-1935)," Microsoft (R) Encarta. Copyright (C) 1994 Microsoft Corporation. Copyright (C) 1994 Funk & Wagnalls Corporation.)

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