

Who is Cyrus Dallin?

Cyrus Edwin Dallin (1861-1944) Springville, Utah

Self-Portrait Bust, 1927

Sculpture-bronze cast, 16-3/4" x 9-1/2" x 7-3/4"

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

(History, Aesthetics, Criticism)

One peculiar fact of Utah's art history is that all four of the Utah artists who attained the highest levels of national recognition were sculptors. Cyrus Dallin is one of them. What is it about his work that may have contributed to his greatness? (Attention to detail, the emotional feelings he expresses, the dignity he portrays in his subjects.)

How is sculpture different from paintings of faces and figures? (You can view it from all sides, you can see more of the subject, you can choose your point of view.) What kind of material is this sculpture made of? (Bronze.)

Look at *Self-Portrait Bust* by Cyrus Dallin, and describe what you think he was like as a person. What makes you think that? (Use examples or features from the sculpture.) Name human features and describe what they look like on this sculpture. What is similar to your face? What is different?

ACTIVITIES

1. Visual Arts-making

Objective: The students will show an understanding of the process of modeling a head by using some type of clay or modeling material to create a likeness of themselves or friends in a smaller-than-life-size sculpture.

Show the image of Dallin's *Self-Portrait Bust*. And 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 and draw a simple face using common proportions to place the eyes, nose, mouth, ears, and hair on their pictures (see facial proportions given in the Math activity for this lesson).

When their drawings are finished, have the students use this information to create a three-dimensional clay sculpture of themselves or of someone else in the class.

When the sculptures are finished, talk about what makes each sculpture unique and display them in the room or in a display case in the school.

2. Social Studies

Objective: The students will demonstrate an understanding of what qualities make individuals famous by writing a report that explains why a famous individual was chosen as the subject for a sculpture.

Show the class the image of Dallin's *Self-Portrait Bust*. Have students brainstorm together to create a list of people of whom sculptures have been made. Or, have the students do research to compile the list either on their own or from materials the teacher has gathered. Each student will then select a different person from the list to research and do a formal written and/ or oral report for the class, being sure to include what that person accomplished that made him/her famous.

3. Mathematics

Objective: The students will demonstrate an understanding of proportions and fractions by creating a drawing of a human face using fractions to establish the relationships of the features and appropriate proportions.

Define proportion in mathematical and artistic terms. Review the fractional terms $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, and $\frac{1}{5}$. Then show the image of Dallin's *Self-Portrait Bust*. Let the students have a few minutes to try to figure out the proportions and placement of features. Have each student draw a large egg shape to represent a face and draw lines to show placement of features, using the following fractions and proportions:

Eye line is $\frac{1}{2}$ way between top of head and chin.

Nose line is $\frac{1}{2}$ way between eye line and chin.

Mouth line is $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way down from nose line to chin.

Ears extend from eye line to nose line.

Divide the eye line into 5 equal parts.

The curve for each eyelid fits between the 2nd and 4th part.

On the nose line, the width of the nose is the same width as the center section of the eye line.

The mouth is as wide as the distance from the center of the 2nd to the center of the 4th section on the eye line.

The neck line is drawn from the outside corner of each eye.

Have students create their own diagrams and label proportions.

Once proportions have been established, the students can add details such as hair, nose, eyes, mouth, ears, eyebrows, and eyelashes to make the face look more human and perhaps to look like someone they know.

4. Language Arts-writing

Objective: The students will demonstrate an understanding of how poetry can portray or honor real people by writing a poem about Cyrus Dallin.

Show the image, *Self-Portrait Bust* by Cyrus Dallin, and tell about his life using the biographical sketch included here. (Additional information and examples of Dallin's artworks may be included if possible.)

Discuss poetry styles such as rhyming, non-rhyming, shaped, Haiku, etc. Review the criteria for writing poems. Then allow students to select a poetry style and have them write an original poem about Cyrus Dallin, an event from his life, or one of his works of art. Have students make finished copies of their poems in their best writing. Let them share their poems with the class or display them in the room or the school, or both.

Adaptation: To enhance self-esteem, group projects in the social studies or language activities can be developed that build on the combined strengths of individual members rather than focusing on individual reports or presentations.

Extension: Students with special interests or abilities can do additional research and create a display centered on the life and works of Cyrus Dallin.

5. Social Studies Unit (incl. 5a & 5b)

Objective: Based on the chronology of Cyrus E. Dallin's life found in the book by Rell G. Francis, develop a time line of events in Utah history that coincide with events in Dallin's life.

Create a wall-sized mural of the time line. Divide the class into groups and have each group research the events from 1861 to 1944, in both Utah history and Dallin's life, in increments of 10-20 years, depending on the number of groups. Each group will be responsible for creating a section of the time line mural. This activity can be used as the basis for a unit on Utah history that focuses on events from Cyrus Dallin's life and his works; it also will provide the background for various drama activities.

5a. Creative Drama

Objective: The students will pantomime some of Cyrus Dallin's favorite activities as a child and as an adult to help them understand the artist as a person. They will be introduced to his self-portrait.

Preparation:

1. Prepare a container with several slips of paper on which are written some of the activities Dallin did as a youth and as a grown man. Activities should include fishing, duck hunting, deer hunting, riding horses, modeling figures of clay, archery, baseball, golf, playing war with his Indian friends, herding cattle, gathering wood, playing billiards, astronomy, oil painting.

2. Obtain a photo or replica of Cyrus Dallin's *Self-portrait*, as well as a photo of the artist as a child. (Available in the book *Cyrus E. Dallin: Let Justice Be Done* by Rell G. Francis.)

Warm up:

Sit in a circle with the students; brainstorm with them to share ideas of activities they enjoy doing for fun, during leisure time. Then ask (or assign) the students to work in pairs to pantomime one of their favorite playtime activities; each pair will have 1 minute to show their activity and let the other students guess what they are doing.

Activity:

1. Show the picture of Cyrus Dallin's *Self-Portrait* sculpture as well as his childhood photo.
2. Ask students to tell you what kind of a man he appears to be. What might some of his characteristics be? Does he look kind, intelligent, caring, fatherly, artistic? Does he look like someone you might like to know? Do you think he would have enjoyed doing any of the things you like to do for fun?
3. Tell the students who he is and relate one or two incidents from Dallin's childhood.
4. Have the students pantomime some of the favorite childhood activities and adult hobbies this artist enjoyed. Let each pair of students choose a piece of paper from the container and pantomime the activity listed on it.
5. Evaluate each pantomime. What went well? What could have made it better?

Variations and Extensions:

1. Students can create a self-portrait by making a paper bag puppet, a clay head, or a drawing.
2. Using puppet self-portraits, the students can role play activities in different ways to show the consequences of different choices they may make on the playground or in the classroom.

5b. Mathematics

Objective: Students will learn how to figure percentages based on information from the artist's life and interpret the data.

Resources:

Use the list of Dallin's works on pages 241-248, as well as the chronology found on pages 249-250, in Rell G. Francis' biography of Dallin.

Activity:

Have students create graphs or charts based on the resource information that shows:

1. How many each of different kinds of sculptures Dallin created.
2. How many sculptures per year he created.
3. What percentage of his life he spent studying in Paris.
4. What percentage of his life he lived in Boston.
5. What percentage of his life he lived in Utah.

6. What percentage of his sculptures were created for people in Utah.
7. What percentage of his sculptures are now in Utah.
8. Other problems you may come up with that seem relevant.

What does this information help us learn about Cyrus Dallin's life?