

## Clay Lesson with 5<sup>th</sup> to 6th Classes

### 'Heads'

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**Curriculum Strand:** Clay (Visual Arts Curriculum p. 72)

**Objective:** *Use clay to analyse and interpret form from observation (p.72)*

**Linkage:** Paint and Colour > *Paint from observation (p.68)*  
Drawing > *Draw from observation (p.66)*

**Integration Possibilities:**

*Oral Language: Be continually aware of the importance of gesture, facial expression, audibility and clarity of enunciation in communicating with others (p.48)*

*Science: Develop a simple understanding of the structure of some of the body's major internal and external organs (p.83)*

*SPHE: Accept his/her own body image and explore some of the factors that affect his/her self-image and beliefs about himself/herself (p.54)*

### Developing this Activity in Class:

**Getting Started:** Before I start an art lesson I find it very helpful to do a little exercise with the children to unlock their imaginations and to create a safe environment in the classroom for them to show and discuss their work without fear of ridicule. Mankind's imagination got us out of the caves and onto the moon!! Anything can happen in our imagination if we only let it! "Close your eyes and imagine a big door. It can be any colour you like. Written across the door in big capital letters is the word IMAGINATION. Now reach out and slowly open the door, let your imagination out! Open your eyes and let me see the sparkle! Now we can do anything, our imaginations are at work and we are all different!"

**Materials Needed:** Potter's clay  
Wooden boards or strong card (to work on)  
Clay tools or lollipop sticks  
Mirrors  
Plant spray to keep clay moist  
Tea strainers (push a small piece of clay through to make very thin strings of clay)  
Poster paints or acrylics (to decorate when dry)  
Plastic bucket with tight fitting lid, or plastic bags for storing the clay

**Stimulus:** The children's heads! Get the children to feel their heads and faces and to look closely at themselves in the mirrors. (There will be some giggling and preening at first, but when the children engage with the activity this will stop). "Look at your eyes, see where they are positioned on your face, look at your nose and mouth. Can you see all of your ears? Feel the back of your head, what shape is it? Feel your neck, how wide is it in relation to your head? How far down your forehead does your hair come? Can you feel your eyebrows? Can you feel your cheekbones? Feel along your jaw and along your chin. Turn and look at yourself in profile."

**Activity:** The children make a model of their own heads, referring back to the mirror as they need to. They will enjoy experimenting with ways to make hair and eyebrows using the tea strainers and clay tools. Give them time

and encouragement to build up the heads and explore adding and subtracting clay to give shape and form to their work. It might take a few lessons before the children are happy with their heads. Keep the clay moist with a plant spray and by wrapping a damp cloth over them between sessions. When they are dry the children could paint them if they wish.

***Evaluation/Looking and Responding:***

This will be happening as the children work. The children can then take turns describing how they worked, any difficulties they had and how they overcame them. Show them pictures or slides of work by Auguste Rodin, Michelangelo and Cormac Boydell. They might also enjoy looking at images of gargoyles from around the world!

**Extension Activities:** The children could make models of each other and of animal heads.

**ICT Possibilities:** Images of their heads could be scanned into the computer and the children could write a little story or poem about themselves.

**Using the I Am An Artist DVD:**

The *Clay* programmes on the DVD offer opportunities to see and hear the children using clay as a medium for imaginative expression.

**Note:**

I found that using a plant spray was best for keeping the clay moist as the children were working. Keep your slip in an airtight container for future use. If using poster paints on their heads, they can be painted over with PVA to create a glossy finish. Acrylic paints can also be used. (Make sure the brushes are washed well before the acrylic paint dries on them).

**Relevant Artists:** Auguste Rodin  
Michelangelo  
Cormac Boydell

**Relevant Websites:** Cormac Boydell's website where you can find images of his fascinating ceramics.  
[www.cormacboydell.com/sculpt.html](http://www.cormacboydell.com/sculpt.html)

Antony Gormley, sculptor  
[www.antonygormley.com](http://www.antonygormley.com)

Gargoyles of the World  
[www.stonecarver.com/gargoyles/](http://www.stonecarver.com/gargoyles/)

Rodin Museum in Paris  
[www.musee-rodin.fr](http://www.musee-rodin.fr)

David's head by Michelangelo  
[www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/michelangelo/michelangelo.david.jpg](http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/michelangelo/michelangelo.david.jpg)

This site contains links to Galleries and Museums where works by Michelangelo can be found.  
[www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/michelangelo\\_buonarroti.html](http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/michelangelo_buonarroti.html)