

10-A Robert Shaw Memorial, 1884–1897

Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907)



10-A Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907), *Robert Gould Shaw and the Fifty-fourth Regiment Memorial*, Beacon and Park Streets, Boston, Massachusetts, 1884–1897. Bronze, 11 x 14 ft. (3.35 x 4.27 m.). Photograph by Carol M. Highsmith.

The Art

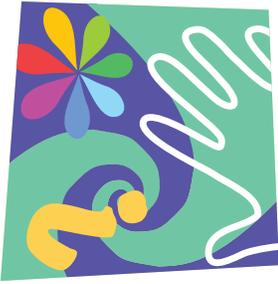
Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment Memorial is a relief sculpture made of bronze that measures 11 feet by 14 feet in size. In a relief sculpture, forms are raised above the background so they are not flat. Saint-Gaudens used different men as models for each of the soldiers, so this memorial shows each soldier as a distinct person. It honors the bravery of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and soldiers of the Massachusetts 54th Regiment, the first unit of African Americans who signed up in the North to fight for the Union in the Civil War. The memorial was designed in 1884 and combines relief sculpture with a nearly freestanding figure of Colonel Shaw on a horse. The sculpture took about 14 years to finish.

The Artist

Augustus Saint-Gaudens was born in Ireland in 1848 and became a sculptor. When he was six months old, his family moved to New York. At age 19, he traveled to Paris, France, where he studied art. In 1870, he left Paris for Rome, Italy, where for the next five years he studied classical art and architecture. In addition to working on his own art, Saint-Gaudens was a teacher from 1888 to 1897. Some of the other sculptures he made are the Adams Memorial, the Peter Cooper Monument, and the John A. Logan Monument. Saint-Gaudens died in 1907 at age 59.

The Historical Perspective

Within three weeks of President Lincoln freeing the slaves on January 1, 1863, the first African American unit of the Civil War was formed in the North. The governor of Massachusetts signed up soldiers from his own state, New York, Indiana, Missouri, and Ohio. Known as “the 54th,” this unit became famous after the heroic battle at Fort Wagner, South Carolina. The courage and sacrifice of the 54th unit helped its soldiers earn battlefield glory. Two months after marching into battle, Colonel Shaw and one-third of the soldiers in this unit died at Fort Wagner, one of the forts protecting Charleston, South Carolina. But the 54th Regiment’s bravery at Fort Wagner drew more volunteers to fight for the Union cause. President Lincoln believed that this made an important difference in the North’s victory.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look closely at the sculpture—the people portrayed, the background, the materials used. Introduce new vocabulary and find books and poetry that relate to the sculpture.

Describing



- ✓ Ask children to find a drum (on far right). Where are the flags? (They are on the left behind the rifles.)
- ✓ Have the children look closely at the individual faces. Which faces have mustaches and beards?
- ✓ The artist used 40 clay models of real people even though only about half of these were used in the sculpture. Ask the children to count the number of people in the sculpture. Do the men look like anyone they know? Do the people in the sculpture look happy? Sad? Serious? Something else?
- ✓ Colonel Shaw is the only one on a horse. Ask the children why they think he is on a horse. What job do they think he has?
- ✓ Do the people in the sculpture look like they are moving? What makes them look like that way?
- ✓ The sculpture is a relief sculpture whose flat background surface is carved away to bring out the figures. The figure that sticks out the farthest is described as being sculpted in high relief. Are the walking soldiers in high relief or is Colonel Shaw in high relief? How is this sculpture like a photograph?

✓ This sculpture is a memorial. Ask the children what they think the artist wanted us to remember. Looking at the sculpture over 100 years later, was the artist successful in making a work of art that make us think back to that time and those people?

Analyzing and Interpreting

Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- This sculpture is named the *Robert Shaw Memorial*. Can you think of why it was given that name?
- Who do you think is in command? (The man on the horse, Colonel Shaw, is in command.)
- How do you know? Children might say: he has a sword; he is the only mounted figure; his jacket has fancy cuffs.
- The sculpture was made to honor and remember Robert Shaw, but who else does it honor? It honors the foot soldiers of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.
- The sculpture is located outside on the Boston Common and is made of bronze. Bronze is a hard metal that lasts a long time. Ask the children why they think the artist wanted the sculpture to last a long time.

- The Robert Shaw Memorial is a way of remembering the first African American troop in the Civil War so people would not forget what they did. Ask the children to talk about pictures, words, or songs that help them remember important people and things. How can art help us remember people and things? Have children list ways our country remembers public events. Children might say parades, songs, and celebrations.
- Are there other things you would like to tell me about this sculpture?



Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

canter	realistic
celebrate	remember
cement	soldier
colonel	statue
company (of soldiers)	walk
gallop	
honor	

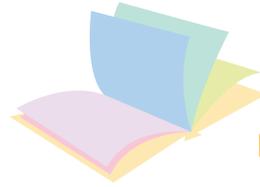


Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can:

- ✓ look for memorials in their community and talk about their significance.



Books

Billy and the Rebel: Based on a True Civil War Story by Deborah Hopkinson (Books for Young Readers, 2005)

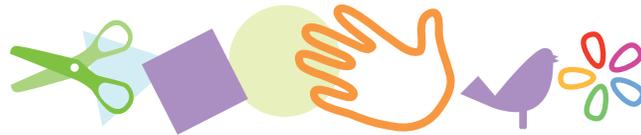
Billy and his family provide shelter to a Rebel soldier during the Battle of Gettysburg.

Li'l Dan, the Drummer Boy: A Civil War Story by Romare Bearden (Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2003)

When a company of black Union soldiers tells Li'l Dan he is no longer a slave, he follows them and uses his beloved drum to save them from attack.

The Silent Witness: A True Story of the Civil War by Robin Friedman (Houghton-Mifflin, 2005)

The Civil War is portrayed through the experiences of Lula McLean, a young girl on whose father's farm the First Battle of Bull Run was fought.



Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ Take the children to see a statue in your hometown. Is it like the Shaw statue? What is it made of?
- ✓ Have the children make their own statues from play dough, clay, or paper mache.
- ✓ Let the children pretend they are horses that walk, canter, and gallop.

The ideas listed are just a few of the many activities that could be used to introduce or extend children's learning. Your knowledge of your children and

families supports your ability to ensure positive learning experiences and outcomes for students. As an educator, you probably have ideas for books, songs, finger plays, and activities that you have thought of when introducing or extending children's learning related to the "A Head Start on Picturing America" artworks. We encourage you to confer with your colleagues, visit the local library or bookstore, and share your ideas with others.