

GRADE 6 ACTIVITY

Art & Identity

All art tells stories and has meaning. In this activity we will use two research skills: close looking and applying context. Both skills are used by researchers to deepen our understanding of something we may not fully understand at first glance. This activity focuses on public monuments or statues that were made in the past.

Close looking is the skill of slowing down in order to take note of what we see. When most people look at art, they only spend seconds deciding whether it is interesting or not. In this activity, you will be encouraged to dig deeper by slowing down and noting each detail in a sketch of two statues from Baltimore City, Maryland, one on public view and the other removed from public view in 2017.

Facts about an object, like what type of art it is (a statue) and where it is located (Baltimore City), are information that provides **context**. Context enables us to develop a well-rounded understanding of a work of art. It helps us to identify what a work of art is and why it was made.

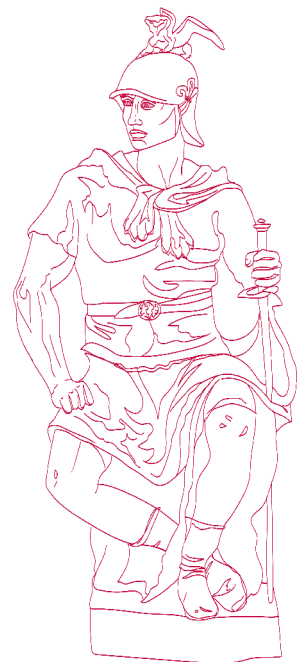
Within this workbook, you will find **historical context** about each statue. Historical context gives you information about the statue's past so that you can better understand it in the present.

After learning about the historical context, your initial understanding of these statues will change. In completing this activity, you will learn how to look closely to find information and how to use context to deepen your understanding beyond what you see at first glance.



The topic of this activity is public monuments in the form of statues. Public monuments can be found in almost every city and town across the United States. Each monument has its own story to tell.

Research skills take practice. Try this activity with a monument that you see. A teacher, caregiver, or local librarian can help you find historical context about your chosen monument to help you unlock the deeper story.



CLOSE LOOKING

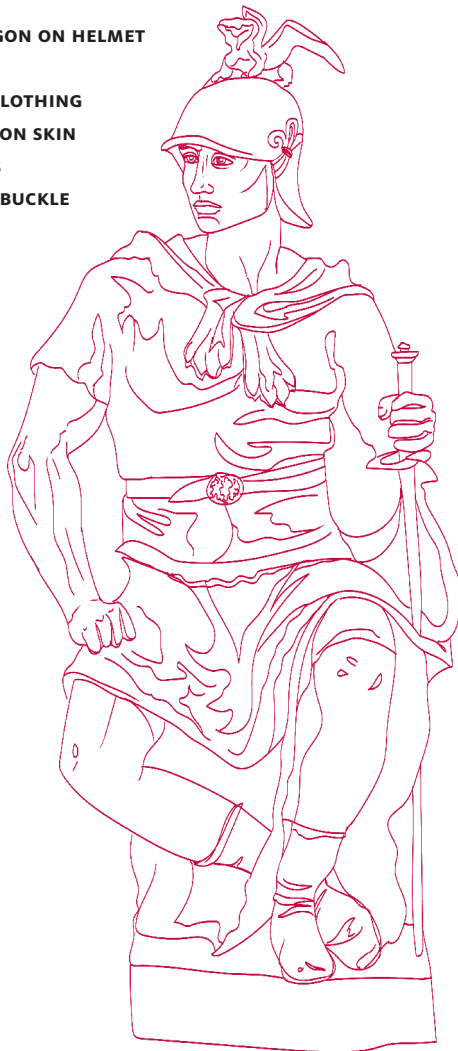
Follow the guided observation below and label the sketch as you see it.

Start at the very top of the picture and read it like you would a book. Take note of all the details and curves in the image. Look closely at the figure's helmet. Notice the shape of the object pictured on top. As you move down the picture, take in the details, curves, and shape of the helmet. Look closely at the figure's facial features and notice the expression. Take note of the cape around his neck. Notice the shape of the material that's tied together and the folds and style of clothing, as well as details like the belt buckle. Notice the sword the figure is holding, as well as how he is holding it with his hand. Continue down the statue, taking note of the figure's posture. Keep reading the image slowly, taking in the details, until you reach the very bottom line of the drawing. Notice the bottom folds of the cape, style of shoes, and the pedestal the figure is positioned on.

OBJECT ACTIVITY

Using the word list below to get you started, note your observations on this image.

- HELMET
- LION-DRAGON ON HELMET
- SWORD
- STYLE OF CLOTHING
- CAPE OF LION SKIN
- LION PAWS
- LION BELT BUCKLE



HOW TO READ AN OBJECT LABEL

Military Courage	ARTIST
Paul Dubois	CURRENT LOCATION
Modeled in France, 1876	MATERIAL
Bronze	PLACE OF ORIGIN
This statue donated to the city of Baltimore by William T. Walters in 1885, Located at West Mount Vernon Place gardens, Baltimore, Maryland.	TITLE

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Read the historical context.

The helmet, sword, and style of clothing the figure is wearing indicates that he is a soldier. This statue was made by a French artist, but the clothing is not what a French soldier would have worn at the time this statue was made. Instead it shows a soldier in an ancient Roman uniform. He is wearing a cape made of lion skin, as indicated by the lion paws wrapped around his neck. The soldier also has a lion belt buckle and a lion-dragon on his helmet. Lions were popular symbols of courage and power in the Roman Empire. The lion was seen as the ruler of all beasts and here could indicate that the artist was portraying this soldier as courageous. The lions that decorate his outfit may be modeled after African lions.

This is likely a connection to a history of European conquest, forcefully and violently taking land from its original inhabitants and ruling over these peoples, and imperialism in Africa, also occurring at the time of this statue's creation. Using this information, we can determine that the artist is making a link between Roman and French imperialism, the act of claiming power over territories, peoples, and resources through policy and force. In fact, the artist made this statue for the tomb of a French general who commanded the French army in North Africa that invaded and conquered the Regency of Algiers in 1830.

The statue was created to represent military courage, which was assigned as a virtue of the French general it was made for. William Walters donated this statue to the City of Baltimore in 1885.

What was happening in Baltimore and the United States during this time period?

STORY & PURPOSE

Now that you have read the historical context, try to tell the full story of the statue by sharing it with someone near you or writing it down. Why do you think this statue was made? What story is it telling? How would you change the story?

CLOSE LOOKING

Follow the guided observation below and label the sketch as you see it.

Start at the very top of the picture and read it like you would a book. Take note of all the details and curves in the image. Notice the lines that are describing the texture of the figure's hair. Moving down to the figure's face, notice his expression and the direction of his gaze. Keep reading the picture, slowly taking in the details while observing the style of clothing. Notice the folds in the figure's draped cloak. Further down and to the right of the drawing, notice his posture and the hand that is draped over the armrest of the chair. Proceed further down and across the legs and edges of the chair, noticing the intricate design and detail in the furniture. Direct your attention to the hand that is holding a rolled-up scroll. Notice how he is holding it. Continue down through the folds of the cloak to the last line of the drawing, taking note of the style of his shoes and the pedestal he is placed on.

OBJECT ACTIVITY

Using the word list below to get you started, note your observations on this image.

- ROBE
- DETAILS IN THE CHAIR
- TITLE
- SCROLL
- FIGURE'S GAZE
- PEDESTAL



HOW TO READ AN OBJECT LABEL

Chief Justice Roger B. Taney

William Henry Rinehart

Modeled in France, 1887

Bronze

This statue created as a Confederate monument and donated to the city of Baltimore by William T. Walters. It was located in the North Garden at Mount Vernon Place in Baltimore, Maryland, until its removal in 2017.

ARTIST

CURRENT LOCATION

MATERIAL

PLACE OF ORIGIN

TITLE

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Read the historical context.

The seated figure is a judge, as indicated by the robe he is wearing. By noticing the style of the figure's outfit, we might assume he lived a long time ago. The ornate details in the chair he is seated on may indicate that he was an important person. The title tells us that this is a statue of Judge Roger B. Taney who was a chief justice of the United States Supreme Court and from Maryland. The scroll he is holding points to the importance of writing to his life and most likely to an important document he wrote during his career, such as his majority opinion that set forth the Supreme Court's decision in the Dred Scott case of 1857. This decision supported slavery and advanced the idea that African descendants, Black people, did not have the right to United States citizenship. When the statue was on display, it was positioned in such a way that made it appear as though the figure was looking down on all who passed by the statue. Artist William Henry Rinehart was employed by William T. Walters, a founder of the Walters Art Museum, to create the statue. Their friendship prompted William T. Walters to continue employing this artist to complete large sculptures for him. This relationship made William Henry Rinehart's artistic career possible through the money he earned by making large statues like this. William gifted this work to the City of Baltimore where it was displayed in Baltimore's Mount Vernon neighborhood from 1887 until it was removed in 2017 after being classified as a Confederate monument.

The Special Commission to Review Baltimore's Public Confederate Monuments (2016) explains why Confederate monuments were created and displayed publicly decades after the Civil War. The purpose was to influence how the public remembered history and the legacy of the Confederacy. A movement called the Lost Cause was dedicated to this purpose. Their rituals, publications,

and Confederate monuments were built to memorialize their cause and spread ideas. Their ideas promoted White supremacy, diminished the role of slavery as a cause of the Civil War, portrayed slavery as a kind and unharmed institution, idealized plantation life and confederate soldiers, identified abolitionists as agitators, and argued that secession, separation from the United States to form a territory with its own rule and governance, is lawful among many other beliefs. These ideas have been disproven by historians although they were passed down as facts through propaganda like Confederate monuments. This legacy continues to shape historical memory even today and has perpetuated racial injustice and violence against Black people through segregation, racial terror lynchings, discriminatory policies that propagate poverty, mass incarceration, and police brutality (*Special Commission to Review Baltimore's Public Confederate Monuments, 2016*). Out of necessity and ingenuity, Black communities in America continue to resist the legacy of White supremacy through grassroots organizing. This has led to large-scale movements of resistance through abolition, literary societies, creative arts, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Lives Matter Movement among many others. It is because of these efforts that three of Baltimore's Confederate monuments were removed in 2017.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BLACK ACTIVISM, VISIT THE LINKS BELOW

Activism: National Museum of African American History and Culture

Home: Black Lives Matter

Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle

STORY & PURPOSE

Now that you have your first look at the historical context, try to tell the full story of the statue by sharing it with someone near you or writing it down. Why do you think this statue was made? What story is it telling? Do you agree or disagree with the story that's being told?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What did you learn about the works of art after embarking on the close looking routine?
2. How does historical context change how we understand monuments?
3. How are the purposes of the monuments the same?
4. How are the purposes of the monuments different?

Citations

These identify the sources of information that were used to develop this activity. They can be used to further research the topics discussed.

Atlas Pro. (2019, August 19). The history of lions in Europe [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F2_LHhyzqw&list=LLgIPG89b5rUn_sCNaph2kxQ&index=153

Mackrandilal, M. (2017, November 17). *The Aesthetics of Empire: Neoclassical Art and White Supremacy*. contemporary.
<https://contemporary.org/the-aesthetics-of-empire-neoclassical-art/>

Paul Dubois, *Military Courage*, acc. no. 27.585. The Walters Art Museum.
<https://art.thewalters.org/detail/40889/military-courage/>

Project Zero. *Unveiling Stories: Project Zero Global Thinking Routine*. Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access.
<https://learninglab.si.edu/collections/project-zero-thinking-routines/oWYbEjpf19oxcFUp#r/599855>

Special Commission to Review Baltimore's Public Confederate Monuments. (2016, August 16). *Report on Baltimore's Public Confederate Monuments*.
<http://www.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Confederate%20Monuments%20report.pdf>

William Henry Rinehart, *Roger B. Taney Statue*, 1887, bronze. The City of Baltimore.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_B._Taney_\(sculpture\)#/media/File:Roger_B._Taney_statue,_Mount_Vernon_Place,_Baltimore,_MD.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_B._Taney_(sculpture)#/media/File:Roger_B._Taney_statue,_Mount_Vernon_Place,_Baltimore,_MD.jpg)

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