



Meet  
 America's  
 Outdoor

# SCULPTURE

## An Insider's View

### What is sculpture?

Sculpture comes in many shapes and sizes. It is located in town parks, atop buildings, in traffic circles and in playgrounds—to name a few! Sculpture is sometimes a **statue**, a physical likeness of a person or animal. A **monument** or **memorial** refers to a structure that commemorates a person or event. Sculpture is sometimes abstract or nonrepresentational; it does not look like any one thing, but reminds different people of different things. Sculpture can be functional, such as a park bench or tree guard. It can be satisfying to look at, or pleasant for both the eyes and the ears, as with a fountain.

Outdoor sculpture is unique among art forms because it is continually subject to the weather. It sits outside. Outdoor sculpture can also include plants, water or sunlight in its design. Outdoor sculpture can be big or small, colorful or not.

### Activities

**1. Mind over matter!** Imagine a "sculpture" in your head. Mentally walk up to it. Describe what you see. How big or small is it? What color(s) is it? What material(s) is it made of? Is it representational or not? Where is it located? Does it make any sound? Is there texture? Does it feel hot or cold, rough or smooth?

**2. What does sculpture do?** Collect images of local or national sculpture (postcards, magazines, phone books, and the newspaper are good resources) or use selections from our SOS! Family Album Sculpture Cards (see SOS! Cards Section "Selections from America's Collection of Outdoor Sculpture."). Discuss the meanings and significance of sculpture in general and then the meanings and significance of the sculptures in the images. What are the ideas and emotions conveyed by each sculpture? What purpose(s) does each serve—commemorate or celebrate a heroine? Is it decorative? Functional? What is the sculpture's purpose in the source where it was found—

to sell a product? Illustrate a story? As a souvenir, like on a cup or magnet? Finally, two artists can take the same subject and create sculptures that either look similar or nothing alike. Compare SOS! Cards 1 and 2, 7, 19, 26, 27. Compare Cards 10, 11 and 12.

sample card here

### Who does what, and when?

Many people can be involved in the creative process of producing an outdoor sculpture:

- Artists, who design and create the sculpture
- Architects, who often design the structure(s) that surround sculptures
- Landscape architects, who may collaborate or work together with the artist to design the site
- Foundry staff, who pour and mold liquid metal into sculpture and assemble other metal works
- Quarry workers, who mine stone
- Carvers, who carve and shape stone
- Owners of outdoor sculpture that commission sculpture or hold competitions to choose sculpture, like city governments, schools, libraries, churches, or businesses.

### Activities

**1. Watch and see!** To view outdoor sculpture from a *young* kid's perspective, watch the video, "I Am a Sculptor."

**2. What part do you play?** Invite some local sculpture professionals to the classroom to tell you what they do and what part they play in the creative process. Ask your guests to work with your group in clay, soap, soft stone, and/or recycled materials to understand first-hand what's



involved in making a three-dimensional sculpture. Later, imagine that those sculptures might be set outside, subject to hazards, like wind, heat and freezing temperatures, deicing salts from roads, fertilizers from lawns, and vandals. Invite your guests to relate experiences they have encountered with their outdoor sculpture braving the elements.

**3. Try this at home!** Make your own soft stone. Use two parts plaster of paris, three parts vermiculite, and two parts water. The consistency will be like oatmeal. Fill an empty milk carton. Allow the mixture to harden for 30 minutes. Remove the carton. The soft stone can be carved for up to three days if wrapped in plastic between sessions. Once carved and allowed to dry for one week, the sculpture can be painted or varnished. Use clay to experience a building-up sculpting process. (SOS! Cards 30–33).

#### Where is America's outdoor sculpture?

Public outdoor sculpture is everywhere—on streets, plazas and parks, in gardens and cemeteries, on bridges and playgrounds, outside museums, even in lakes, ponds and oceans. Sometimes the sculpture is very carefully designed for a specific location, like an historical area, or to fit in with unusual geology—like a volcanic crater! See SOS! Cards 2, 4, 6, 11, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 59, 60.)

#### Activities

**1. Where is America's sculpture?** To see sculpture located in your state (or any other state), have students go online and visit [www.heritagepreservation.org](http://www.heritagepreservation.org). Go to SOS!4Kids. Then go to "Where is America's sculpture?" Click on the desired state(s). Plot the sculptures described on a state or national map. Mark them with pins. Connect the pins with strings that lead to illustrations (drawings, postcards, magazine or website pictures) of the artworks. Add some text describing each of the items in your "State (or National) Collection of Outdoor Sculpture." You've got the beginning of a library exhibition or a series of kid-written newspaper articles! For even more sculpture, check [www.americanart.si.edu](http://www.americanart.si.edu).

**2. Why is it there?** Where have you seen sculpture in your town, or elsewhere? If you were in charge, where in your town would you place a new sculpture? Draw a simple map of your town and indicate the location of any existing sculptures. Include proposed sites for new sculptures based on your ideas. Defend your choice of site. Who or what would your artwork honor, celebrate or commemorate? Does the subject have any connection to the site? If your town could afford only one sculpture, which would your students recommend?

#### What is sculpture made of?

Outdoor sculpture is constructed of one or more materials. Common materials are stone (granite, marble or sandstone) or metal (usually bronze, copper, steel or aluminum). Other elements can include water, sound, color, light, or moving parts.

#### Activity

**1. A touching discovery!** Handle and discuss the different sculpture materials found in your kit. List adjectives to describe the material and sculpture. In a mystery bag, feel these same objects and others. Describe what you feel. Do different materials elicit different emotions?

#### Let's do more!

- How are bronze sculptures made? Now watch and discuss the videotape "Preservation of Outdoor Sculpture and Monuments." Were you correct in your assumptions? What surprises were there?
- Your teacher/leader will read a short passage or show you an especially engaging illustration from *Rushmore* or *Liberty*—share just enough to whet your creative appetites. Finish the passage or create a story based around the text or illustration.

#### Materials list

- SOS! Family Album Sculpture Cards\*
- "I Am a Sculptor" videotape\*
- "Preservation of Outdoor Sculpture and Monuments" videotape\*
- Assorted items from SOS! Treasure Trunk of Sculpture Materials\*
- *Liberty*\* and *Rushmore*\* books
- Plaster of paris
- Vermiculite
- Water
- Empty quart-size milk carton