Art Masterpiece: *The Thinker*,
Auguste Rodin 1840-1917

Keywords: Relief, Carving, Casting, Molding and Constructive sculpture
Grade: 6th
Month: January
Activity: Clay Sculpture

Meet the Artist:

- August Rodin was born in Paris France in 1840. He would be (____) years old if he were standing here today!
- He loved to draw as a child and was very observant. He was known to sketch animals, people and places he had seen from memory.
- He was very good at art and applied three times to a very famous art school in France. Unfortunately, they never let him in. (Their mistake as he is now regarded as one of the most famous sculptors in the world!)
- Eventually Rodin discovered the art of sculpting and became an assistant to a popular sculptor in France.
- In 1875 he took a trip to Italy and studied the art of Michelangelo. This trip made a huge impression upon him and inspired him to work more artistically.
- One of his most famous works is a bronze sculpture called *The Thinker*. Rodin created a small version of it in 1880 and then cast a large version in 1902. This artwork was based on a poem called *The Divine Comedy*, written by a famous poet named Dante (born in 1265). *The Thinker* was supposed to be part of a larger piece and was originally titled “Poet”. Rodin pictured Dante sitting and thinking about his poem before he put it on paper. Then this idea turned into how man will dream or think of an idea and then those dreams or thoughts could be made into reality. Man is the only creature on earth that can contemplate. After this inspiration, he re-titled the artwork “The Thinker”.
- Rodin went on to create many more famous pieces around the world. He died in 1917 at 77 years old. Rodin is remembered for his famous works for
Art and for his trademark. He was known to represent inner-beauty in his artwork by distorting the anatomy of a piece or leaving an area unfinished.

Rodin cast in Bronze and carved in stone- let’s look at all the different ways to sculpt: (Show prints with examples)

**Modeling** - Examples: Clay, Play dough.

**Casting** - Bronze (Like the Thinker and what we saw at the BAG)

**Carving** - Stone, wood-taking and extracting materials from a block to create a sculpture. Works the same today as it did thousands of years ago. Only now we have power tools.

- Chisel/Mallet to take away big pieces
- Smaller files and chisels to add detail
- Sand and polishing to finish

  Relief-carving on a flat surface, wood or stone tile

**Constructive** - Sculpting with found object like Butterfield/Calder. Gluing or welding together.

**Activity:** Clay sculpture

**Supplies:** Clay, bowls for water, plastic knives and toothpicks

1. Hand out a chunk of clay (golf ball size) to each student.
2. Fill bowls with water and make them accessible to students so they can mold and shape their sculpture.
3. Brainstorm ideas for sculpture and write ideas on board. I.E. animals, plants, faces, etc.
4. Once students are done sculpting have them add detail will knife and/or toothpicks.
5. Have students place sculpture on scrap of paper to air dry.
Today in art masterpiece your 6th grader had the opportunity to study Auguste Rodin and his very famous work titled “The Thinker”. This work is based on a poem titled “The Divine Comedy” written by Dante. The work was originally titled “The Poet”, however, Rodin pictured Dante and decided the work was a reflection of how man will sit and think of an idea and contemplate before putting to paper and thus the work was titled “The Thinker”. Students reviewed different ways to sculpt including casting, carving and modeling. Each student was then given the opportunity to create their own sculpture from clay. Take a minute to talk about what your child “thought” of today.