



EduTrend Contents

W4C · ART HISTORY AND APPRECIATION · MIDDLE SCHOOL

Classical Sculpture Up Close

Proportion, pose and colour in ancient sculpture

Ages 11–14

Level: Intermediate

60 minutes

Pairs · up to 30

Activity 03

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 03 • AT A GLANCE

Classical Sculpture Up Close

Students compare stiff early Greek figures with later statues in contrapposto, pose to feel the difference, and draw a figure using proportion guides. They then learn that many ancient sculptures were painted and design a colour reconstruction.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- describe changes in Greek sculpture over time;
- explain and demonstrate contrapposto;
- use proportion when drawing a figure;
- evaluate evidence that ancient sculpture was painted.

KEY WORDS

sculpture • marble • bronze •
contrapposto • proportion • canon •
idealised • polychromy • Roman
copy

CURRICULUM LINKS

History: ancient Greece and Rome.
Art and design: figure drawing and
sculpture. Maths: ratio and
proportion.

1**LOOK**

Slow looking

2**DESCRIBE**

What do you see?

3**ANALYSE**

How was it made?

4**CONTEXT**

When, where, why?

5**INTERPRET**

What does it
mean?

6**RESPOND**

Judge and create

Materials (per pair)

- Images of early Greek kouros figures and later classical statues
- Images of painted reconstructions from museum projects
- Drawing paper, pencils, coloured pencils
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Collect images from museum open-access collections.
- Prepare a timeline strip.
- Practise the contrapposto pose.
- Print a statue outline for colour reconstruction.

SAFETY

Hold poses briefly and comfortably. No special hazards.

ACTIVITY 03 • SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Getting students to stand in contrapposto makes the idea click instantly.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–10 min Hook	Compare an early standing figure with a later relaxed statue.	<i>“Which looks more alive? Why?”</i>
10–20 min Contrapposto	Students stand stiffly, then shift weight to one leg.	<i>“What happens to your hips and shoulders?”</i>
20–35 min Proportion	Students draw a figure using a head-length proportion guide.	<i>“How many heads tall is your figure?”</i>
35–50 min Colour	Look at evidence of paint on ancient statues; design a colour reconstruction.	<i>“What evidence shows statues were painted?”</i>
50–60 min Discuss	Why do we imagine ancient statues as white?	<i>“How do museums shape our ideas?”</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Draw a figure in contrapposto using proportion guides and design an evidence-based colour reconstruction of a classical statue.

ACTIVITY 03 • FACILITATOR NOTES

The art history in brief

Early Greek figures called kouroi stood stiffly with one foot forward. Over time sculptors developed contrapposto, a pose with weight on one leg so the hips and shoulders tilt in opposite directions, making figures look relaxed and alive. The sculptor Polykleitos wrote a treatise called the Canon on ideal proportions.

Many famous Greek statues were bronze originals that survive mainly as Roman marble copies. Traces of pigment show that ancient statues and buildings were often brightly painted, a practice called polychromy. Museum projects have used scientific analysis to reconstruct their original colours.

Common ideas to listen for

- “Ancient statues were meant to be white.” Many were painted.
- “All famous Greek statues are Greek originals.” Many are Roman copies.
- “Classical statues show real people exactly.” Many show idealised bodies.

Adapting the activity

Support

Provide a figure template with proportion lines already drawn.

Stretch

Compare classical ideals of the body with representations in another culture’s sculpture.

WORKSHEET 1

Then and later

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Compare two statues.

Comparison

Feature	Early figure	Later figure
Pose		
Weight		
Expression		
Sense of life		

WORKSHEET 2

Proportion drawing

Draw a figure in contrapposto.

Figure



Mark head lengths. Show tilted hips and shoulders.

WORKSHEET 3

Colour reconstruction

Justify your colours.

Evidence that statues were painted

My colour choices and why

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

Student	Describes stylistic change	Uses proportion	Evaluates evidence

Suggested codes: W = working towards • E = expected • G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Classical Sculpture Up Close is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents W4C Art History and Appreciation programme (middle school, level: intermediate). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

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