

"The Thinker" by Auguste Rodin - 1902

(many of the 5th graders I presented to had seen the sculpture before but did not know who the artist was... many good guesses - Michelangelo, daVinci...)

- questions to lead discussion...
 - Are they familiar with the sculpture? What is it called? Who was the artist?
 - What is the person doing? What is he feeling?
 - What is he thinking about? Peaceful thoughts or is he struggling?
 - How does the artist show emotion/expression in the human form? (toes gripping the base, fist against his teeth, furrowed brow, tense muscles on neck, back, calves, twisted torso...)
 - What is it made of? How was it made? (cast bronze, lost wax casting method)

Rodin once said ... *"What makes my Thinker think is that he thinks not only with his brain, with his knitted brow, his distended nostrils and compressed lips, but with every muscle of his arms, back, legs, with his clenched fist and gripping toes."*

The Thinker is a bronze sculpture originally cast in 1902.

- over life size (73" high)
- about 25-28 full size castings were made (only 10 castings were made during Rodin's lifetime with his supervision)
- one casting now sits at his grave as his headstone.

The Thinker was originally conceived in 1880 as part of a large commission for a bronze doorway called the "**Gates of Hell**" depicting a portion of **Dante's** poem "**The Divine Comedy**"

- Dante's poem is an imaginative vision of a journey through all three realms of the afterlife Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell.
- Rodin's figure of The Thinker in the center of the doorway (approx. 27.5in. tall) is thought to be Dante, the poet, pondering his vision of Hell and conceiving his great poem.
- Rodin spent 40 years on the doorway project and never finished it.

Auguste Rodin : 1840-1917

- widely regarded as the "Pioneer of Modern Sculpture"
- Born in Paris
- he liked to draw as a teen, applied to art schools in Paris and was rejected three times, so he became a decorative bricklayer
- in his 30's, after a trip to Italy where he was inspired by the works of Michelangelo, he tried sculpting
- by his 40's he became quite accomplished
- by 1900 he was a world renowned artist
- Rodin would sculpt in clay, make molds from the clay and cast in bronze
- early in his career many accused him of using live models to make the molds because his sculptures were so life-like
- his first sculpture the "Age of Bronze" was life size
- to put those theories to rest he started sculpting his figures either smaller or larger than actual size.
- Rodin is known for his ability to create drama and emotion through body postures, facial features and expressions. He is remembered for his molten metal process of sculpting and for bringing a strong influence of realism into the world of sculpture.