

## ArtReach Lesson - Building Action Figures

**Suggested Grade Level(s):** Can be adapted for Primary to Twelve

**Suggested Length of Class Time:**

One class or more if you wish to develop the action theme or setting

**Possible Subject Areas:** Art, Social Studies, Language Arts, Health, Biology

### **Rationale:**

This lesson is intended to give students an opportunity to think about how our bodies move, how artists use various materials to create three-dimensional figures and, using plasticine, wire, and tinfoil, to fashion their own “action figures”.

### **Logistics:**

*Classroom setup* – individual or small group work, tables

*Materials* – heavy duty tinfoil, bendable wire, (available at hardware stores such as Home Depot), plasticine, pencils and paper

### **Suggested resources/images**

- Information on artist Alberto Giacometti (notes attached)
- Any depictions of figures in action (toys, magazine pictures, on-line clip art images, calendars, comic books, etc.)
- Videos showing people in action through dance or sport

### **Suggested Outcomes:**

Students will

- develop spatial sense and understanding of position in-space.
- explore and manipulate a range of art materials
- explore the science and art of the body in motion
- observe and discuss a variety of images in different artistic styles

### **Introduction:**

Discuss with students ways in which our bodies move and why it is possible for us to adopt many poses and move in many ways (the biology of movement). Encourage them to think about simple acts like sitting and standing, then walking and running and then into more advanced gymnastic poses, for example: how important joints and muscles are. Perhaps some students are involved in dance, yoga, or various sports and can talk about what you need to do to train your body to do these things well. Gauge your questions according to age level.

### **Suggestions for Teaching and Learning:**

- Students, in pairs, can do a warm up exercise in which one person adopts a pose while the other does a simple line sketch of their partner in that pose, giving attention to approximate body proportion. Then have them switch.
- After looking at the sculptures of Giacometti, distribute pipe cleaners, two chunks of plasticine and strips of tinfoil. Students can build figures in various positions, anchoring

the two feet with the plasticine on a base (such as an old book cover or a piece of heavy cardstock). See photo below:



- Another method for making slightly more developed figures is to create a skeletal frame of a figure with the bendable wire and in the fashion of Rodin, use small pellets of plasticine to cover the wire to create a figure (Using one colour of plasticine is preferable and more visually interesting). See below:



**Extension of ideas**

- As seen above, students can embellish their figure with one or two items such as eyes, a basketball, beads...no more than one or two, however, as the figure then loses its shape and interest.
- Students could create an entire three-dimensional scene using their figures as props.
- This activity lends itself beautifully to writing poetry, short stories, comic strips, speech balloons or brief skits.

**Suggestions for Assessment**

Students can be observed as they gather information, noting: ability to focus, to discuss, to cooperate with others, to make connections. Depending on the extensions chosen, work can be evaluated according to the skills at individual students' levels, science outcomes can be assessed through oral or written responses, asking, for example, what students have learned about the movement of bodies.