

# COMMEMORATION: MAKING STATUETTES OF FAMOUS CANADIANS

Ken Marland, Saskatchewan

## INTENDED GRADE/SUBJECT AREA

Elementary but adaptable to all grade levels of Art, Social Studies, History, Language Arts

## BACKGROUND

My students began this project with exercises in drawing the human face. We began by observing and discussing examples of symmetry in the classroom and on the human body and, in particular, faces. We looked at the geometric shapes that make up the human face, such as the ovoid or egg shape of the head, the almond shapes of the eyes and the triangular shape of the nose. We also looked at the proportions of the human head and noted the relationships of one facial feature to another. The ears are attached to the head in line with the eye.

## ACTIVITY

### Sketches

The students did a series of sketches to practice drawing the eyes and making both eyes about the same size. They observed that the iris is a circle but is usually partially hidden by the eyelids. Each student made an outline drawing of his or her face on a large sheet of art paper. As the students painted their self-portraits, I encouraged them to think about hair and eye colours, style of hair and clothing around the neck and shoulders.

## MATERIALS/RESOURCES

- White Paper
- Paint
- Cardboard
- Photographs of Prime Ministers

### Finishing Touches and Framing

- The portraits were painted on large sheets of white paper leaving the background white.
- When the paintings dried, the students carefully cut out the portraits.
- Use discarded wallpaper books to select a unique background for each portrait.
- Glue the portraits to the wallpaper.

### Making Frames

- A frame shop was clearing out old stock and I was able to get inexpensive, precut mat boards.
- For another class, parent helpers cut cardboard boxes into frames.
- Each student decorated the plain frames with stickers and symbols of Canada, such as maple leaves, flags, the beaver and small magazine pictures of Canadian scenes.
- Fancy frames can be made by gluing pasta and other textured material to the cardboard frame and having parent helpers' spray- paint the frame.

### Finishing

- Students used white glue to attach the portraits to the finished frames.

- We use a fancy font on computer labels to place a plaque on the bottom of each frame to indicate who was represented by the portrait and the dates that each person was Prime Minister of Canada

Our class set up an art gallery in the hallways of the school placing the Prime Ministers in order of their leadership. A local restaurant was impressed with the show in terms of the interesting artwork and the unique presentation of historical information. Our show hung in the restaurant for several weeks and was very popular with the diners.

### 3D Statuettes of the Prime Ministers

After finishing the portraits, the students visited a display of historical artifacts at the university. Many students were interested in the marble and bronze busts of Julius Caesar, Hannibal and other famous people on display. I decided the class would enjoy taking our project a step further and make three-dimensional busts of the Prime Ministers.

### MATERIALS/RESOURCES

- Small Yogurt Containers
- Balloons
- Masking Tape
- Ice Cream Pails

#### Building the Armature

- Cut a large hole in the bottom of a small yogurt container.
- Attach the neck of a large inflated balloon to the yogurt container by putting the knotted end of the balloon through the cut opening and running four strips of masking tape down the sides of the balloon and onto the yogurt container.
- Using a hot glue gun, glue the rim of the yogurt container to the bottom of a 4-litre ice cream pail.
- The balloon forms the base for the head, the small yogurt container forms the neck and the ice cream pail forms the shoulders and acts as a base for the bust.
- Students write their name in marker inside the ice cream pail.

#### Applying Paper Maché

- Place about 3 layers of paper maché over the forms.
- It is important to start at the bottom and work up to the top of the balloon.\*
- Use long narrow strips of torn newspaper and a paste made from flour and water.
- It works better to do the bottom half of the bust one day, let it dry and then complete the top half, over-lapping the sections.
- After the layers of paper maché dry, add one final layer using paper towels.
- Paper towels help make the surface smoother and also cover the print to make painting easier.

*\*Note When students start at the top, they overload the top and the neck is not strong enough to support the weight of the heavy, wet, paper maché.*

#### Facial Features

- Sculpt noses and ears by dipping a paper towel into the paper maché, squeezing out the excess paste, and shaping the paper into an ear or nose.
- To make the eyes, cut small Styrofoam eggs in half. I used egg shapes rather than spheres to help the students create a more realistic almond-shaped eye.

- Used a small amount of acrylic paint to form the round iris in the appropriate colour for their Prime Minister on each half of the Styrofoam egg.
- Hot glue the finished eyes in place on the dry paper-maché heads.
- Finish the eyes with small strips of paper towel and glue these on the top and bottom of the Styrofoam eyes to set the eye into the face and to form eyelids.

### Painting the Statuettes

- It takes about 3 days for the paper maché to dry thoroughly and ready for painting.
- If a nose or an ear falls off during the drying process, let it dry and then use hot glue to put it back in place.
- Paint the busts a skin tone made from white and brown tempera blocks or an inexpensive mis-tinted latex paint purchased or donated from a paint store.

### Applying the Hair

While the paint is drying, use scrapes of yarn and/or sheep's wool to create hair. The students tried to imitate the hairstyle in the photographs of the Prime Ministers. For example, the student who made the bust of John Diefenbaker gave him a head of black hair with a streak of gray on one side.

- Cut several lengths of the yarn and tie a knot in one end of each piece.
- Unravel the yarn to make finer stands of hair.
- When the students have numerous hairpieces tied, run a bead of white glue along the back of the bust and set the knots of yarn in this glue.
- Make a second bead of glue above the first row and glue on a second row of yarn. (The process was like putting shingles on a roof.)
- The number of rows a student has to glue depends on how much hair the subject has. Kim Campbell required many rows and longer strands of yarn.
- When all the yarn is in place and the glue is dry, lightly style the hair to match the hairstyle in the photographs.

### Finishing Touches

The final task was to dress the busts. Letters were sent home to the students' families requesting old dress shirts and ties. As well, I visited second hand clothing stores and bought old dress shirts and ties very cheaply. We draped the shirts around the busts and buttoned them up. The small yogurt container-size necks let us button the shirts up to the neck. We gave each man a tie and our one female Prime Minister a string of "pearls."

Each bust was displayed with a freestanding card naming the Prime Minister, giving a short biography and noting the sculptor. Each student also found an artifact that was associated with the Prime Minister. For example Trudeau had a rose, Diefenbaker had a scroll of the Bill of Rights and Pearson had a medal representing his Nobel Peace Prize.

This project was further developed through a variety of projects such as, mapping the birthplace of each Prime Minister, and graphing the occupations of the Prime Ministers before becoming a politician. I wrote and reproduced a mini-book at an appropriate reading level with biographical information about each leader. This book became our reader and provided many opportunities for language arts activities. One of our creative writing assignments involved, "If I were Prime Minister I would..."

## About the Educator

Ken Marland's grade 2 students explore local and national history through drama, models, field trips and website development. In *My Mini Stamp Album of Saskatoon*, his class learns about local flora, fauna, political figures and symbols. *The Bison: A Journal of Discovery* has older students explore the plains bison and its relationship to the Native people and the first Europeans on the prairies. *Signal Hill: A Community Study of St. John's Newfoundland* takes students to the Maritimes.