

Guided Critique

Mahonri Mackintosh Young

Da Winnah, 1927

bronze

Springville Museum of Art Collection

Grade Level: High School



Professional
Outreach
Programs in the
Schools





Look at this sculpture and describe what you see.

1. What subject does this sculpture represent?
2. What kinds of shapes, spaces, and silhouettes do you see?
3. Is the sculpture detailed or simplified?





Respond

1. What is your reaction to this artwork?
 - a. How does it make you feel?
 - b. What does it make you think about?
2. What do you think the story behind this artwork is?
3. Why do you think the artist chose to show this boxing match?

Analyze



1. What is the relationship between these people?
2. Why do you think the artist included the loser along with the winner?
3. What emotions do you think each person is feeling?
4. What emotions have you felt after you won or lost something?

Context

- The 1920s are considered the Golden Age of Sports.
- *Da Winnah* is a sculpture based off of a real boxing fight that happened in 1923.
- The fight was in New York City, the invincible Jack Dempsey vs. Luis Ángel Firpo. It was the first time a Latin American fighter would challenge the heavyweight title.
- Dempsey was the boxing champion since 1919 and Firpo was one of the top heavyweights in the world.
- It is considered to be the shortest and fiercest battle between heavyweights and called “The Fight of All the Ages”. It would be one of the defining fights in Dempsey’s career. They both became icons afterward.
- In the first round Firpo went down seven times, but then knocked Dempsey out of the ring (as shown in the picture). Dempsey barely came back and in the second round caught Firpo off guard and won, keeping his champion title.
- At the end of the match the referee announced, “Da Winnah, and champion of the world, Jack Dempsey!”



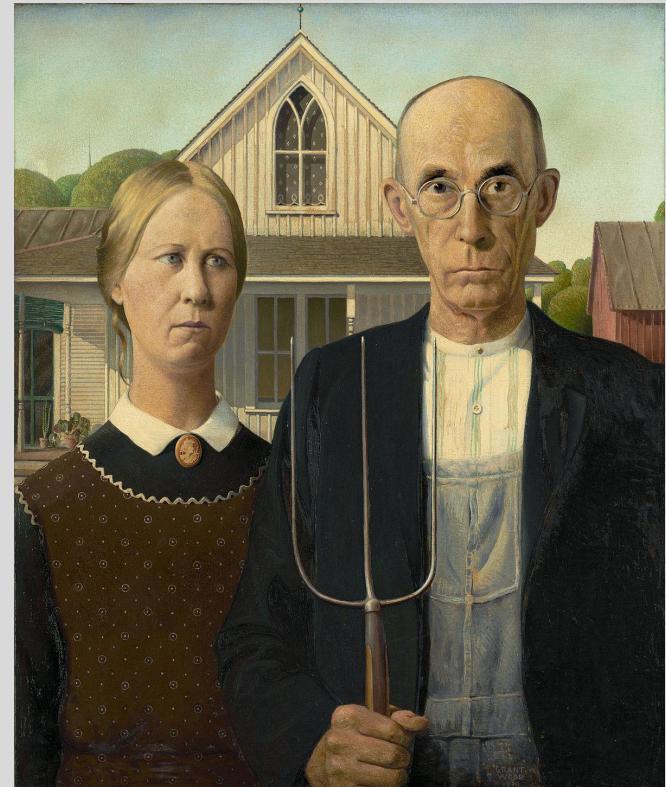
Context

- Mahonri Mackintosh Young was an American social-realist sculptor and artist.
- Young studied in New York at the Art Students League with Robert Henri and others.
- His most well known statues are *This is the Place Monument* and *Seagull Monument* in Salt Lake City, Utah.
- Young won a Gold Medal from the Olympic Games in Los Angeles for his sculpture *Knockdown*.



Art: Social Realism

- Social Realism is art that draws attention to real social and political conditions of the working class.
- The working class is a term for people who generally do not have a college degree and are working for income, especially in manual or industrial work. This class of workers developed out of the industrial revolution.
 - The working class has changed a lot since the Industrial Revolution and the 1920s when Mahonri Young sculpted *Da Winnah*. How would you define the working class today?
- The main goal of Social Realism is to expose deteriorating conditions of the poor and working classes.
- This art movement was popular between WWI and WWII.
- The goal was to show anonymous workers as heroic symbols of strength in the face of adversity.



Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930, oil on beaverboard, Chicago Institute

Ashcan School

- The Ashcan School was a group of artists in New York City including George Bellows, John Sloan, and Everett Shinn, who wanted to create a new kind of art that showed day-to-day living in the city.
- These artists wanted to show simple pleasures of the working class and what they did for entertainment.
- Mahonri Young lived in New York at the same time the Ashcan school was developing. His work was even shown in some of the same galleries as the Ashcan artists.

How does Mahonri Young's work follow the ideas of the Ashcan School?



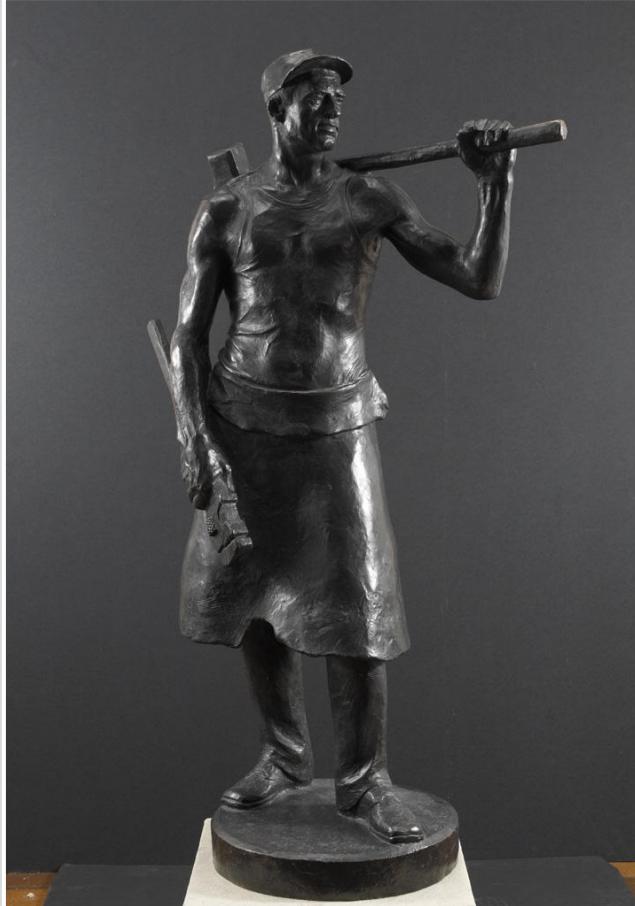
George Bellows, *Stage at Sharkey's*, 1909, oil on canvas, Cleveland Museum of Art



Analyze

Now that we know about Social Realism and the Ashcan School...

1. How does this sculpture align with social realist ideas?
2. How does this artwork show a part of the working class?
3. What details does the artist give to make the figures look heroic?
4. Why do you think the artist chose to show this particular boxing match?



Compare and Contrast

1. What is similar and different between this work and *Da Winnah*?
 - a. How is the subject matter different?
 - b. Who would the audience be for these two works?
 - c. What details stand out to you in each artwork?
 - d. Why do you think the artist wanted to show an industry worker?
 - e. How do both of these pieces follow the ideas of Social Realism?
 - f. If these two pieces were in an art show, do you think they belong together. Why or why not?
 - g. If these sculptures were of the upper class, what do you think would be shown?

Mahonri Young, *Industry: The Factory Worker*, 1938, bronze,
Springville Museum of Art



Create

1. Think about who you would like to represent as the working class.
 - a. Who is the working class today?
 - b. What sport or job would you depict?
2. Using materials that you can find in your home, clay, playdough, legos, tinfoil, etc., make a sculpture inspired by this one.
 - a. Sketch the sculpture
 - b. Create your sculpture from your sketch
 - c. Make a base for your sculpture

Further Learning

- Learn more about the artist:
 - <https://www.nps.gov/wefa/learn/historyculture/mahonriyoung.htm>
 - <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1985/10/mahonri-young-sculptor-of-his-heritage?lang=eng>
 - <https://anthonysfineart.com/blogs/blog/mahonri-young-newly-discovered-works-by-a-heavyweight>
- Learn more about Social Realism:
 - <https://www.theartstory.org/movement/social-realism/>
 - <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/social-realism.htm>
- Learn more about the Ashcan School:
 - <https://smarthistory.org/the-ashcan-school-an-introduction/>
- Learn more about the Dempsey v. Firpo fight:
 - <https://www.thefightcity.com/sept-14-1923-dempsey-vs-firpo/>
- Learn more about the Golden Age of Sports:
 - <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/culture-magazines/1920s-sports-overview>
 - <https://www.history.com/tag/sports>