

SCULPTURE GALLERY

Objectives

- Students will explore the show's central theme of independence.
- Students will create living sculptures that visually represent what independence means to them.
- Students will understand that independence can mean different things to different people.

Materials needed

- Open space to create/display living sculptures
- Index cards or post-it notes to display titles of pieces
- Whiteboard or giant post-it notes
- Pens or markers

Activity

In the musical *1776*, Benjamin Franklin reminds his colleagues, "You talk as if independence were the rule. It's never been done before." This activity focuses on the main topic of *1776*: independence. We'll explore this abstract concept using our bodies and imaginations.

- Warm-up: Invite your students to take 5-10 minutes to free write their answers to the following question: What does independence mean to you?
- Curator's Intro: Congratulations! You have been commissioned to create several pieces for the National Gallery of Art's sculpture garden. The theme is INDEPENDENCE-Y.

PART 1

- In groups of three, choose one person to be the sculptor and the other two people to be the clay.
- Sculptors, before you begin, you will need to get consent from your clay as to how they prefer to be sculpted. There are three ways you can mold them [demo "May I sculpt you?"]:
 1. Make physical contact to gently move the clay into position.
 2. Use invisible strings to move your clay into specific positions.
 3. Using your own body, show the clay the position you would like to see so that they can mirror it.
- Once you've gotten consent, you'll have the next few minutes to create a sculpture that visually represents "independence." Clay, be sure to freeze in your final position (but keep breathing!).

Reminders/Tips:

- Sculpt clay into positions that can be easily held for a period of time.
- Honor whatever physical needs or limitations your clay may express.
- Once consent is given, sculpting should be a silent activity. Please do not disturb other artists at work.

PART 2

- Once masterpieces are complete, clay remains frozen. Sculptors, you may now choose a title for your piece and display it at the foot of your sculpture. Sculptors, take a walk around the gallery. Carefully observe each work of art and take the time to share your responses [in pairs or in a group] to the following questions:
 - What do you see?
 - How does each work of art represent the theme of independence?
 - Do you notice any commonalities/differences?
- Curator's Closing: Clay, you may relax. Thank you, everyone, for your work.

As you watch *1776*, think about the different people seeking freedom from control and the different meanings that American independence will ultimately have for them.

Lesson Extensions

If time allows, repeat the activity so that other students can be sculptors.

Lesson Variations

Ideally, keep the clay to sculptor ratio 2:1 if possible. In larger groups, you may have more students act as clay and invite multiple sculptors to work on a single sculpture together.