



2nd Grade: SEPTEMBER

Roma

Anne Whitney

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About the Artist

The following information is provided to give classroom teachers a comprehensive understanding of the artist and artwork. Use your judgment on what to share with your students based on their level of curiosity, observation/inquiry skills, comprehension and age-appropriateness.

Anne Whitney

Anne Whitney was born in Watertown, Massachusetts, on September 2, 1821, to Nathaniel Whitney and Sarah Stone Whitney. Whitney's well-to-do parents provided her with a very comfortable lifestyle that included an indulgence in the arts. The Whitney home embraced the liberal Unitarian ideals which included a belief in the equality of women. As a young woman in the 19th century, Whitney had tutors at home and later attended a prestigious ladies' school in Maine. Women in that day were not permitted to attend universities. At age twenty-five, Whitney opened a small school in nearby Salem, Massachusetts. It was during this time Whitney began to develop her reputation as a serious writer and poet. Her friend, Ralph Waldo Emerson, collected her works and arranged for them to be published, frequently in *Harper's* and *Atlantic Monthly* magazines.

In her mid-thirties, Anne Whitney decided to pursue her interest in the visual arts. Young women of that day were encouraged to work with watercolors but Whitney had other ideas. Sculpture would be her focus and clay would be her media. Even though clay was designated as more a man's choice of material at the time, Whitney quickly mastered it to sculpt family and friends. Boston's William Rimmer, known for his precise understanding of human anatomy, took Whitney in as a student for two years. Under his tutelage, Whitney created her first life-size sculpture titled *Lady Godiva*, a fine work exhibited in Boston and New York. She also submitted the bust of a child and a huge sculpture, *Africa*, which addressed the abolition of slavery.

In 1866, Anne Whitney traveled to Rome, spending five years studying ancient sculpture and working primarily in the neoclassical style, producing large historical figures. One such work, *Roma*, was a symbol of the poverty she witnessed in Rome. While in Rome, Whitney was introduced to the works of two American female sculptors, Harriet Hosmer and Edmonia Lewis whom she later met. They formed a close friendship socially as well as professionally.

Whitney returned to Boston in 1871 when she received a commission for a marble sculpture of the Revolutionary War hero, Samuel Adams. The statue was Massachusetts' gift to Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol Building, Washington, D.C., where the

statue still stands. At the urging of Bostonians, Whitney created a similar statue in bronze for Adams Square in Boston.

In 1876, Whitney established her own studio in Boston where she continued to work for the next eighteen years. She also taught sculpture at Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts, where many of her works are currently housed. One of Whitney's sculptures at Wellesley was of English writer and social critic, Harriet Martineau whom Whitney considered a representative of the modern, intellectual woman. It became the practice to pass freshman students at the all-female school through an opening in the sculpture as a means of initiating them to the threshold of intellectual education. Unfortunately, the building which housed the *Harriet Martineau* sculpture burned to the ground, destroying the sculpture as well.

Anne Whitney was a well-established, well-respected sculptor of her time. However, her respected reputation did not free her from the consequences of gender inequality. In 1875, Whitney anonymously entered and won a contest for a commission of a statue of the Massachusetts anti-slavery senator, Charles Sumner, which was rejected by the Boston Art Committee when it realized the model was executed by a woman. The committee felt no woman would be able to model a man's figure and it would be improper to even try. Second place winner Thomas Ball who was awarded the commission executed his sculpture for The Public Garden in Boston. The Sumner family much preferred Whitney's model, and at the family's urging, Whitney executed her proposed model of Charles Sumner in 1900. It was installed in 1902 on the Harvard University campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts when Whitney was eighty-two years old. The Charles Sumner statue was the final major work Whitney completed.

Anne Whitney died of natural causes on January 23, 1915, at the age of ninety-three and is buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Throughout her career, Whitney was a spokesperson for social justice, supporting abolition of slavery, equal rights for all, and helping the poor.

About the Art

The sculpture, *Roma*, was created in 1869 in bronze. It stands 26 5/8" tall and is currently housed in the Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts. *Roma* was a gift to the college from the class of 1886.

Anne Whitney arrived in Rome in 1866 with hope of advancing her work. She found Rome rich with statuesque figures of gods and goddesses depicting triumphant victories of the great Roman Empire of centuries past. These figures were in direct contrast to

Discipline-Based Art Education

The following components are integral to students having a complete, well rounded art experience.

Art Aesthetics

Providing opportunities to develop perception and appreciation of visually expressed ideas and experiences.

Art Production

Providing opportunities to develop skills and techniques for creative visual expressions of emotions and ideas.

Art History

Providing opportunities to develop an understanding of the visual arts as a basic component of personal heritage.

Art Criticism

Providing an opportunity to develop an intellectual basis for analyzing and making aesthetic judgments based on an understanding of visual ideas and experiences.

ELEMENTS OF ART

- Line: A continuous mark
- Shape: Area enclosed by a line
- Color: Hue, reflection of light.
- Texture: Surface quality, real or implied
- Form: 3D shape or illusion of 3D
- Value: Graduated areas of light/dark
- Space: Illusion of depth

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

- Repetition: Imagery repeating pattern
- Variety: Contrast/variation
- Rhythm: Issues of eye movement
- Balance: Even visual weight
- Emphasis/Economy: Dominance/minimalism
- Proportion: Compare size relationships

COMPOSITION

- Symmetrical: Mirrored imagery
- Asymmetrical: Random placement
- Radial: Mirror image from center point
- Repetition: Repeating pattern, motif

ARTISTIC STYLES

- Realism: Realistic representation
- Abstraction: Personal interpretation
- Non-Objective: No recognizable depiction

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN IN PICTURE

BOOKS

Children's literature that relate to this lesson due to elements of art or story content are:

- *The Little Match Girl* by Hans Christian Andersen
- *Rag Coat* by Lauren Mills
- *Stone Soup* by Marcia Brown
- *We are All in this Dump with Jack and Guy* by Mother Goose and Maurice Sendak

REFERENCE/BIBLIOGRAPHY

- *Appleton's Encyclopedia*; Lisa B. Reitzes "The Political Voice of the Artist: Anne Whitney's "Roma" and "Harriet Martineau".
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the reality of life she currently saw; the quality of life had deteriorated, leaving many poor living in the streets. Whitney desired to commemorate these social conditions with the sculpture, *Roma*, which depicts a poor elderly woman. It is evident the woman is weary and depressed. The hem of her classical dress is bordered with medallions and images referencing the Roman decline and decay.

Needless to say, the modern Romans, even the Papacy, did not appreciate Whitney's allegorical sculpture of the current social condition and prevented its public display by quickly moving it to Florence, Italy. At this time, Whitney returned to the United States and began teaching at Wellesley College.

Directed Observation

Show students an image of Anne Whitney's *Roma*. If possible, have on hand several images representing various angles of the statue. Tell them it is a sculpture made in bronze by Anne Whitney in 1869. Feel free to share Whitney's personal background as appropriate and/or as the students inquire. After some time for thinking, encourage students to share what they see. Welcome all comments. The following questions are provided to help students use art vocabulary to talk about the work.

1. Take some time to look for the elements of art and principles of organization in this sculpture. Invite student to share where they see good use of lines, shapes, and textures. Look for examples of repetition, variety, and balance.
2. Invite students to determine the approximate age of the woman and share the basis for their conclusion. Certainly, the texture of the skin and pose would be some indication.
3. Draw attention to the woman's posture and ask students to talk about it. Why do you think she is sitting this way?
4. Tell the students about Anne Whitney and why she created this bronze sculpture in Rome, Italy (feel free to point out the location on a map). Anne Whitney was saddened by living conditions in Rome and its ineffective care of the poor.
5. Direct students to look at the hem of the dress. Almost all statues in Rome reflect the city's pride in all the good things from Rome's history. The images in the border of the hem tell the sad story of the Roman empire's decline. If you were a citizen of Rome, what would you rather see in a sculpture, the proud moments or the sad?
6. The citizens of Rome were not happy when they saw Anne Whitney's sculpture because it made them look bad, so they moved it to another city. Why do you

think Anne Whitney thought it important to show the sad story? Sometimes artists make art that is not pretty. Sometimes artists make art to teach a lesson or to remind us of the past so we can do a better job in the future.

7. If you were to make a sculpture of someone or something in order to remind us of an important story, who or what would you sculpt and why?
8. Take a close look at *Roma* or other sculptures by Anne Whitney. Based on what you see, describe why Anne Whitney is considered a good sculptor.

Things to Do

1. Consider the less-fortunate people in society—the aged, the poor, the ill. Talk about how a good community takes care of its people. Visit a retirement community and draw portraits of the residents. Leave the portraits with the residents as a gift and write follow-up letters to them.
2. Draw grandparents or other seniors in your life. Invite older adults to serve as models in your room.
3. Anne Whitney sculpted a tired woman. Pair up and take turns posing as "tired" or "sleeping." Using clay, one child forms a sculpture of the partner. You can also sketch or paint the figure. Be sure to look for lines, shapes, textures to put in your work.
4. Practice sculpting skills by molding clay into the shapes of animals. Look at a variety such as zoo animals, farm animals, pets or insects.
5. Sculpt members of your family, capturing the proper sizes (height and weight) of each person.
6. Gather photographs by New York photographer Dorothea Lange who, during the Depression, provided a permanent record of the economic and social condition of America's impoverished classes. She traveled the country documenting migration and poverty—beggars, bread lines, even shanty towns. Use these images as inspiration to write a story about the people in the photograph and to draw or paint the figures.
7. Identify local charities which assist the underserved people in your neighborhood and ask what they need. Consider doing a project such as a bake sale or a collection of canned food which can be donated to your charity.
8. Find local charities in your neighborhood and learn how they improve the lives of people in need. Create posters advertising these charities and post them around the community. How else can you help?