

Mythical Beasts

(art + literature; art + history)

Many cultures develop creatures to explain natural phenomenon and social interpretation of the needs of people. Often, these creatures have both human and animal traits. The Greek Centaur is part horse and part man. The Egyptian Sphinx has the body of a lion with a man's head. The Greek Sphinx has a lion's body and a woman's head. Neptune, Roman God of the Sea, was half man and half fish. Popular books that have recently been produced as movies such as *The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe*® and *Harry Potter*® feature characters based on similar creatures. Study the mythical part man part beast creatures of two or three other cultures.

Each student writes a poem or short story to create a hero or heroine and an animal friend. The story brings together a combination of their lives. Create a sculpture built to illustrate the mythical beast, animal and person, for the story

Sample Story: "THE FISH OR MAN — *The fisherman lived in a small village and caught fish for the people of the village. Fishing was his profession and very important for the nourishment and health of his family and friends. The long hours he spent on his boat caused him to become friendly with one special fish in the harbor. The fish told him of his yearnings to be able to know the pleasures of living on land. The fisherman was curious about life under the water. The two friends decided to exchange parts of their bodies so each could exist in the other's life. They enjoyed the wonders they found but agreed family and friends were too important to abandon. The fisherman and fish remained special friends forever each in his own world.*"

Grade Levels 5-12

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Process

1. Write a story or poem. The writing can be long or short but must involve critical thinking.
2. Sketch a mythical beast combining a person and animal into a sculpture that reflects the story. Remember to think and design in three dimensions. All sides of the sculpture should have interest in color, texture and balance.
3. Create the sculpture form with aluminum sculpture wire. This wire is soft and easy to twist. Double the wire for strength, while keeping the length. Cutting the wire and adding parts will make



Materials

AMACO® Wireform Aluminum Contour Mesh (33408-2650), 20" x 10-ft roll, need approximately 1 square foot per student

Sculpture Wire (33400-1435), 350-ft, need approximately 4 ft per student

Activa® Celluclay™ Instant Papier Maché (33106-1005), share one 5-lb package between five students

Blick Matte Acrylic (00727-) assorted colors, distribute throughout class

Blick Scholastic White Bristle Flat Brush (05949-1014) size 14, one per student

Plastic Painting Knives (03105-0020), one per student

Zip-close plastic storage bags, gallon

Process, continued

- weak areas in the sculpture and it could lose balance. Follow the desired shape by
3. Create the sculpture form with aluminum sculpture wire. This wire is soft and easy to twist. Double the wire for strength, while keeping the length. Cutting the wire and adding parts will make weak areas in the sculpture and it could lose balance. Follow the desired shape by bending the wire back over itself. Cover the wire form with the wire mesh. It will bend easily to attach and build mass. This form can be constructed quickly and freely leaving. Detailed shape will be built during Celluclay application.
 4. Cover work space with plastic or paper to catch excess Celluclay. Pour dry Celluclay into the gallon zip-close bag. Use only two or three cups the first time. Add one cup water, zip close and knead until mixed to the consistency of brownie mix. Add water or Celluclay a little at a time as needed to achieve correct consistency. Using the painting knife, apply the mix to the wire form and mesh covering the sculpture and adding texture where desired. Celluclay is very strong when dry. Drying time will vary.
 5. Paint the Mythical Beast using Blick MAte Acrylic. Acrylic will create a strong waterproof surface. Celluclay will accept tempera and opaque markers but colors may not be as intense.
 6. Embellish with metallic paint, yarn, glitter etc.

Options

- Write a class story and create all the mythical beasts for a tableau
- Put on a theater production

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National Standards

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

5-8

Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks

9-12

Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks

Content Standard #4 — Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

5-8

Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures

9-12

Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art

Content Standard #6 — Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

5-8

Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts

9-12

Students compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues, or themes in the humanities or science