

SUGGESTIONS FOR EDUCATORS

Teachers of various age groups and subjects will find this material useful. This resource will be of particular interest to those who teach language arts, visual arts, European history, art history, and French.

Following are suggestions on how to incorporate this resource into your curriculum using the **New York State Learning Standards for the Arts** as a guideline:

Standard 1: Creating, performing, and participating in the arts

> **Students will develop their own ideas and images through the exploration and creation of artworks based on themes or actual events.** After learning about Rodin's sculpture *The Burghers of Calais*, students may create their own drawings or sculptures depicting a famous historical event or illustrating the idea of heroism. Students may design a work like Rodin's that focuses on humanizing the event or the people portrayed.

Standard 2: Knowing and using arts materials and resources

> **Students will increase their understanding of art by viewing slides and by visiting a museum to see an original work of art.** Teachers may do the classroom activity described in this resource and then follow up with a visit to either The Metropolitan Museum of Art or a local museum or gallery to see an original sculpture. Students may then discuss the differences between viewing slides of a work and seeing the original.

> **Students will become acquainted with art history to understand what is required to become an artist, historian, art historian, and/or art critic.** By learning about Rodin's life and work, students will develop an

understanding of the artist's craft and the skills necessary to create a work of art. They will learn how an artist makes choices and decisions about the form and content of his or her work. In addition to the classroom activity included in this resource, students may write a formal critique of *The Burghers of Calais*, thereby gaining an understanding of how historians, art historians, and art critics formulate their ideas about art and/or history.

Standard 3: Responding to and analyzing works of art

> **Students will explore the meanings, purposes, and sources of a work of art. They will describe their responses to the work and the likely reasons for those responses.** By doing the classroom activity described in this resource, students will both describe what they see in Rodin's sculpture *The Burghers of Calais* and consider the ideas expressed in the piece. After learning the history of the sculpture, they will discuss why and how Rodin chose to render his figures the way he did.

> **Students will describe the visual and other sensory qualities (texture, shape, size, and volume) of a work of art.** By viewing the slides of Rodin's work as well as slides of work by other artists, doing the classroom activity, and discussing Rodin's sculpture, students will be able to describe how Rodin creates movement, texture, and shape, and how he conveys emotion in his piece.

> **Students will explain how the ideas, themes, or concepts in a work of art are expressed in other disciplines, specifically science, literature, and social studies.** In relation to science and photography, students may compare Rodin's sculpture to the stop-action photography of Eadweard

Muybridge. The photographer's images of people and animals in motion mirror the effect of the six burghers' repeated gestures.

Social studies students may discuss Rodin's sculpture in terms of its subject matter. *The Burghers of Calais* is a tribute to six men who were prepared to die in order to liberate the French town of Calais, under siege by King Edward III of England in 1347, during the Hundred Years' War. The sculpture offers Rodin's perspective on what it means to be heroic in times of war. His heroes, however, are not examples of unqualified bravery. They are conflicted individuals exhibiting a range of emotions, including doubt, despair, and confusion.

> **Using the language of art criticism, students will write analyses and interpretations of Rodin's work.** In addition to doing the classroom activity in this resource, students may research Rodin's work and read critical reviews of his sculpture in books and periodicals. They then may discuss how critics of Rodin's time interpreted his work and compare these responses with their own.

> **Students will analyze and interpret the ways in which psychological concepts are explored in *The Burghers of Calais*.** By discussing the expressions on the faces of the six burghers, students will attempt to determine which emotions and concepts are explored by the artist as well as their significance.

> **Students will describe the impact of the work of art on the viewer.** Students will describe the impact of Rodin's sculpture on the viewer through discussions and through the writing exercise described in this resource.

Standard 4: Understanding the cultural dimensions and contributions of the arts

> **Students will explore the significance of Rodin's piece in terms of its cultural context and will compare Rodin's work to the art of other cultures and/or eras.**

Students may write a short research paper comparing Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais* with **public sculptures in their own neighborhoods** that pay tribute to a hero or famous leader. The students may discuss how the artists express the idea of heroism or bravery in different ways or how the depictions of heroism are similar.

Students may compare Rodin's sculpture to works by **Edgar Degas**. Both Rodin and Degas created forms—specifically torsos, limbs, and faces—that they use repeatedly throughout their work. Constructing compositions in this way creates a sense of movement throughout the piece; it also focuses attention on the rhythm of the formal arrangement rather than on a description of a particular event or person.

Students also may compare Rodin's work to the art of **twentieth-century artists**. Discussions may focus on how Rodin's work was innovative in expressing psychological content as well as in experimenting with form.

Students also may discuss Rodin's sculptures in relation to those produced by non-European artists, such as artists from **Africa** and **Asia**. Students may focus how artists from different cultures depict the human figure.





INTRODUCTION

Rodin's sculpture *The Burghers of Calais** consists of six figures standing in various positions and facing in different directions. They stand together on the same level—no figure is elevated above another—wear the same plain garments, and possess similar physiques. However, they all exhibit different facial expressions: sorrow, despair, determination.

This resource will discuss the following questions: Who are these men? What is their relationship to one another? What are they doing? Why are their hands and feet so large in comparison with their bodies? Why are they facing in different directions? Does the sculpture tell a story? Why is it an important work of art?

Students will benefit most from this resource by discovering Rodin's sculpture and its message on their own. The classroom activity is designed for students to study *The Burghers of Calais* before they know anything about the story or Rodin's life. Teachers also may benefit by doing the activity themselves before reading the other sections of this resource.

* The title of the sculpture in French is *Le Monument aux Bourgeois de Calais*.