



# Art History

## English Lessons



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# Auguste Rodin

Auguste Rodin was a French sculptor born on November 12, 1840, in Paris, France. He is widely regarded as the father of modern sculpture and is best known for his realistic and expressive works. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Rodin did not focus on the idealized forms that were popular in traditional art. Instead, he sought to capture the raw emotion and human experience in his sculptures, which often portrayed figures in dynamic and naturalistic poses.



Rodin's early life was marked by challenges. He struggled academically and was rejected three times by the *École des Beaux-Arts*, a prestigious art school in Paris. However, these setbacks did not deter him. Rodin continued to develop his skills by working in decorative arts and learning from various sculptors. His persistence paid off when, in 1877, he achieved his first major success with the sculpture *The Age of Bronze*. This work was so lifelike that it was initially accused of being a cast of a live model rather than a sculpture.

Rodin's career flourished in the following years, and he created some of his most famous works, including *The Thinker*, *The Kiss*, and *The Gates of Hell*. *The Thinker* is perhaps his most iconic piece, representing a man deep in thought, often seen as a symbol of philosophy and contemplation. It was part of a monumental project called *The Gates of Hell*, inspired by Dante's *Inferno*, which features over 200 figures and took decades to complete.

During his lifetime his talent was acknowledged and was considered the Michelangelo of his time. Despite his success, Rodin faced criticism for his unconventional methods and his focus on unfinished surfaces and fragmented forms. However, his influence on modern sculpture is undeniable. Rodin's ability to convey emotion and movement in his work set him apart, and today, his sculptures are celebrated worldwide as masterpieces of art.



“Nothing really is more moving than the maddened beast, dying from unfulfilled desire and asking in vain for grace to quell its passion.”

Auguste Rodin





**After reading the text, answer the questions**

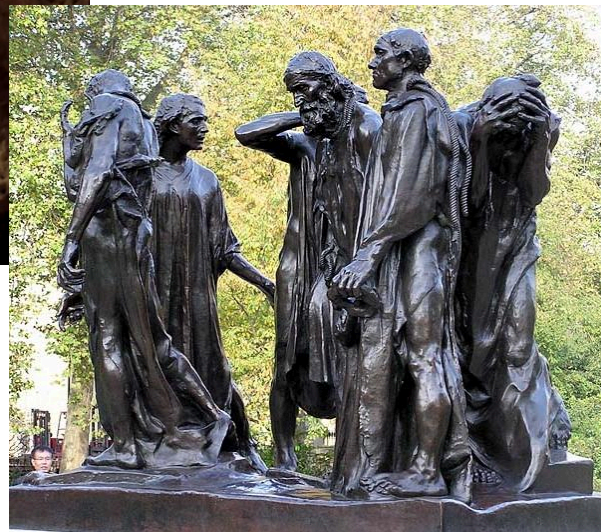
- 1. What is Rodin best known for in the world of art?**
- 2. How did Rodin's approach to sculpture differ from that of his contemporaries?**
- 3. What challenges did Rodin face early in his life and career?**
- 4. What was Rodin's first major successful sculpture, and why was it controversial?**
- 5. Name three of Rodin's most famous sculptures.**
- 6. What does *The Thinker* represent, and why is it significant?**
- 7. Despite his success, what kind of criticism did Rodin face during his career?**







**These are three of the most famous sculptures of Rodin. Which is your favourite one and why? Write a paragraph expressing your ideas and feelings towards it:**



**1. What is Rodin best known for in the world of art?**

He is best known for his realistic and expressive works

**2. How did Rodin's approach to sculpture differ from that of his contemporaries?**

Rodin did not focus on the idealized forms that were popular in traditional art. Instead, he sought to capture the raw emotion and human experience in his sculptures, which often portrayed figures in dynamic and naturalistic poses.

**3. What challenges did Rodin face early in his life and career?**

He struggled academically and was rejected three times by the *École des Beaux-Arts*, a prestigious art school in Paris

**4. What was Rodin's first major successful sculpture, and why was it controversial?**

In 1877, he achieved his first major success with the sculpture *The Age of Bronze*. This work was so lifelike that it was initially accused of being a cast of a live model rather than a sculpture.

**5. Name three of Rodin's most famous sculptures.**

The Thinker, The Kiss, and The Gates of Hell.

**6. What does *The Thinker* represent, and why is it significant?**

*The Thinker* is perhaps his most iconic piece, representing a man deep in thought, often seen as a symbol of philosophy and contemplation

**7. Despite his success, what kind of criticism did Rodin face during his career?**

Rodin faced criticism for his unconventional methods and his focus on unfinished surfaces and fragmented forms





For more ideas on how to use masterpieces of Art to teach critical thinking, you can read my blog post here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/how-to-use-works-of-arts-to-teach-critical-thinking/>

And about the use of images in the language classroom, another of my blog posts here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/the-use-of-images-in-language-learning/>

I have made a pdf with a set of questions that I use a lot with my students when we study all types of images, you can download it here:

<https://www.ruthlessteacher.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Questions-about-images-in-class.pdf>





## **Sculptor**

[François Auguste René Rodin](#) (12 November 1840 – 17 November 1917), was a French sculptor. Although Rodin is generally considered the progenitor of modern sculpture, he did not set out to rebel against the past. (information from Wikiart).

## **Sculptures**

You can see Rodin's work online here:

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/auguste-rodin/all-works#!#filterName:all-paintings-chronologically,resultType:masonry>

The first sculpture is called "*The Kiss*" (1901-1904) and it is in a private collection

The second sculpture is called "*The Thinker*" (1902) and it is in the *Philadelphia Museum of Art*:

<https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/103370>

The third sculpture is called "*Burghers of Calais*" (1902) and it is in the *Rodin Museum*, in Paris:

<https://rodinmuseum.org/collection/object/103361>





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For any questions you may have you can message me at [info@ruthlessteacher.com](mailto:info@ruthlessteacher.com)

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