

## See/Think/Wonder | *The Shaw Memorial* by Augustus Saint-Gaudens

African-American History: The Civil War

Adapted from Julie Carmean, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

**Target Thinking Dispositions:** Observing and Describing, Reasoning, Questioning and Investigating

**Thinking Routine:** See/Think/Wonder

**Work of Art:** Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *The Shaw Memorial*, 1900

**Disciplines:** African-American History, American History, Social Studies, English Language Arts

**Curricular Topics:** The Civil War

**Grade Level/Age:** Grade 5 or Ages 10-11 (adaptable for older or younger students)

**Total Time:** 50 minutes (adaptable for shorter time frames or two sessions)

**Learning Objectives:** Students will interpret a work of art, by making connections and articulating what they see, think, and wonder about it.

Students will discover the history and legacy of the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment, the first African-American troop to fight for the Union in the Civil War by engaging with the monumental sculpture.

### Materials Needed:

- Art reproduction of *The Shaw Memorial* by Augustus Saint-Gaudens (poster, digital image, or individual prints)
- See/Think/Wonder templates and pens/pencils (1 per student)

### See/Think/Wonder

#### 1. Seeing

~10 minutes

Introduce the work of art and explain to students they will be doing the See/Think/Wonder routine. Invite students to look at the foreground of the sculpture, the bottom, the middle, the top, and into the background, and write what they see in the first column of the See/Think/Wonder organizer. Then, call on students in a whole group discussion to share what they noticed. As they answer, encourage students to provide more detail in their responses and to point to the location of the things they mention. When finished, provide a summary of what the students observed.

#### 2. Providing Background on the Artist and Artwork

~5 minutes

Explain to students the memorial sculpture serves as a reminder of a significant event in American history. It showcases the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts volunteer regiment, which was the first African-American regiment to fight for the north during the Civil War and was led by Robert Gould Shaw. This information provides a general context in which students can base further thinking in the subsequent steps.

### 3. Thinking

~10 minutes

Next, ask students, What does this sculpture make you think?, or What do you think might be going on in this sculpture? Have them write responses in the second column of the See/Think/Wonder template, and then allow students to share their ideas with a partner. Ask students to base their thinking on evidence by using the probing question: “What do you see that makes you say that?”

### 4. Wondering

~10 minutes

Ask: What does this work of art make you wonder? Give time for students to write their questions in the “Wonder” column. Then, invite them to share their questions with the whole group. Write them down and summarize the different themes that come up in their wonderings.

### 5. Providing Further Background on the Artist and Artwork

~5 minutes

In 1863, President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, enabling African-Americans to enlist. The 54<sup>th</sup> regiment fought in the Civil War, and President Lincoln credited them for their valor. He said that if it weren’t for their bravery and inspiring many more African-Americans to join the fight, the Civil War may have had a very different outcome.

### 6. Wrapping-Up

~10 minutes

Ask students what else they are wondering or share something *you* may be wondering. For example, tell students you are wondering what they will remember about the sculpture and your conversation about the 54<sup>th</sup> regiment. Give students time to talk about what most stood out to them.

Summarize the lesson, highlighting the types of thinking students used to build understanding (Observing and Describing, Reasoning, Questioning and Investigating), and any additional relevant curricular content.

### **Additional Suggested Works of Art:**

This lesson can be applied to other works of art, such as:

- Richard Norris Brooke, *A Pastoral Visit*, 1881
- George Bellows, *Both Members of This Club*, 1909
- Aaron Douglas, *Into Bondage*, 1936

For more works of art related to the subject of African-American history, please refer to the National Gallery of Art’s collection website:

[www.nga.gov/collection](http://www.nga.gov/collection)