

**United Arts'  
 Arts and Culture Access Grant**

<b>Organization name</b>	The Albin Polasek Museum & Sculpture Gardens
<b>Lesson title</b>	Sculpture Stories
<b>Length of lesson</b>	1-3 classes
<b>Grade levels</b>	3-8
<b>Lesson type (pre/during/post)</b>	Pre, during, and post

**Objectives**

Students will use their infinite imaginations to come up with new stories about our Polasek sculpture. Their adventure begins by learning about some of the Slavic myths that young Albin Polasek grew up with as a child. Then they will see first-hand how he used these folktales to create his outdoor sculpture. They will analyze what attributes Polasek gave them and identify why that might be? After their tour of the historic home and sculpture gardens, we will ask your students to find their favorite outdoor piece and give them a new title or name, design and draw a new outfit/costume/hairstyle/or accessory for their figure, and finally write a new story for their character. They will integrate factual elements from the existing figures, to translate into their own conceptual tale. Who is this person, and where are they going? The story is completely in their hands! This flexible experience will teach students to respond and analyze visual cues, while they improvise additional elements of design. Along the way, they will discover the joy of folk or oral storytelling tradition so beloved by our Museum founder, Albin Polasek. Our trained docent/educator will share the classic stories behind the artwork to start the student's creative process. We will ask open-ended questions that will spark ideas and discussion, which will ultimately lead to an evolved concept. To prepare for your visit, we suggest you review the following vocabulary terms and participate in the pre/post activities to amplify knowledge retention in your students.

**Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS)**

SS.3.G.1- The World in Spatial Term  
 SS.4.G.1- The World in Spatial Terms  
 SS.5.G.1- The World in Spatial Terms  
 SS.5.G.2- Places and Regions  
 SS.6.W.3- Recognize significant events, figures, and contributions of classical civilizations.  
 SS.7.G.6 - Understand how to apply geography to interpret the past and present and plan for the future.  
 SS.8.G.1- Understand how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technology to report information.SS.8.G.2-Understand physical and cultural characteristics of places.  
 VA.3.H.1.3- Identify and be respectful of ideas important to individuals, groups, or cultures that are reflected in their artworks.  
 VA.3.H.2- The arts reflect and document cultural trends and historical events, and help explain how new directions in the arts have emerged.  
 VA.4.H.1- Through study in the arts, we learn about and honor others and the worlds in which they live(d).  
 VA.4.S.1- The arts are inherently experiential and actively engage learners in the processes of creating, interpreting, and responding to art.

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VA.5.H.3-Connections among the arts and other disciplines strengthen learning and the ability to transfer knowledge and skills to and from other fields.

VA.68.S.1- The arts are inherently experiential and actively engage learners in the processes of creating, interpreting, and responding to art.

VA.912.C.2.2-Assess the works of others, using established or derived criteria, to support conclusions and judgments about artistic progress.

VA.912.C.2.4-Classify artworks, using accurate art vocabulary and knowledge of art history to identify and categorize movements, styles, techniques, and materials.

VA.912.O.1.1-Use the structural elements of art and the organizational principles of design in works

VA.912.O.1.2-Use and defend the choice of creative and technical skills to produce artworks.

VA.912.H.1.4-Apply background knowledge and personal interpretation to discuss cross-cultural connections among various artworks and the individuals, groups, cultures, events, and/or traditions they reflect. Research and use the techniques and processes of various artists to create personal works.

**Common Core State Standards (CCSS)**

NA

**Key vocabulary and definitions**

**Myth:** is a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining some natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events. It is derived from the Greek word "mythos," which simply means "story". Mythology can refer either to the study of myths, or to a body or collection of myths.

**Oral Tradition/Story Telling:** The way in which a community's cultural and historical traditions are passed down by word of mouth from one generation to another without written instruction. The transmission is through speech or song and may include folktales, ballads, chants, prose or verses.

**Slavs/Slavic People:** The meaning of "Slav" depends on the context in which it is used. But, generally speaking, a "Slav" is a group/person who shares ties to their common ethnic culture and language with linguistic ties to the modern Slavic language family. The Slavs inhabit Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Southeast Europe, North Asia and Central Asia. Slavs speak Indo-European Slavic languages and share, to varying degrees, cultural traits and historical backgrounds. They have been documented since the early 6<sup>th</sup> century. Presently, over half of Europe's territory is inhabited by Slavic-speaking communities. Present-day Slavic people are classified into West Slavs (chiefly Poles, **Czechs and Slovaks**), East Slavs (chiefly Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians), and South Slavs (chiefly Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, Macedonians, Slovenes, Montenegrins of the Former Yugoslavia and Bulgarians).

**Deity/God/Goddess:** Can mean different things to many different people and cultures, but typically it is a natural or supernatural being who is considered divine or sacred. Monotheistic religions accept only one deity (predominantly referred to as God) and polytheistic religions accept and worship multiple deities.

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**Pagan:** Although no longer in technical use, the word refers to a person or community that observes a polytheistic (many gods) religion, such as the ancient Romans, Greeks, *and Slavs*. Pagans or paganism mostly refers to early cultures before the widespread of Christian, Jewish, or Muslim religions.

**Creation Myth/Story:** A creation myth is a symbolic story of how the world began and how people first came to inhabit it. While in popular usage the term myth often refers to false or fanciful stories, it does not imply falsehood. Cultures generally regard their own creation myths as true.

**Materials needed**

Cellphone or camera  
Drawing pencils/charcoal  
Clipboard or portable drawing surface  
Sketch pad or drawing paper  
(optional) computer design software

**School must provide**

Art materials are available upon request, and may be included into group tour pricing. Please inquire about art activity fees.

**Background information**

In 1879, a hundred and thirty-seven years ago, before the internet, televisions, cars, or even flushable toilets, little Albin Polasek was born in a European country we now call the Czech Republic. Albin grew up in a very small village called Frenstat. It was nestled among forests and set in the huge Carpathian Mountains full of wolves and maybe magic...? This was the perfect place for storytelling during the long, dark winters. This place was also home to a group of people called the Slavs. The Slavic people loved sharing stories and passing on oral traditions. They told these stories at special times throughout the year; such as religious feast days, holidays like Christmas and Easter, and during seasonal harvest times of year as well. Their stories were about deities, Slavic myths, and also helped explain the natural world around them: why spring comes every year, who created the earth, what's in the deep woods at night, etc. These stories or legends were as old as the Slavic people themselves and had been passed down for hundreds of years. Little Albin Polasek grew up hearing these stories and envisioned what these mighty warriors, beautiful goddesses and strange creatures might have looked like. He used his imagination to come up with sketches and drawings, that he would later turn into his sculpture. This story-telling tradition was very important to Albin Polasek, who worried that if he didn't capture their likeness and put them into his stone sculptures, that his people would forget the tales over time...He believed it was his duty as an artist to keep these oral traditions alive and preserve them in his sculpture so that future generations could see them for themselves and enjoy them. And that's why he created the Museum, so that we can see the sculpture and be inspired by the art and the stories!

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**Lesson process**

**Pre Activity—Myths and Legends Around the World**

Read the background information out loud to your students and ask them if they have ever heard of the ethnic group the Slavs before? Show a map of what is now the Czech Republic and compare it to an old map that shows the extent of the Slavic people. Explain that the Czech Republic was once a country called **Czechoslovakia**, and then physically write the word on the board for them to see and break the two words apart, showing the **Czechs** and the **Slavic** people in the word. Go over the vocabulary list with your students and quiz them as a pretest (optional). Then introduce the concept of “creation stories/legends.” Ask if anyone has heard of one from a different culture or religion before? Chances are they will recall some from various social studies courses, or even from pop culture (Thor in Marvel movies, Hercules Disney cartoons, etc.). Ask your students to research a “creation story” based on a country or ethnic group. You may assign these to get the broadest cross-section, or let them choose their own culture. A helpful segue is asking what their own heritage or ethnic roots may be? Mexican? Chinese? Native Floridian? Have them research and summarize a creation story to bring back to the class. You may opt for them to sketch and illustrate the story with one main image (optional). Share these diverse creations stories, gods, goddess, and deities. Stress that one is not more “right” or accurate than the other, that each culture or group of people simply had a different way of explaining their environment. Many of the major religions may have evolved out of these underlying pagan/traditional stories (Christianity, etc.), and that art played a role in how these cultures depicted their gods. (Optional) Show images and examples of how different gods and goddesses are portrayed and mark the country or culture of origin on a map for a cross-curriculum component.

**During Your Visit:**

When you book your group or school tour, please notify the Polasek Tour Coordinator that you selected this particular lesson, and your docent will tailor your tour to include indoor/outdoor sculpture portraying Slavic/Greek myths, as well as the regular historic home tour. Remind your students to closely examine the mythological works as their assignment will be to re-envision one of them and write an original story. The docent will tell them the stories behind some of Polasek’s Slavic and Greek inspired works. After their formal tour, give them plenty of time to find their favorite sculpture. Have them sit in front of their choice and contemplate the sculpture they chose. Suggest giving students a 15-30 minute break after their tour for brainstorming ideas at their inspiration sculpture. They are welcome to take cell phone pictures of their sculpture for reference later. They should also bring sketch pads for rough draft sketching on site. Have them sketch the outline of their figure, just the body.

**Post Activity—Re Designing a Deity**

Back in your classroom, have your students think about their character. Give them a new name or title and decide upon a story. Who is this person, where are they going, what are they carrying and what is the function of their decoration or accessories? Do they have a pet or a crazy hairstyle, or a sword? Have them design a costume to put onto their figure. Does the pattern mean anything? Why is the dress a certain color? Ask them to think about each item and ponder the potential meaning for their story. Their take-home assignment will be to continue to refine their sketch and create a fully realized new character. Have them write a half page to two-page story about their character. This is a “create

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your own adventure” or “select a quest!” The character can be from an existing county or culture or from a fantasy world as well.

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills to Increase Rigor**

Ethnic Diversity  
Global Geography  
Creative design  
Oral communication/public speaking  
Internet research proficiency

**Assessment**

Final assessment will be based on the creativity of their oral presentation. Each student will read their story aloud and showcase their accompanying drawing. Have them pretend they are old storytellers from a small village (optional: storyteller hat and props to add dramatic effect). Have them explain what the original Polasek sculpture looked like, and how they improved and changed it. This is an exercise in heritage, creativity and interpreting visual cues.

**Reflection/follow-up activities**

Ask students to look up well-known cultural icons and myths; such as Santa Clause, witches, mermaids, or pan/fawn/satyr, etc. Have them find several different art portrayals of this figure. Ask them to examine what’s similar about the way all the various artists represented the cultural/mythical figure, and what’s different? Have them try to find the earliest drawing of the figure, and the newest or most modern depiction. How has the character changed over time? What power do artists have over culture myths? (Optional paper with attached internet images as examples)

**Additional resources** (online, print, etc.)

Online sources for art history and early cultures:

Collections of Creation Stories: <http://www.gly.uga.edu/railsback/CS/CSIndex.html>

World History site- <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ab83>