"Gargoyles~ Monsters in Stone"

....created by Marianne Coble ~ 2018

The word "gargoyle" originates from an old French word *"gargouille"* meaning *"throat"* and refers to the gargling noise of a waterspout. During the Middle Ages, the grotesque architectural carvings called gargoyles, with their gaping mouths, had a practical architectural function: to drain water from the roofs of churches and cathedrals. *Gothic gargoyles* are over 8 centuries old and were created by sculptors that left NO written record as to their meaning. Thousands of them stare down from the rooftops and walls of European churches and cathedrals

Gryphons, dragons, lions, sea monsters, horned heads, half-human faces have been combined in countless ways to forms these carvings. ...these " monsters in stone" are the inspiration for todays project.

OBJECTIVES/ CONCEPTS:

Students will:
♦ Understand the significance and symbolism of gargoyles in Gothic architecture
♦ Create a unique clay gargoyle with realistic and/or imaginary animal features
♦ Construct a clay sculpture, using a variety of hand building techniques
♦ FOCUS on: Shape/form, EXPRESSION on sculpt, an OPEN Mouth, and TEXTURE on clay

MEDIUM: *clay*

PROJECT: *Using a variety of clay techniques, students will hand build a creature inspired by Gothic gargoyles*

ART WORDS:

Sculpture > *a three-dimensional work of art either in the round (to be viewed from all sides) or in bas relief (low relief in which figures protrude slightly from the background)*

Additive> *refers to the process of joining a serious of parts together to create a sculpture*
Subtractive> *refers to sculpting method produced by removing or taking away from the original material (the opposite of additive)*

Texture> *the surface quality of materials, either actual (tactile) or implied (visual). It is one of the elements of art*

Visual Arts Education practiced with this project>
California Visual Arts Content Standards
2.0 Creative Expression=2.2,2.6,2.7/Historical and Cultural Context 3.0 =3.1,3.3

Interesting Facts about Gargoyles:

> <u>THEY SERVE A PRACTICAL PURPOSE</u>: **When gargoyles began appearing on churches throughout Europe in the 13th century, they served as decorative water spouts, engineered to preserve stone walls by diverting the flow of rainwater outward from rooftops.** ***The longer the gargoyle, the further the water would be carried from the walls, which is why they're usually carved into a very long, fantastic looking creature.*****An ornamental gargoyle that is not constructed as a waterspout is technically called a <u>chimera or boss.</u>*

> <u>THE NAME COMES FROM A DRAGON-SLAYING LEGEND:</u> **The word gargoyle derives from the French *gargouille*, meaning "throat." This would appear to take its inspiration from the statues' water-siphoning gullets, but in fact the name comes from the French legend of "<u>La Gargouille</u>," a fearsome dragon that terrorized the inhabitants of the town of <u>Rouen</u>.**

> <u>THEY WERE MEANT TO INSPIRE FEAR IN PARISHIONERS:</u> **Because most Medieval Europeans were illiterate, the clergy needed visual representations of the horrors of hell to drive people to the sanctuary of the church. Placing gargoyles on the building's exterior reinforced the idea that evil dwelt outside the church, while salvation dwelt within.**

> <u>THEY ALSO BROUGHT PAGANS TO CHURCH:</u> **Churches would also model gargoyles after the creatures worshipped by pagan tribes, thinking this would make their houses of worship appear more welcoming to them.**

**During the Middle Ages, some gargoyles had human faces and were modeled after real people. Although they were predominantly fashioned as scary creatures, many gargoyles were commissioned to represent living beings—sometimes local benefactors, sometimes local parish priests.

> <u>THEY DATE BACK TO ANCIENT EGYPT:</u> **Although the name gargoyle dates back just a few centuries, the practice of crafting decorative, animal-themed drain spouts reaches back several millennia. The ancient Egyptians had a thing for lions, as did the Romans and the Greeks. The oldest gargoyle-like creation is a 13,000-year-old stone crocodile discovered in Turkey.**

> <u>NOTRE DAME'S GARGOYLES ARE FAIRLY RECENT CREATIONS:</u> **The world's most famous gargoyles, and the ones that most influenced the popular wings-and-horns image of the creatures, are found on Paris's Notre Dame Cathedral. Although the cathedral was constructed in the 13th century, the gargoyles were part of an <u>extensive restoration</u> project in the mid 1800s.**

> <u>PITTSBURGH IS A HOTBED FOR GARGOYLES:</u> **In the 19th century, the Steel City embraced the Gothic architecture revival that swept across America. Many of its Gothic churches, government buildings, and other edifices remain, along with their iconic gargoyles. All told, Pittsburgh features more than 20 authentic gargoyles, and hundreds of grotesques. Many of them are featured in the city's "<u>Downtown Dragons</u>" tour run by the History and Landmarks Foundation.**

> <u>THERE'S A DARTH VADER GARGOYLE IN WASHINGTON D.C.:</u> **Back in the '80s, the Washington National Cathedral held a contest for kids to design its newest gargoyle. Coming on the heels of the *Star Wars* trilogy, of course someone proposed a Darth Vader gargoyle. The cathedral, which had already installed some off-the-wall gargoyles and grotesques during its extensive restoration work, named 13-year-old Christopher Rader's design as one of its winners, and in 1986 put Lord Vader high up on the cathedral's "dark side" north wall**

DOCENT Set Up INSTRUCTIONS:

SUPPLIES: per student /all grades

➢ ½ of 1 -1 ½ inch slab of clay
*****(cut 1 in slab in half to yield 2 pieces = clay for 2 students)*
➢ small plate to work on and to take project home on
➢ Paper towel, old paint brush, old pencil, clay tools
➢ Resource sheet of gargoyle images

Share per 2-4 students/all grades

➢ water cups - for clay brushes
➢ baby wipes (for fingers/hands)
➢ additional assorted clay tools for cutting and texture (plastic knives & forks, paper clip, toothpick, old marker)

Share per class/all grades

➢ Clay cutter/ plastic knife/spray bottle with water(for keeping clay moist as needed)

****OPTIONAL

➢ painting the gargoyle after sculpting. You would need grey acrylic paint (or mix your own grey color) and painting supplies to go with this
➢ after sculpt is completely dry- seal with a glue or varnish

DOCENT PREP:

➢ Pre cut clay per student

Getting started in the class~ (ALL GRADE LEVELS)

➢ **Give students an overview of the history of the gothic gargoyles**
➢ **Show visual examples of gargoyles and discuss what they are, what they look like, and the difference between a gargoyle and grotesque**
➢ **Point out that gargoyles are not meant to be realistic. They are not human and can be a combo of different creatures. No limit to your imagination here!**
➢ **Talk about the idea of *expression* and how exaggerating a feature/s; bulging eyes, oversized ears or nose, gaping mouth.. can make them look more monster like**
➢ **focus during sculpting will be on these 3 points: Creating a <u>gargoyle with expression/ gargoyle with open mouth/ surface of clay having texture</u>**

**NOTE: *ALL the project steps will be demo'd during workshop, along with additional tips and my adaptions for younger/older students as needed. Please take notes during workshop instruction*

PROCESS: ALL GRADES

♦ **students pick a reference gargoyle and begin with a warm up of shapes that will be used when hand building their gargoyle**
♦ **All grade levels then begin using process/techniques taught at workshop to build sculpt.**
♦ **<u>ALL GRADE LEVELS</u> will focus on these 3 points:**
Creating a gargoyle with expression/ gargoyle with open mouth/ surface of clay having texture