

## Visual literacy in RE teaching and learning

Rachel Woods

### Case Study 2

### Madonna and Child; RESEARCH: Physical object



#### **RESEARCH: Physical object**

##### **Colour**

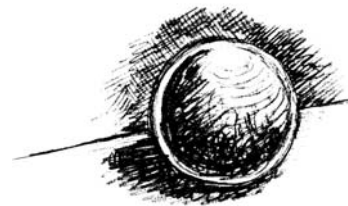
What colours has the sculptor used? How has the sculptor used colour symbolically? Which colour has the sculptor used most? Why do you think this is? What does the natural colour of the material used add to the sculpture?



##### **Lines and marks**

Key questions: How has the sculptor used lines and marks for example as outlines, or to show movement? How has the sculptor used lines and marks to create patterns, decoration, and symmetry? How has the sculptor used line or marks to create texture: rough, smooth, or feathery? Has the sculptor used symbols? What lines and marks has the sculptor used to create mood (dark, angular, thick, light, thin, or soft?) What moods are expressed?

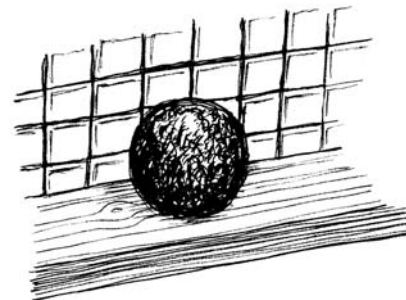
**Sample response:** The artist has created the figures from a single large block of stone by carving away unwanted stone to reveal the 3-dimensional form. Some parts he has left very simple almost unfinished showing the flat cubist-like faces of the forms. The edges of the sculpture are smooth and organic.



##### **Tone**

**Key questions:** How has the sculptor used tone from black through grey to white? How has the sculptor used tone to express mood for example by creating shadows, highlights or contrast? How has the sculptor used tone to depict light and shade?

**Sample responses:** The surfaces of the sculpture interact with the light and dark around it. The deeply carved recesses such as between the ankles and around the Christ child will show as dark voids, adding to the sense of being held in a safe place. Raised surfaces and forms reflect the light, for example, light from windows above falls on the head of Jesus, the head of the Madonna and her knees.

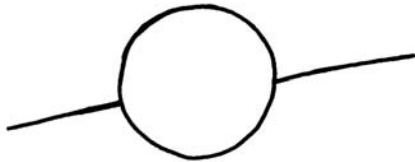


##### **Texture**

**Key questions:** What textures has the sculptor used and how have they created them? For example rough, smooth,

jagged, spiky and soft. What emotions or thoughts are expressed?

**Sample responses:** the textures are very understated with very little distinction between different surface such as skin, hair and cloth. Only a repeated pattern is evident around the neck of the mother.



### Shape

**Key questions:** What shapes has the sculptor used in the artwork? How are these arranged and what feelings and thoughts do they express? How has the sculptor used shapes symbolically or in an abstract way? Is the artwork a particular shape? What significance does the shape have?

**Sample responses:** The shapes Henry Moore has brought out in his carving are simplified, bold, and solid organic shapes but there are some parts of the carving that are rectangular and almost primitive such as the hands and feet. The emphasis is on the expressive power of the forms and interaction between the mother and child, rather than on realism.

### Mood (atmosphere and feelings evoked by work)

**Key questions:** How does this artwork make you feel? (Happy or sad, warm or cold, calm peaceful, uneasy, frightened, angry) What sort of mood has the sculptor created? What elements in the work of art tell us this? How did the sculptor want us to feel? How do you know?

**Sample responses:** The mood that the sculpture expresses is a mixture of calm, peace, security and insecurity. The calm and peace are expressed both through the stone material itself and the way Henry Moore has carved and smoothed the figures from one piece of stone that express the unbreakable connectedness between mother and child.

### Composition

**Key questions:** What is the central focus of the work of art? Do some parts of the artwork look more finished than others? Describe why you think this is. How are we positioned as viewers by the work? Are we forced to look at it from a particular angle? Are we made to become conscious of our own position in space? Is it clear where the artwork begins and ends? Can you see any underlying geometrical structure to the work and how does this affect the composition?

**Sample response:** The majestic body of the Madonna forms a throne for the Christ child to sit on. He sits firmly, unmoving in the middle of her lap, whilst with his outward gaze engages the attention of the ever-changing viewers.

### Materials

**Key questions:** What materials is the artwork made of? Are they traditional art materials or found objects? Is the material of the artwork important? How would your reaction to the artwork change if the sculptor used a different material? What associations do the materials carry?

**Sample responses:** The sculpture is made of one large piece of Hornton stone. The naturalness of the material reflects the nature of the mother and child relationship.

### Process

**Key questions:** How did the sculptor make the artwork? Did the sculptor make it by hand or did someone else make it? What kinds of skills were involved? What changes might have occurred to the piece while it was being made? How visible or invisible is the process of making? If it is an installation how has it been assembled?

**Sample responses:** The stone has been carved and smoothed out using chisels and other stone carving tools. The process of stone carving is extremely physical and would have engaged all the artists' physical, emotional, mental and spiritual energy in focussing on the creative process. He would have been constantly moving around the subject, making decisions about the next part to carve away.