

Tree Faces

Use clay to bring the personality of a tree alive!

All

Art and Design



Background

Assigning a character to a tree may be all the inspiration you need. Is the tree wise, tired, angry or kind? There are many examples of talking trees from Greek mythology and literature.

An alternative stimulus could be research about gargoyles or the green man.

The practical purpose of gargoyles in architecture is to channel water away from the masonry walls. They were designed to look grotesque or fantastical in order to protect those that they guarded.

The green man is a facial sculpture surrounded by leaves. Forms of this character are found in many different cultures through the ages. The icon is generally interpreted as a symbol of the cycle of new life at spring.

Equipment

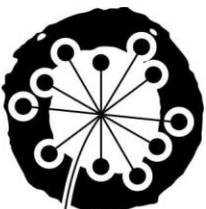
- Several mature trees
- Clay
- Availability of natural materials such as leaves, twigs and seeds
- A camera

Activity

1. Walk around the school grounds examining the shapes and textures of the bark on the trees. Look at how natural features – such as knots, burrs and scars – naturally suggest facial features.
2. Give children a lump of clay each and access to natural materials.
3. Let children choose the tree they want to work on – if possible, incorporating the tree bark's natural features.
4. When all the groups have finished allow everyone to look at each other's work.
5. Keep a record of the artwork – either by drawing the faces or taking photographs.
6. Leave the work to be enjoyed by the rest of the school and visitors.

Take it further

For a more permanent piece of artwork, mould and sculpt a gargoyle plaque out of clay which can then be fired and glazed.



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