

Thematic Area:
BODIES

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ANATOMIC GEOMETRIES

Discover how artists throughout history have studied and depicted the human body, seeking a balance between perfect proportions and harmonious gestures.

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Welcome!

Artists have always studied the human body and searched for a method to represent it with correct proportions. In Classical Greece, the sculptor Polykleitos (active between 465 and 417 BC) managed to represent both movement and stillness in a single statue: the right leg supports the weight, while the left is relaxed, bent, and pushed back. To find the model (or canon) of the perfect human figure, he studied nature in depth: after measuring several men, he calculated the average of their dimensions, establishing that each body part should be in proportion to the others. For example, the head should be about $\frac{1}{8}$ of the total body height, the torso three times the head, and the legs four times— $1 + 3 + 4 = 8$.

The Romans, after conquering Greece, copied many classical statues for their art collections and were deeply influenced by them. In a museum, artworks capture our attention through their shapes, the materials used, and especially the postures of the figures. By observing poses and body language, we can understand how customs have changed over time.

What feeling might a figure with crossed arms express compared to one with open arms?

materials

You'll need a sheet of paper, a ruler, an eraser, a grey pencil, a red pencil, and a blue pencil.

**BE
GREEN**

You can print only page
2 to complete the
activity!



Philosopher Michel Onfray says:

"Sculpting is stopping energy to contemplate it, capturing vitality to tame it and feed on it."

Let's begin!

Now that you've learned the principles of anatomical proportions and the role of geometry in art, it's time to put your knowledge into practice. Carefully observe the figures above and try to simplify the human forms into basic geometric shapes: what shape does the head resemble? And the legs? Mark with an "X" the geometric shapes you think are most similar. Remember, some body parts can be represented by combined shapes—think of joints or the structure of hands.

What geometric shape resembles the head?



What shapes resemble the arms and legs?



What shapes resemble the hands and feet?



What shape resembles the torso?

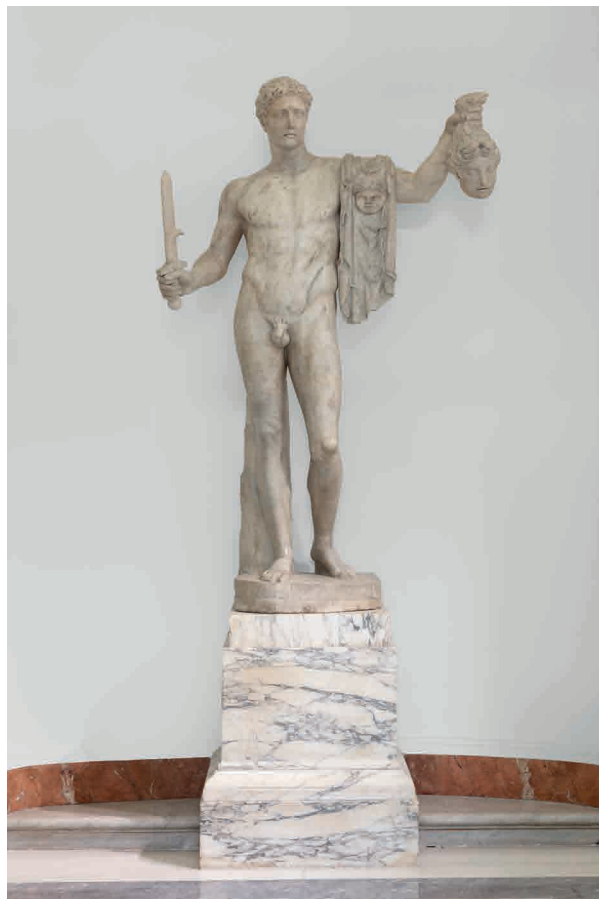


Now it's your turn

Observe the work "Perseus with the Head of Medusa", a masterpiece from the 2nd century B.C., which represents the mythological hero Perseus holding the severed head of Medusa. Scan the QR codes to view the work in high resolution.

Note the lines, curves, and proportions of the body and try to divide the figure vertically into eight parts by drawing lines with a red pencil. Remember: one part for the head, three for the torso, and four for the legs.

All parts of our body can be simplified into basic geometric shapes: the head and joints (like shoulders, elbows, and knees) resemble circles; legs and arms resemble rectangles; the torso resembles a trapezoid. Hands can be simplified into a square and five thin rectangles (the fingers), while feet into a triangle and five circles. Try drawing these shapes on the sculpture with a blue pencil.



Arte Romana,
*Perseo con la
testa della
Medusa*,
II sec. a.C.

Observe how the artist captured the movement of the figure, with one leg bent and the other extended!

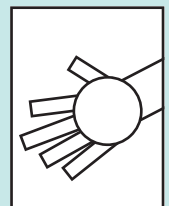
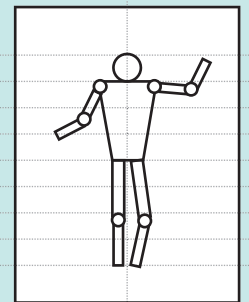
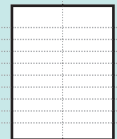
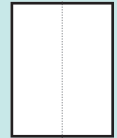


Now it's your turn

Now that you've learned the basics of anatomical drawing, you'll see how easy it is to reproduce the statue of Perseus with the correct proportions!

What to do?

1. Take a blank sheet of paper and divide it vertically in half with a pencil. This will help you keep the figure symmetrical.
2. Divide the area into eight horizontal sections by drawing nine evenly spaced lines. These will help you place the main parts of the figure in proportion.
3. In the top section, draw a circle in the center for Perseus's head. In the next three sections, draw a vertical trapezoid for the torso and two circles for the shoulders. Remember: arms and legs are made of two rectangles—one longer for the upper arm/thigh (closer to the body), and one shorter for the forearm/lower leg (further from the body). The two rectangles are connected by a circle representing the elbow or knee.
4. Add hands and feet using squares, triangles, and rectangles. Your base figure is ready—now you just need to add the details of the face, body, fabric, and Medusa's head!



Did you know...

Medusa, once a beautiful maiden loved by Poseidon, was turned into a monster by Athena as punishment for desecrating her temple?



Cenni sugli artisti

► Il II secolo a.C. è un periodo di grande trasformazione per la scultura romana.

Con la conquista della Magna Grecia e della Grecia nel 146 a.C., i Romani iniziarono ad ammirare, collezionare e copiare le sculture greche. Il marmo sarà uno dei materiali più usati. Scriverà il poeta Orazio: "Una volta conquistata, la Grecia conquistò il suo rozzo vincitore" alludendo alla forte influenza dell'arte greca su quella romana.