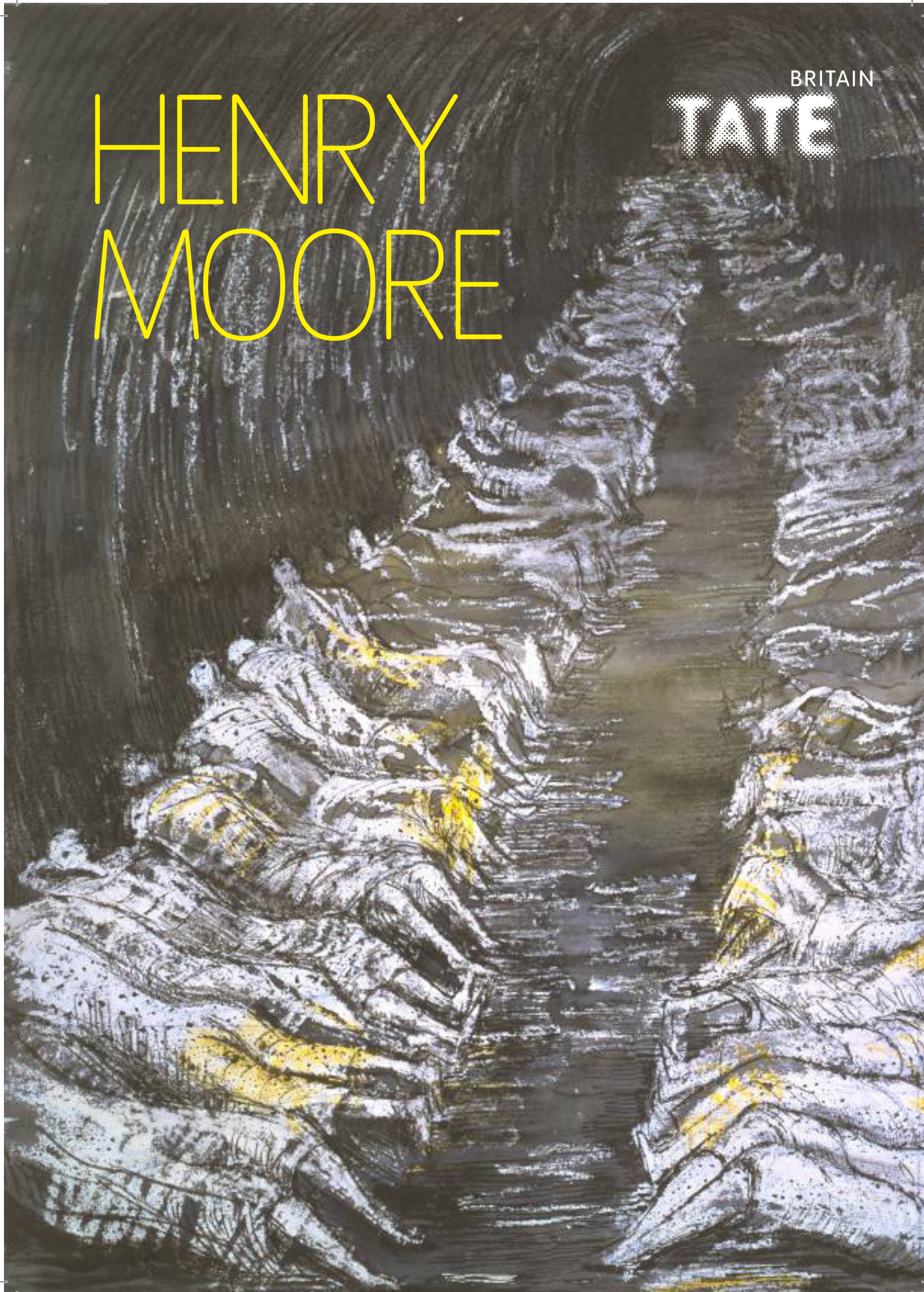


BRITAIN

TATE

HENRY MOORE



TEACHERS AND STUDENTS NOTES

Downloadable full colour A4 images with introductory information, discussion points, links and activities.

For use in the gallery or classroom suitable for teachers and students of key stage 3-5

By Imogen Cornwall Jones, Art Historian and Educator
Coordination Pascale Guychard, Schools and Teachers Curator

ABOUT...

This pack is intended as a brief thematic introduction to the work of Henry Moore and covers four works in depth. It offers background information, starting points and practical activities for visiting teachers to use with all age groups, as well as for A-level and GCSE students to use on their own. Some of the activities and discussions can be used as preparation for a visit, some are for use in the exhibition itself, and others are more suited to class work after your visit. Some of the works discussed are reproduced at A4 size so that you can print them out and use them as a resource in the classroom.

WHERE TO VIEW THE WORKS?

Online

All works mentioned in this pack are on www.tate.org.uk/collection a database that can be searched by artist name or work title. You can also search the Tate art works database thematically for broader connections at www.tate.org.uk/servlet/SubjectSearch

At Tate Britain

Our gallery displays regularly change so to check if a work is on display you can go to:

www.tate.org.uk/britain/explore/etb.jsp

Please note that from 24 February to 8 August 2010 some of the works in this pack are visible in the Henry Moore temporary exhibition.

Please call the Education Bookings line on 020 7887 8888 to make a booking for your visit, your school area lunch slot and locker spaces or your exhibition ticket.

INTRODUCTION

'In the human figure one can express more completely one's feelings about the world than in any other way'

These notes explore Henry Moore's sculpture and drawings in relation to the historical and cultural events of the period and consider how they were reflected in his work

Henry Moore (1898-1986) was one of the 20th century's great sculptors and after the Second World War he became one of Britain's most well known artists, both at home and abroad. He was influenced by European Modernism and developed an abstract sculptural language, combining the human figure, particularly the female figure, with references to organic forms such as shells, pebbles and bones. Throughout his career, he focused on the subjects of the mother and child, the reclining figure and the head.

These recurrent themes might appear benign and timeless, but Moore was profoundly influenced by the historical events he lived through. His work expresses the impact of First World War and Moore's experience in the trenches, as well as his reactions to the Spanish Civil War, the Cold War, the Second World War and the austere post-war decade that followed. His abstracted figures are distorted and deformed and many critics at the time related this to the mutilated and vulnerable body of the victim. They saw his work as expressing the anxieties and trauma of 20th century history, one critic wrote that Moore's dismembered bodies were, 'a mirror for contemporary man to gaze into'.

Henry Moore was born in 1889, the son of a Yorkshire miner. His father saw education as a way of escaping a life in the pits, and encouraged his children to study. Moore briefly became a teacher, but in 1917 he was called to fight in France. This was a terrible experience: after a three day period of fighting his regiment of 400 was reduced to 52. Moore himself suffered from gas poisoning and was invalided back to Britain. Like many men of his generation, he spoke little about this but the experience permeates his work.

After the War Moore attended Leeds School of Art and the Royal Academy of Art and he became interested in the Mexican, Egyptian and African sculptures he saw at the British Museum. The work was bold and anti-naturalistic, very different to the classical, realistic sculptures he had studied at art school. Like other artists at the time, he saw non Western or 'primitive' art as more authentic than classical, Western art. After the mechanical sophistication of the war, Western culture and art was seen as morally bankrupt and artists sought to reinvigorate art through a return to what they perceived as its 'primitive' origins.

The impact of 'Primitivism' can be seen in Moore's work of the 1920s and early 30s. For example, in *Girl* 1931 www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=9681&searchid=18853 he simplified and abstracted the human figure, carving directly into the stone block. Such works were also influenced by avant-garde sculptors like Brancusi, Gaudier-Brzeska and Epstein. However, critics have noted that sculptures of this period have strangely blank, impassive faces suggestive of First World War shell shock, a subject explored by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* and D. H. Lawrence in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

During the 1930s Moore's approach to the human figure became increasingly experimental. Influenced by Surrealism, he combined figurative and abstract elements with references to organic forms, developing a style critic Geoffrey Grigson called 'biomorphism'. Towards the end of the decade he became actively engaged in the political issues of the time, supporting the Republican cause during the Spanish Civil War. In 1939 he produced an appeal poster, *Spanish Prisoner*, to raise money for Spanish refugees held in detention camps in France. He was a member of the Artists International Association whose aim was the 'unity of artists against Fascism and war and the suppression of culture'. He also exhibited with the British Surrealist Group, designing the cover of their broadsheet which attacked the British government's policy of non-intervention. Like his contemporaries, Moore was anxious about the impending war and a sense of foreboding menace is conveyed by works such as *Three Points* 1939-40 with its sharp, treacherous spikes.
www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=10239&searchid=19841

When war broke out in September 1939, Moore was too old for active service. However, he felt a moral responsibility to explore the subject of war. It was not possible to make large scale sculpture and Moore began searching for a more suitable medium. He became increasingly aware of the plight of civilians and started making sketches of Londoners sheltering from German bombing in the Underground. The drawings came to the attention of his friend, Kenneth Clark, chair of the War Artist's Advisory Committee (WAAC) which purchased a number and later employed him as an official war artist. In a bid to bolster public moral, the *Shelter* drawings were displayed at the National Gallery in London where they were seen by many as an expression of the common tragedy of war.

After the War Moore continued to employ the preoccupations he had developed *In The Shelter* drawings for large scale public commissions. The theme of these works was often the nuclear family, a reassuring subject which chimed with the Labour government's desire to reconstruct family and country after the war. At this time, direct carving became less important for Moore and he increasingly made small clay maquettes which were then cast in bronze. Moore was now a successful international figure. He had a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1947 and represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1948 where he won the International Sculpture Prize.

In 1951 the Tate Gallery held a solo exhibition of his work to coincide with the Festival of Britain and throughout the 50s the British Council used his work to promote a positive image of Britain abroad.

However, there was also a much darker, more abstract side to his work in which he gave voice to his traumatic experience of the war, the discovery of the concentration camps and the dropping of the Atomic Bomb. The work also expressed his anxieties about the Cold War and the development of nuclear weapons. These concerns remained and in 1958 he became a supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). This concern came to influence his work as did so many events of 20th century history.



Henry Moore *Reclining Figure* 1951© The Henry Moore Foundation

Henry Moore

Reclining Figure 1951

Plaster and string

Recumbent Figure 1938

Green Hornton stone

Recumbent Figure 1938 is one of the many reclining figures Moore produced during his career. It was commissioned by the architect Serge Chermayeff to stand on the terrace of his ultra Modernist home on the Downs and Moore said he hoped it would become 'a mediator between the modern home and the ageless land'. The figure is recognisable and yet distorted, Moore punctured the body with a large hole, fusing the human with organic and inanimate and replacing limbs with forms inspired by pebbles or bones. The curvaceous, organic shapes gently swell and undulate, suggesting a female body and evoking a landscape of rolling hills and dales. The figure seems to reference some ancient monument, a fecund prehistoric earth goddess, weathered and aged like the stones of Stonehenge. It appears as a symbol of permanence and continuity, stranded in the modern world.

The work reflects Moore's strong identification with the English landscape, a theme also explored by contemporary English artists such as Paul Nash. Like Nash, Moore depicted the landscape as ageless and untouched by industrialisation. Their vision is an idyllic, comforting and slightly nostalgic one. It was as if they wanted to evoke, not the actual contemporary landscape, but a vision of a half remembered or invented landscape of childhood, before the mechanical horrors of the First World War.



Henry Moore *Recumbent Figure* 1938 © The Henry Moore Foundation

However, the deceptively timeless work is grounded in specific issues of the 1930s. This preoccupation with landscape and Englishness was typical of the time, it can also be found in Germany where the idea of Fatherland and the countryside were key ideas within the Fascist promotion of German Nationalism. The 1930s saw the foundation of the Rambler's Association, the Youth Hostel Association, The Council for the Preservation of Rural England and the vigorous campaign for National Parks. People wanted to preserve the English landscape from development, rallying to lobby the Government for measures to protect the countryside. They took to the hills in droves and access for all became a hot political issue. In 1932 five ramblers' were jailed for an act of organised mass trespass on Kinder Scout in the Peak District. By the late 30s the Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin was developing a cultural strategy emphasising Englishness in an effort to unite the country in the face of a likely war. The land was a central keystone of this policy. Moore's evocation of ageless, untouched rolling hills and his use of specifically English stone, such as Hornton stone from a quarry near Banbury in Oxfordshire for *Recumbent Figure*, must be seen in this wider context.

Moore's treatment of the reclining figure motif did not always have such benign associations. After the War, when Moore had become a more established figure, he was commissioned to produce the centrepiece sculpture for the 1951 Festival of Britain. This was the Labour government's celebration of British technical and cultural achievements and its optimistic attempt to paint an image of a better future. The organising committee suggested a family theme, but Moore chose to make *Reclining Figure* 1951. The Tate work is the plaster model for the bronze work displayed at the exhibition. Like the 1938 version, the figure is abstracted, fusing human with organic elements. Yet where the 1938 version swells voluptuously, the Festival figure is thin, emaciated and skeletal, as if the flesh had been carved away leaving just the bones beneath. Here the distortions read as acts of violence: the figure has been mutilated and suggests horrific acts of violence and the charnel house. The tragic mood of the work is similar to that of other sculptures Moore produced at the time, such as *Maquette for Fallen Warrior* 1956 <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/WorksList?searchid=25283&page=1> and *Falling Warrior* 1956-7 <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/WorksList?searchid=25290&page=1> where weaponless soldiers fall like vulnerable sacrificial victims. These works and *Reclining Figure* are comparable to much art produced in Britain and Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War, when artists were attempting to express their response to the horrors of war, the Holocaust and the dropping of the Atomic Bomb, as well as the onset of the Cold War. Describing Moore's work at the time, one critic wrote of "beings, thin and emaciated, like inhabitants of Belsen, with skin drawn tight over protesting bones".

Such disturbing figures were not new to Moore. He had made numerous drawings and sculptures of similarly distorted, dehumanised bodies in the lead up to the Second World War. *Reclining Figure* 1939 is made of dark grey lead and has a militaristic, menacing feel which communicates Moore's feelings of anxiety and foreboding at the threat of war. Critics have suggested that underlying all these works is his first hand experience of the trenches and the decimation of his regiment during the First World War.

FOR DISCUSSION

- Moore's work was not always appreciated when it was exhibited. Some critics saw it as ugly and inhuman. Does art have to be beautiful? Why might 20th century artists such as Moore have rejected traditional standards of beauty? What were they attempting to express instead?
- *Recumbent Figure* 1938 can be seen as reflecting ideas of Englishness current in the 1930s. What is 'Englishness' today and how do contemporary artists such as Mark Wallinger explore the subject? How does this compare with ideas of Englishness current in the 1930s?
- The subject of the *Fallen Warrior* works is the male soldier. How is this subject normally approached in contemporary art? For example, look at Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* 1784 and work such as Thomas Hirschhorn's *Substitution 2* 2007 or *Drift Topography* 2003 <http://www.stephenfriedman.com/index.php?pid=11&aid=9> Compare the three artist's treatment of the theme. How does Moore subvert the traditional approach to gender stereotypes of the male figure?
- Moore's works such as *Reclining Figure* 1951 have sometimes been interpreted as a form of war memorial. Research 20th century memorials, including First and Second World War memorials, Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* 1982 in Washington DC and Doris Salcedo's work. Do you think war should be commemorated? What do you think are the pros and cons of figurative versus abstract memorials?

ACTIVITIES

- Henry Moore combined the human figure with bones, shells, pebbles and twigs to express ideas about the times he was living through. What objects would you fuse with the human figure to say something about the world today? Make a collage, combining photocopied images of body parts with the objects you have chosen.
- Research how British Neo-Romantic artists such as Paul Nash, Eric Ravilious, Graham Sutherland and John Craxton explored the theme of landscape in their work in the interwar and post war years. Collect images and compare them with Moore's works exploring the subject. What view of the landscape do they express and how does it compare with views of the British landscape today? As a class make a display or installation exploring our differing contemporary views of the subject.
- Many artists during and after the Second World War made works that were tragic in character, expressing a bleak view of human nature. Why do you think this was? Compare Moore's works such as *Reclining Figure* 1951 or *Falling Warrior* 1956-7 <http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/WorksList?searchid=25290&page=1> with Jean Fautrier's *Large Tragic Head* 1942, Germaine Richier's *Shepherd of the Landes* 1951 and Francis Bacon's *Three Figures at the Base of the Crucifixion* 1945. How do they treat the human body? What common themes emerge? Which works express strong emotions most effectively? Make an art work that registers anger or grief – a response to war, invasion, or destruction using a different strategy from these artists'.
- Make a memorial to your chosen war in the form of a human sculpture with a group of several students. Decide first if you want this to be a criticism of war or a celebration to victory, freedom and so on. Try a few physical postures to see which ones represent your opinion in the best way. For example, look at how to express conflict through physical tensions. Your human living sculpture can become a performance in front of a public, or you can ask another student to photograph it and further work on it under Photoshop.



Henry Moore *Grey Tube Shelter* 1940

Henry Moore

The Shelter Drawings

Grey Tube Shelter 1940

Watercolour, gouache and drawing on paper

Woman Seated in the Underground 1941

Gouache, pen and ink, ink wash, watercolour and crayon on paper

Tube Shelter Perspective 1941

Pencil, ink, wax and watercolour on paper

On the night of the 11th of September 1940, Moore and his wife were coming home from a dinner party in central London. It was the fourth night of the Blitz. They got off at Belzise Park underground station on the Northern Line where Moore was confronted by an extraordinary scene. The platform was packed with the sleeping and huddled bodies of men, women and children who were taking unofficial refuge from the air raids above. The American poet, Louis MacNeice described such a scene, "The sleepers lie packed together making a continuous layer of bodies from one end of the platform to the other". Moore was astonished and in a letter to a friend wrote, "I was fascinated by the sight of people camping out deep underground. I have never seen so many reclining figures and even the holes out of which the trains were coming seemed to me like holes in my sculpture. And there were intimate little touches, children fast asleep, with the trains roaring past only a couple of yards away. People who were obviously strangers to one another forming tight little intimate groups. They were cut off from what was happening above, but they were aware of it. There was tension in the air".

The scene resonated with Moore and he returned again and again to sketch the sheltering Londoners, working the images into larger, more finished drawings. When Kenneth Clark, chairman of the WAAC and a senior official in the Ministry of Information saw the pictures, he purchased a number and commissioned more. They were exhibited at the National Gallery as part of Clark's campaign to bolster civilian moral in the face of the relentless German bombing. He and others were worried the population would be so traumatised by the onslaught, they would force the government to accept German peace terms at any cost. The drawings were popular with the public and instrumental in building the myth of the Blitz as a symbol of British resistance: a defenceless population responding stoically to indiscriminate attack. The government also included the drawings in the 1941 *Britain Art War* show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York as part of their effort to persuade the US government to provide more aid.

In many of the drawings, such as *Grey Tube Shelter* 1940 or *Tube Shelter Perspective* 1941 Moore depicts an amorphous mass of people, some recognisably women and children, others genderless, their bodies small and fragile in comparison with the dark, cavernous tunnels. It is as if they have been imprisoned in some claustrophobic, underground prison or tomb. They sit, they lie, they wait with silent resignation. They are grey and ghostlike, their spectral, shrouded, almost mummified forms looming out of the darkness. In *Tube Shelter Perspective* 1941 Moore depicts what was described in the original National Gallery catalogue as a "terrifying vista of recumbent shapes" vanishing down the tunnel. Moore does not individualise the shelterers, their faces are blank, expressionless, emotionless. In *Woman Seated in the Underground* 1941, a lone woman sits apart from the others. Swathed in layers of clothing, she stares out of the picture, anxiously clasping her hands. This sense of tension is heightened by the abrupt jump from foreground to background and the network of nervous, scratchy lines that describe the figure. The drawings are images of the dehumanisation of war and have been described as depictions of survival and endurance. They are unsettling, one critic at the time writes, "they are figures of life...the wonder of which is terrifically threatened. The figures belong to the mass of life; they are below the edge of will...they are life to which terrible things are being done".

This grim mood is facilitated by the medium employed. Moore used a combination of wax crayon, watercolour and pencil, laying down the crayon and then flooding the image with dark watercolour, so the white and grey wax shapes loom out of the darkness. The marks themselves are scratchy and wiry, which helps to create a sense of unease and tension.

In style, the drawings are different from Moore's earlier work. They are more naturalistic and this probably accounts for their popularity with the general public. Gone are the abstracted and deformed bodies of the 1930s. However, though the style is new, the theme of entrapment develops earlier preoccupations. In 1937/38 Moore made a number of drawings he described as, "settings for sculpture". These depicted abstracted bodies in oppressive man made settings and have been related to his response to the Spanish Civil War. This theme of war and confinement was developed in *Spanish Prisoner* 1939 www.henry-moore-fdn.co.uk/pg/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/2006/henry-moore-retrospective-in-barcelona and his first *Helmet Head* sculpture of 1939-40. So when Moore was confronted by the shelterers on Belzise Park underground station in 1940, they seemed to embody and fulfil his visions, as if Moore's forebodings had come to life.



Henry Moore *Woman Seated in the Underground* 1941

FOR DISCUSSION

- Why do you think Moore doesn't individualise the people or give them historically specific clothing? What effect does this create?
- Moore was not the only artist who the WAAC commissioned to make images of the people in the Underground during the Blitz. Compare Moore's Shelter drawings with Bill Brand's photograph *People Sheltering in the Tube, Elephant & Castle Tube Station* 1942 and Edward Ardizzone's watercolour *In The Shelter* 1940 www.iwmcollections.org.uk/qryMain.php What is each artist interested in? How do they represent the scene in different ways? Does the mood of the works differ?
- *Guernica* 1937 by Pablo Picasso is also an image of the effect of bombing on the civilian population. Compare it to the Shelter drawings. How do they differ and what does each artist emphasise?
- The Shelter drawings were used as propaganda during the war. Do you think they are effective? Consider the use of colours. What mood do they create? Why did the artist chose this palette of colours and not just greys? Have a debate. Divide the class in two, one group arguing they are effective and the other that they are not. Research propaganda imagery and compare it with Moore's images.

ACTIVITIES

- The Poet Laureate, Carol Anne Duffy wrote *Woman Seated in the Underground* 1941 www.bbc.co.uk/apps/ift/learningzone/clips/queryengine?ContentType=text%2Fhtml%3B+charset%3Dutf-8&SuppressCaching=1&page=1&pagesize=12&results=search&config=results_pre&attrib_1=SCHOOL_LEVEL_NAME&oper_1=eq&val_1_1=&attrib_2=SUBJECT_NAME&oper_2=eq&val_2_1=&attrib_3=TOPIC&oper_3=eq&val_3_1=&attrib_4=SearchText&oper_4=eq&val_4_1=Carol+Duffy inspired by Moore's Shelter drawing of the same name. Compare her poem with the original drawing. What do you think of her response? In what way does it alter the way you think about the image? Write your own short poem about a difficult historical event of your choice, type it up in large font, and then cut the letters. Now reorganise the words to create effects such as disorder, fear, destruction or on the other hand, patience, courage and determination depending on the content of your poem. Discuss how arranging the letters in this way gives more strength to your poem.
- Imagine you are sheltering in an underground tunnel during a war with your family. You have no facilities or privacy and are surrounded by hundreds of other people. It happens night after night. You are worried about what is going on above ground and whether your home is still standing. Working in small groups, use Moore's images as a starting point and write short play about what a group of people would be feeling. Try acting the scene out, thinking about what your poses communicate. Consider the gloomy type of light in *Grey Tube Shelter* 1940 and make a short video of your play trying to use various types of lighting: direct lighting, candle lighting, natural light etc... Discuss in your group which type of lighting creates the atmosphere you are looking for. Which is the most dramatic?
- Look again at the drawings in this section. What clues are there that they were made by a sculptor? Draw another student posing for you in one of the shelter postures. Use a life size sheet of paper and try to give the drawing a strongly three dimensional feel. Discuss how working on this scale affects the way you work and creates unexpected results.



Henry Moore *Mother and Child* 1953 © The Henry Moore Foundation

Henry Moore: Mother and Child and Family Groups

Mother and Child 1953

Maquette for Madonna and Child 1943

Maquette for Madonna and Child 1943

Family Group 1949

Bronze

Family Group 1949 is an idealised vision of the nuclear family. Mother and father sit upright, their arms curving round to support the child between them. Their knees lean towards one another and they gaze calmly, but slightly impassively towards the spectator. It is a grand and monumental bronze, commissioned by the new Barclay School in Stevenage to sit in the school grounds.

In post war period Moore produced a number of large scale public works such as this one, in which he returned to a theme that had preoccupied him since the 1920s, the parent/child relationship. He explored the subject through sculptures of the mother and child, and the family group. The first of the series was *Madonna and Child* 1943, commissioned for St. Mathew's Parish Church in Northampton. He made numerous small scale maquettes, of which the Tate owns two, considering different ways of treating the commission. In the Tate versions, an intimate, caring and tender relationship is described. In one the mother winds her arms round the child on her hip and they gaze intently at one another, in the other the mother envelops the child on her lap with protective arms. Moore also produced another family group in 1954/55 for Harlow New Town. With all the works, Moore was careful to ensure his compositions were clear and legible and focused on recognisably human content. This more naturalistic style originated *In The Shelter* drawings and was more accessible than his abstracted biomorphism.



Henry Moore *Family Group* 1949 © The Henry Moore Foundation

All the works are reassuring images of stability and security. They emphasise the mother's nurturing role and resonated with the complex post war climate of optimism and uncertainty. The theme was also consistent with the social and political preoccupations of Labour government as it tried to reconstruct the battered country through acts such as the provision of the Welfare State. There was concern about the status of the family and women were encouraged to return home to care for children; the country would be rebuilt from the hearth upwards. Yet there was also anxiety about the low birth rate and nursery places were cut so women would be more likely to stay at home rather than work. In the newspapers there were calls for a return to traditional family values with accompanying discussions on the fragmentation of the family. The mother was at the heart of these popular debates; Psychoanalyst, Donald Winnicott broadcast on the BBC promoting the skills of motherhood.

Moore's optimistic images of the family, with the mother at the centre, are products of this anxious cultural context. Kenneth Clark, director of the National Gallery after the war, saw them as symbols of a new humanism, which was also expressed in the Welfare State, the National Health Service and the construction of new towns. At the unveiling of the Harlow New Town Family Group he said, "The architecture of our time has not manifested in fortresses, palaces or even in town halls, but in schools, welfare centres, and good habitation for families. This was a humanitarian age, and he [Clark] had the honour to unveil a symbol of the new humanitarian civilisation".

However, Moore did not only explore the theme in positive, 'wholesome' ways. Psychoanalysis began to suggest more complex family and mother/child relationships, and during the 50s Moore responded with works that hint at a more unsettling interpretation. In *Mother and Child* 1953, the mother is bare breasted and appears almost vulnerable. The child seated on her lap has its mouth wide open, like a snake about to pounce or bite rather than suckle. The work doesn't suggest a nurturing relationship, but rather the submission of the mother to the aggressive needs of the child.



Henry Moore *Maquette for Madonna and Child* 1943 © The Henry Moore Foundation
Henry Moore *Maquette for Madonna and Child* 1943 © The Henry Moore Foundation

FOR DISCUSSION

- Why do you think the mother and child and family group images would have appealed at a time of both optimism and anxiety?
- How do the works reflect gender stereotypes? What do you think of the way the man and the women have been represented and would this be different today? Why is the family group, as opposed to the mother and child such a rare subject?
- Artists have represented the mother and child for centuries, research how it is linked to mythological and religious themes. How have contemporary artists explored the subject? You might consider works such as Rineke Dijkstra's photographs of new mothers such as *Julie, Den Haag, Netherlands, February 29 1994* 1994 www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=26250&searchid=21370, Damien Hirst's *Mother and Child Divided* www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=99670&searchid=21374 or Chantal Joffe's images of motherhood. Collect images and display them on the walls. How has the treatment of the subject changed? Is it still relevant today?

ACTIVITIES

- Make your own sculpture of a mother and child. How would you explore the relationship? Don't let other members of your class know your intentions and get them to respond to your work. How do they see the piece and do their interpretations correspond with what you intended?
- Consider Damien Hirst's *Mother and Child Divided*. How does it make you feel? What do you think the artist was trying to do? Think of 5 alternative interpretations of the theme. Choose your favourite and find an unusual way of presenting your work: it could be unusual in the materials or in the way it looks.
- Discuss how Moore presents the relationship between mother and child in his 1953 sculpture. How does his treatment of the theme subvert our stereotypical reading of the subject? Create a mind map of the range of relationships you have observed between mothers and their children. Are some both difficult or disturbing and caring at the same time? Explore Louise Bourgeois' treatment of her mother as a spider. Make a drawing that explores the different aspects of your relationship with your mother. You could treat the parts of the body in a variety of ways to suggest different relationships.
- Compare the way Henry Moore and Francis Bacon distort facial features. Think of different ways of distorting faces such as looking into spoons or mirror paper, blurring oil pastel drawings or throwing a clay piece on a hard surface to squash it. Experiment with different processes and tools. You could also try to make a clay sculpture and then bend it to see the effect it produces. What feelings do your distortions express?



Henry Moore *Atom Piece* (working Model for Nuclear Energy) 1964-5 © The Henry Moore Foundation

Henry Moore: Helmet Heads/Atom Piece
Atom Piece (Working Model for Nuclear Energy) 1964-5
Helmet Head No. 1 1950
Bronze sculpture

The associations of Moore's sculptures are typically organic. However, at various points in his career he explored the theme of the helmet head, producing works which feel robot-like and manmade. He made his first helmet sculpture in 1939 and returned to the subject in early the 50s, producing 13 works between 1950 and 1952. In *Helmet Head No. 1*, an outer, armour-like form which is polished, cold and unyielding, encloses a geometric, cone-like shape. The interior bronze form has sometimes been interpreted as suggesting a face. The work could evoke a protective helmet shielding a vulnerable body within.

Moore once described the helmet motif as, 'a recording of things inside other things', which could relate to the mother and child theme so abundant in his work. However, whilst some of his works present this relationship as protective and nurturing, the helmet head works are more ambiguous. The idea of one form inside another can suggest entrapment as much as protection. *Helmet Head No. 1* is angular and mechanistic and the work has a sinister feeling, something Moore associated with armour itself, describing it as having a "weird expression". He said the Helmet Heads emulated this "disturbing and strange expression".

The timing of the Helmet Heads production is significant when exploring their more menacing implications. The first, *The Helmet 1939/40* was made at the outbreak of the Second World War and like *Three Points 1939/40* www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=10239&searchid=19841 it has been seen as expressing Moore's anxiety at the onset of war. A similar mood of threat and foreboding is found in paintings such as *Black Landscape 1939-40* www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?workid=14066&searchid=15236 by Moore's contemporary Graham Sutherland. However, the theme of imprisonment, of a figure being trapped inside something else, originated in his drawings of fragile humanoid forms caged in oppressive, prison-like environments. These expressed his feelings about the Spanish Civil War and the idea was later developed in *The Shelter* drawings.

When Moore started exploring the helmet theme for the second time, the world stage was equally tense. *Helmet Head No. 1* was made just as the outbreak of hostilities in Korea threatened to escalate into a wider international conflict. As a confirmed supporter of the British anti-nuclear movement, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), *Head No. 1* also reflects his concern over the development and possible use of nuclear weapons by Russia and the United States in the early years of the Cold War.

The Helmet series is also related to Moore's large sculpture, *Nuclear Energy*, <http://physics.uchicago.edu/about/history/manhattan.html> unveiled in 1967. The work was the result of a commission by the University of Chicago to commemorate the first controlled nuclear chain reaction carried out by Enrico Fermi at the University in 1942. *Atom Piece (Working Model for Nuclear Energy)* 1964-5 is one of seven smaller casts. It is an odd commemorative work which seems more like a memorial to the dropping of the atomic bomb or a critique of nuclear energy. The shape of the sculpture is similar to the *Helmet Heads* 1964-5, but also evokes a human skull and a mushroom cloud. Moore spoke of it as being like a death's head and he was probably influenced by F. H. K. Henrion's well known 1963 poster for CDN, *Stop Nuclear Suicide* www.iwm.org.uk/upload/package/posters/posters6.htm which combined the same motifs. However, despite his support for CND, he downplayed the critical reading of nuclear energy which the sculpture's forms suggested. He said he intended to evoke 'a contained power and force' appropriate to the subject. Later in life, he tried to further depoliticise the work, saying it was inspired by an elephant's skull he had in his studio. Yet the work was commissioned in 1963, a time when the debate over nuclear weapons was the dominant political issue in Great Britain, and the year after the Cuban Missile Crisis. It is more than likely that *Atom Piece* reflects Moore's critical feelings on the subject.



Henry Moore *Helmet Head No.1* 1964-5 © The Henry Moore Foundation

FOR DISCUSSION

- Why do you think the *Helmet Head* sculptures are often seen as sinister?
- Moore often explored the theme one thing inside another. Compare his treatment of the *Helmet Heads* with the Upright Internal/External Form sculptures. The idea might be similar, but why are they so different?
- What is nuclear energy? How does it work? What are the risks and implications of its use? Why have people so often protested against its use? How did it change forever the way we fight wars?
- Moore's work of the 1950s is often grouped with the 'Geometry of Fear' sculptors such as Bernard Meadows, Reg Butler and Lynn Chadwick www.tate.org.uk/search/ Research their work in the Tate collection and compare it with Moore's. Do you feel there are similarities?
- How have artists used images of the nuclear mushroom cloud? Compare Henry Moore's *Atom Piece* with Subodh Gupta's *Line of Control* 2008 www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/altermodern/explore.shtm How does their use of the image differ?

ACTIVITIES

- *Helmet Head* and *Atom Piece* are robot-like in feel. Many other artists, from Epstein with the *Rock Drill* to Stelarc's contemporary performance pieces have explored the fusion of human and machine. Research how artists, writers and film makers have dealt with the theme of the robot or cyborg and consider how it has been used to explore fears about cutting edge technologies. With a partner, design a robot, combining contemporary technologies with the human body. What fears about the future possibilities of technology does your robot express?
- In *Atom Piece*, Moore fused the image of a mushroom cloud with a skull to produce what can be interpreted as an anti-nuclear statement. He was inspired by F. H. K. Henrion's poster which superimposed two photographic images. Using digital imaging software, combine photographs of two objects to produce an antinuclear or anti-war image. Discuss the effectiveness of your image with the rest of the class.
- Over several months collect broken and used objects to create a group installation about the destruction of war. Once you have a lot of objects discuss with your group how to assemble them. They could be mounted or arranged on the floor, either together or scattered. Once you have found a satisfactory composition discuss the possible colour of the work. It could be spray painted or covered by various dusts or pigments or you could even have them under a thin piece of fabric. Experiment with a range of possibilities and choose the best one. Discuss how the different presentations affect the meaning of the piece.
- With your class group, each make 3D bomb like shapes of different sizes from clay. Ensure there is a hole to allow you to attach a piece of string. Once the pieces have been fired, hang them from the ceiling at different heights to create the effect of falling bombs. Take a photograph of the installation. Take bomb shapes off the ceiling and think of other ways of installing them and each time take a photograph of the work. Compare your work with Cornelia Parker's *Cold Dark Matter; An Exploded View* www.tate.org.uk/colddarkmatter/default.htm.