

## Transformation

Grade level 3–5

**Curricular connection** Social Studies /  
Visual Arts

### Artist

Richard Rosenblum  
(American, 1940–2000)  
Worked in Newton Centre, MA

### Artwork

*Venusvine*, 1990, bronze  
16' x 5'6", Anonymous Gift

Influenced by sixteenth-century Chinese rocks which are considered concentrations of energy and life as well as objects of contemplation, Richard Rosenblum's sculptures communicate a profound experience of being. Falling between traditional figurative sculpture and postmodern abstraction, *Venusvine* offers a meditative, universal, and timeless image of oneness with nature.

Rosenblum combines landscape with the human figure and transforms matter from its inert and passive state. The figure seems capable of motion, not only through its sinuous contours but by a sense of internal energies. The title is derived from the mythology of a pantheistic culture and places the sculpture in a position of worship or contemplation as a goddess associated with nature. Grounded in the earth's energy, art reclaims its role as sacred and spiritual.



### Goals

1. Students will learn to carefully view and describe *Venusvine*.
2. Students will discuss the way in which artwork is able to make us think about how things change.
3. Students will discuss *Venusvine* as an example of transformation and compare two sculptures from different time periods and cultures that share a similar theme of transformation.

### Vocabulary

- **Metamorphosis:** A change in appearance or form, such as when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.
- **Abstract art:** Imagery or art that departs from the representational or realistic.

- **Transform:** To change in shape or appearance.
- **Myth:** A story of events that may be made up or imaginary, which serve to show a world view of a certain culture, or explain a practice, belief, or natural phenomenon.

### Looking Questions

- What do you see? If you walk around the sculpture do you see anything differently?
- What words would you use to describe this sculpture (Think about shapes, colors, textures, etc.)?
- What does this sculpture remind you of?
- Where is the sculpture placed in the landscape? Why do you think this site was chosen?
- Does the sculpture appear to be still or in motion? How does the artist show us this?
- How is this different from sculpture you have seen before? How is it similar?

### Discussion Questions

- What do you think the word "metamorphosis" means? How might the term metamorphosis apply to this sculpture?
- Venus was the Roman goddess of love, and thought of as the mother of the Romans. What characteristics of the sculpture represent the goddess Venus? What characteristics of the sculpture represent the natural vine?
- What can the title *Venusvine* tell us about the meaning of this sculpture? Why do you think the artist has combined the two words in the title into one word?
- What is metamorphosing into what in this sculpture? How can you tell?

### Activity: Compare and Contrast

- Goal: Students will compare two sculptural examples of the theme metamorphosis and draw conclusions based on their observations.

### Materials

- Pen or pencil
- Comparison sheet
- Images of *Venusvine* and *Apollo and Daphne*

### Directions

- As a class, discuss the image of the sculpture *Apollo and Daphne* with the relevant questions from the Looking and Discussion Question sections above.
- In small groups, students will compare the two sculptural examples of metamorphosis each filling out a **Comparison Template**.
- Individually, students will identify and record anything they can about the time period and culture in which each sculpture was created.

<b>Title</b>	<i>Venusvine</i>	<i>Apollo and Daphne</i>
<b>Artist</b>	Richard Rosenblum	Gian Lorenzo Bernini
<b>Date</b>	1990	1622–1625
<b>Material</b>	Bronze	Marble
<b>Size</b>	16' x 5' 6"	243 cm (8ft)

<b>Location</b>	deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, MA	Galleria Borghese, Rome, Italy
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### Reflection Questions

- What techniques did each artist use to create the sense of motion in his sculpture?
- Both sculptures show a metamorphosis. Why did the artists choose to sculpt these particular moments in the metamorphosis?
- Carving in marble and casting in bronze are both ancient techniques that are still used today to make art. What are some new ways to create art today that you can name?
- Give some examples of “metamorphosis” stories (stories about how a person changes) that we tell today? (Batman, Harry Potter, etc.)

### National Standards

- **Social Studies:** <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/toc.html>  
II. Time, Continuity, and Change

### Resources

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#### Book

*Metamorphosis: Nature’s Magical Transformations*, Alvin Silverstein and Virginia Silverstein, Dover Publications, Inc., 2003. (ISBN: 0486423964).

#### Website

Metamorphosis: Morning Earth

<http://www.morning-earth.org/Graphic-E/Transf-Metam.html>

### Extensions

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- **Science:** Study and illustrate the four-stage metamorphosis of a butterfly.
  - Standard Life Science C2. Life cycles of organisms
- **English Language Arts:** Read a range of stories from Classical Mythology and discuss the attributes of the gods and goddesses. Consider how the stories of gods and goddesses answered questions about life on earth.
  - Standard 2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
- **Math:** Create a tessellation as a type of transformation in math using a variety of shapes and patterns including the hexagon, square, triangle, parallelogram, rhombus, rectangle, trapezoid, kite, etc.
  - Standard Geometry: Apply transformations and use symmetry to analyze mathematical situations.

Comparing Sculpture



***Apollo and Daphne***

1622–1625, Marble,  
8' (height), Gian Lorenzo  
Bernini, Gallery Borghese,  
Rome



***Venusvine***

1990, bronze  
16' x 5'6", Richard  
Rosenblum, Anonymous Gift

COMPOSITION

Where does your eye go first?  
What seems most important?

COLORS and LIGHT

Bright, dull, or both?  
Which part is lightest, darkest?

LINES and SHAPES

Straight or curvy?  
Geometric or organic?

SENSE OF MOTION

Still or moving?

TEXTURES

Soft, scratchy, smooth?

MOOD

Happy, serious,  
Playful, mysterious?

EXPRESSION

What do you think  
the artist is saying?