



## *Shaftesbury Abbey Education Days*

### Gargoyles and Grotesques

#### **Activity Objectives:**

- To observe and handle museum artefacts to find the different features of gargoyles and grotesques.
- To design and create a grotesque/gargoyle face in clay.

#### **Discussion with Group:**

Look at the 3 different museum artefacts. Let the children run their fingers over the stone and feel how it is carved.

#### **Suggested Questions:**

- What do the stone carvings look like? (face, mythical beast, animal like)
- How would you describe these faces? (ugly, distorted, mythical, beast-like)
- Where do they think they might find them? (On medieval buildings but mainly religious buildings like cathedrals etc.)
- Have they seen any like it before?
- Why do they think they look like that? (to frighten people, scare away evil spirits - link back to religious buildings)
- What features make them look ugly and frightening? (open mouth, bulgy eyes, teeth, snarling, eyebrows, sunken eyes, horns etc.)
- Can they pull a face like these stone carvings?

#### **Background Notes** (Can read this out to the children)

These stone carvings are called grotesques and were primarily carved out of stone. Their aim was not only to decorate a building but to act like a stone spy watching over the people outside of the building. In most cases they are scary figures looking ugly, angry, unnatural or

distorted and in medieval times they had a power to shock or scare those who looked at them. They were also believed to ward off evil spirits and protect the people inside the building.

Gargoyles look very similar to grotesques but they had a practical purpose and acted as water spouts, directing water, that ran off the roof, away from the building. Sometimes the grotesque or gargoyle can have a funny carving included and was the stone carvers' way of adding a joke to the decoration!

## **Instructions:**

### **Clay Grotesque/Gargoyle**

1. After discussion of the museum artefacts and the background notes, look at pictures of other gargoyles and grotesques. Discuss other features such as big noses, bulging cheeks, horns etc. Discuss animals and dragons featured quite a lot as scary and evil creatures from myths and legends.
2. On paper, design a face for their own grotesque/gargoyle using ideas from what they have seen today. (See tips below for ideas)
3. Take a lump of clay and roll it into a ball. Try and get a 'roundish' shape to make the face.

**Tips for moulding the face.** (Try and mould/sculpt as much as you can from the main lump of clay - less to fall off!! )

- Large eyes and noses.
- Holes for nostrils and mouth
- Push fingers into the clay to 'sink' eyes
- Make a tongue to hang out of the mouth
- Pinch clay to make lines of the forehead and big eyebrows that look angry
- Beards - use 'strings' of clay
- Pointed ears
- Bulging cheeks

