

EMOTIONS IN LEGENDS

The ability to express and interpret complex emotions is one of the defining features of our species which distinguishes us from the rest of the animal kingdom. In art, emotion is often displayed in the faces and body language of artistic subjects. Throughout my travels, I have taken a keen interest in statues, from Classical marble sculptures to the bronze giants of the Modern era. On the bottom we have the Hellenic era sculpture entitled Laocoön and His Sons, currently located in the Vatican. The context of the legend of Laocoön is the Trojan War, where the subject was a Trojan priest who fell victim to the wrath of a Greek god. In this depiction, he and his sons are being bound by serpents, causing them to twist in agony. Their emotions are on full display in their faces, with the sons looking fearfully to their father while Laocoön appears to be calling out for help. Contrast this with this 19th century depiction of American founding father and legend George Washington. This statue of him on horseback shows a man sitting upright, possibly looking towards his soldiers to raise their spirits in preparation for battle. His near lack of emotion displays his courage and bravery in the face of battle, characteristics which are desirable in a leader. These two different displays of emotion tell two different stories. One meant to strike fear and discourage the questioning of deities, while the other gives hope and encourages the viewer to trust their leaders. An artists' ability to incorporate emotion into their works adds an extra layer of complexity to their designs, one which allows them to convey a message without writing or speaking a single word. Skillful application of this ability is the finest way for an artist to showcase their expertise.



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