

## Alexander Calder

Alexander Calder was born on 1898, in Lawnton, Pennsylvania. He is most famous for his colorful, modern mobiles. He also created toys, household objects, sculptures, paintings, and lithographs, always infusing motion and playfulness in his work. Calder was inspired by the circus, its movement and tension, and choreography. He used abstractions in his art; he took form and broke it down to its simple geometric properties.

Vocabulary:

Abstraction, Mobile, Stabile

Art Project:

An art project focusing on playful, imaginative sculpture, using fun familiar objects accompanies this presentation.

Catalyst Questions:

- Some things to consider: When art evolved from pictures on cave walls to free standing three-dimensional sculptures, viewers had to move around the sculpture. Just imagine walking around the magnificent 17-foot high sculpture of “David” by Michelangelo. David, so lifelike, might seem to breathe, but he will never twirl and dance. It was the playful, joyful, imagination of Alexander Calder that hung a sculpture from a single strand or supported it on a single point. This innovation freed the forms to move with air currents.
- Here is a “thought” experiment to try: Take a scrap of wire, much like the ones a young Calder would find on the ground, and bend it into an interesting line or shape. Hang it from a piece of string.
  - How do you *design* the wire’s shape so it is pleasing to you from many directions?
  - How do you *attach* the wire to the string?
  - How do you *balance* the wire so it gently moves?

Already you have had to solve some of the problems that Calder encountered many times throughout his long creative life.

- When asked to make a monumental sculpture, Calder would make a small version to test how it would look and balance. How could Calder transform the small model into a sculpture large enough to occupy the plaza between two skyscrapers?"
- What are some of the topics in school that might have helped Calder solve some of the problems he encountered in making his “revolutionary” (a bit of a pun) art?

Links:

#1)The Calder Foundation

<http://www.calder.org/>

#2) Britannica- **Alexander Calder**

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/89245/Alexander-Calder>

#3) Alexander Calder at the Guggenheim

<http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artists/554>