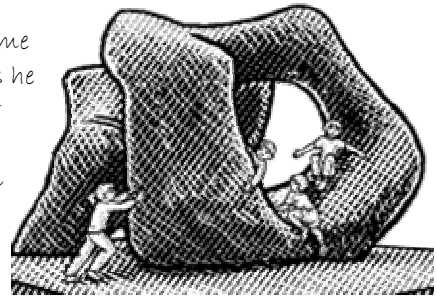


# Henry Moore

Henry Spencer Moore was born on the 30th of July 1898 in the small coalmining town of Castleford, Yorkshire. He was the seventh of the eight children of Raymond Spencer Moore, and his wife Mary Baker. His mother was an affectionate woman who inevitably played a central role in her youngest son's life. His father, a miner, was an intelligent man who read and studied widely. He was determined that all his children should be well educated, and that no son of his should work down the pit.

Henry Moore went to infant and elementary schools in his home town, and then in 1910, like several of his brothers and sisters he won a scholarship to Castleford Secondary School, which later became a Grammar School under subsequent reforms and administrative developments. During these years Moore began carving in wood and modelling clay, and he consciously decided to become a sculptor after hearing of Michelangelo's achievements at the age of eleven.



While at secondary school Moore's art teacher Miss Alice Gostick influenced him considerably. She introduced him to a broader art world, and her enthusiasm enabled art to become a part of Moore's life out of the classroom. Positively encouraged by Miss Gostick, he was sure of his vocation as an artist. Moore passed the Cambridge Leaving Certificate in 1915, and was thus qualified for further education. He was determined to sit the examinations for a scholarship to the local art college, but his parents regarded such activity as unpromising manual labour and his father thought that he should follow an elder sibling, and incidentally, D.H. Lawrence, another miner's son, into the teaching profession. After a brief introduction as a student teacher Moore began teaching in the same school he had attended in Castleford.

The Great War came in the summer that Moore left school. He had just turned sixteen a full month before the outbreak of hostility, and as an older boy he was asked by the headmaster to design and carve a Roll of Honour for the names of all those former schoolboys who were marching off to war.

At the age of eighteen in 1917 Moore was enlisted in the Civil Service Rifles, 15th London Regiment. Shortly afterwards he was sent to France, where he and his regiment took part in the battle of Cambrai. Here he suffered a gas attack and was sent back to spend two months in hospital. After recovering, he became an Army Physical Training Instructor.

Moore had served his king and country honourably for two years: He returned home, a mature and responsible man of twenty and took his life into his own hands.

Moore applied for an ex-serviceman's grant supported by a local education authority, and became the first ever student of sculpture at Leeds School of Art in September 1919. He continued to live in Castleford, where he attended Miss Gostick's Peasant Pottery Class in the evenings, travelling to Leeds by train every morning. Here he had the good fortune to know Sir Michael Sadler, the then Vice Chancellor and a great collector-connoisseur who had bought works by Cezanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh and had examples of African Negro carving well in advance of their general acceptance in England.

Moore admitted his career as an artist began with the discovery of Roger Fry's *Vision and Design*, a collection of essays that had been published in 1920 and contained two particularly influential essays, one on Negro sculpture and the other on Ancient American art. Among Moore's fellow students at Leeds was Barbara Hepworth, who at the age of seventeen moved to London with a major scholarship to the Sculpture School of the Royal College of Art.

In 1921 at the end of Moore's second year Moore too had won a scholarship to London and subsequently studied there until 1924. London remained his home for almost the next twenty years. He visited museums and galleries and in particular studied the collections in the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum, where he observed intently the collection of Mexican sculpture. It was a period of developing ideas and great activity, many of them into the pages of notebooks which have survived to this day. He had been prepared well by Miss Gostick and now he was able to discover new sources of inspiration for himself.

Moore's sculptures in the twenties and the early thirties are perfect examples of deeply romantic English lyricism with a great feeling for landscape and natural forms. Whilst his early work remained firmly grounded in relatively figurative forms, Moore also rejected tradition, choosing for his inspiration not the classical figures of the Renaissance and the Graeco-Roman tradition but primitive models, as seen in the British Museum and the readily available information on non-western art that was fashionable at the time. One of Moore's first sculptures to demonstrate his distinctive individual style was the 1929 *Reclining Figure* in brown Horton stone (LH 59), later sold to the Leeds City Art Gallery.

Moore also rejected the established academic practices and insisted on direct carvings and truth to materials, influenced by sculptors like Brancusi and Epstein. His early sculpture was not always understood or appreciated, and revolutionary as it was, it was largely condemned by reviewers. Often his works were expressed in Epsteinian terms of primitivism and barbarism, in the *Daily Mirror* (14 April 1931) the *Leed's Reclining Figure* is described: A monstrosity at an exhibition of sculpture by Mr. Henry Moore which surpassed in repulsiveness even that of Epstein.

In 1924 Moore was awarded the Royal College of Art travelling scholarship, and thus in 1925 he went to Italy for six months to study the Old Masters, most importantly Giotto, Masaccio, Michelangelo, Donatello and Giovanni Pisano, visiting Rome, Florence, Pisa, Siena, Assisi, Padua, Ravenna and Venice. By the end of 1925 Moore had assimilated the main influences that were to determine the future course of his creativity.

The year 1928 marks a major turning point in Moore's career, his remarkable talent was finally being recognized and he received his first public commission to produce a relief for Charles Holden's new London Transport headquarters above St James's Park Underground Station. With the West Wind Relief in Portland stone (LH 58), his first effort to make public art, Moore was finally able to conceive his developing ideas on a monumental scale. In the same year Moore had his first one man exhibition in the Warren Gallery in London, and it was followed by a second show at the Leicester Galleries in 1931. From the 1931 exhibition came the first sale to a gallery abroad, and in the same year he exhibited three works in the Plastik exhibition in Zurich.

Before Moore had left for his trip to Italy he had accepted a seven-year appointment as a sculpture instructor at the RCA, a post which in return for two days' teaching a week gave him enough to live on and develop his own work. It was there that he met Irina Radetsky, a painting student at the college, whom he married in 1929. The couple lived in Hampstead and became friends with many aspiring young artists and writers, including Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, Naum Gabo and Herbert Read. Moore moved from the RCA in 1932 and began teaching as a first head of the department of sculpture at the Chelsea School of Art.

Between 1930-1935 Moore was elected to the 7 and 5 Society, a society which originally consisted of seven painters and five sculptors. By 1934 the society's general meeting was attended by Moore, Hepworth, Nicholson, Piper, amongst others, and the new name 7 & 5 abstract group was proposed. Moore exhibited in the last exhibition of the 7 & 5 at Zwemmer Gallery in 1935. In 1933 Paul Nash founded Unit One which again included Moore. Also that year a book Unit One - the modern movement in English architecture, painting and sculpture, edited by Herbert Read was published. In 1934 Moore contributed to the Unit One exhibition at the Mayor Gallery in London. Moore was becoming an established name and as early as 1934 there was the first monograph on Moore's work by Herbert Read, published by Zwemmer, London.

