

# Landmarks Guide For Adolescents

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**Simone Leigh**  
American, born 1967

***Sentinel IV***  
2020  
Bronze

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**Subject:** Anthropomorphic sculpture

**Activity:** Creating sculptures that reimagine everyday objects as anthropomorphic

**Materials:** Clay or similar material (model magic, air-dry clay, etc), pencil

**Vocabulary:** Ceremonial, commemorative, ritual, sentinel, replica, anthropomorphism

## **i** Introduction

Simone Leigh's work is inspired by and honors spiritual and ceremonial objects of West and South Africa. *Sentinel IV* is modeled after a Zulu spoon often used in wedding ceremonies to signify the joining of two families. The wooden object is meant to signify family integration, or the bride entering into the husband's home.

Leigh's practice is informed by her interest in Black feminine subjectivity, and *Sentinel IV* is a larger-than-life abstract Black female form. It showcases the power and beauty of Black femininity while also questioning the use and creation of ritualized objects and the belief systems they uphold.

## **?** Questions

Can you think of any ceremonial or spiritual objects in your life?

When and how do you use them?

Why is it important?

How do these objects reflect your own culture, beliefs, or traditions?

## **&** Activity

Think of an object in your life that makes you feel protected and safe. Sculpt the object using clay. Use a pencil to add decorative elements. Try and imagine what your sculpture would look like as a person. Can you make your object an anthropomorphic sculpture?

## Simone Leigh, continued

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### Look Again

How do you think Leigh's sculpture references her original object, a spoon? How is it similar? How is it different?

Look back at your sculpture. How would you feel if other people could buy plastic replicas of your ritual object?



### BTW

Leigh has many other sculptures that are inspired by the Zulu ceremonial spoon. One of these, *Sentinel (Mami Wata)* (2020–21), is located in New Orleans, and stands at the former site of a confederate monument. Leigh sold 25 miniature versions of this sculpture and donated the proceeds to Color of Change, a nonprofit organization that advocates for racial justice. The artist also exhibited a larger version when she represented the United States at the Venice Biennale in 2022.



### Vocabulary

**Ceremonial** – Something that is a part of or used for a religious or public event

**Commemorative** – Acting as a memorial or mark of an event or person

**Ritual** – A repeated activity or movement during a religious or important event

**Sentinel** – A guard whose job is to keep watch

**Replica** – Copies of an original work that can be mass produced and are often less expensive and detailed than the original

**Anthropomorphism** – the attribution of human characteristics or behavior to a god, animal, or object



### Artists with Related Works

Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Figure on a Trunk*, 2000

Marc Quinn, *Spiral of the Galaxy*, 2013

Michael Ray Charles, *(Forever Free) Ideas, Languages and Conversations*, 2015