**Family Activity: Put Her on a Pedestal**
Provided by the Art Institute of Chicago Department of Museum Education

**Introduction**
Queen Zenobia ruled over an area of the Roman Empire located in what is now Syria. Not content with her lands, she conquered Egypt and much of Asia Minor before being defeated in 272 A.D. by the Roman Emperor Aurelian, who forced her to march in chains through the city of Rome. When Harriet Hosmer sculpted the marble bust at right, she said she wanted to show that Zenobia was “calm, grand, and strong within herself.” An independent spirit herself, Hosmer was among the first American female sculptors to work in marble. She was drawn toward female subjects who, like her, challenged traditional ideas about the roles that women can fulfill in life.

**Discussion Questions**
Use the close-up view to look carefully at this bust.

- Hosmer sculpted Zenobia wearing a toga, the most common garment in ancient Rome. What else do you notice about the queen’s appearance that suggests royalty or strength?
- Although Zenobia is not bound in chains in this bust, emotion is still apparent in her facial expression. What do you think Zenobia’s face suggests about her feelings?
- Although Hosmer’s teacher John Gibson painted his statues, Hosmer preferred to leave the stone exposed. Why do you think so? Which would you prefer?
- Describe some women that you know personally, or know of, who challenge traditional ideas about women's roles.

**Activity**
Create a sculpture of a woman you admire.

**Materials Needed:**
- Pencils and paper
- Clay
- Carving tools, such as a plastic knife, large paper clip or wire loop made with paper clips, wooden clothespins, and masking tape
- Tools to create texture, such as a pencil, fork, or comb
- Materials for a pedestal, such as a small cardboard box
Steps:

1. Optional: Make two or three wire-loop carving tools with rounded or pointed tips by straightening a paper clip, then bending it into the desired shape. Pinch the ends of the paper clip wire with a wooden clothespin. Then wrap the end of the clothespin tightly with masking tape to hold it shut.

2. Choose a woman you would like to sculpt. Sketch a design of her upper body and face in pencil. Ask yourself the following questions as you work: What is her most obvious feature? What is she wearing? What is her expression?

3. Mold the clay into a ball or lump that is roughly the shape of her head and upper body.

4. Using your drawing as a guide, use the wire loop to carve away tiny strips of clay. Try to imagine that the clay is a chunk of solid stone. Work until you have the shape you want.

5. Use other tools to create textures that suggest clothing, hair, and other features.

6. Place your sculpture on a pedestal!

Glossary

bust (n)
a sculpted representation of the head and shoulders of a human figure