

LESSON TITLE: THREE OBJECTS OF THE NEAR EAST, FOUND IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NYC.

Subject Area: Global History / Social Studies

Grade: 8th and 9th grades

Duration: 1-2 periods, with a possible museum visit to follow

Class information: Students represent a group of diverse ELLs from many different countries, several of whom also have IEPs.

Lesson Rationale Students will engage in an object-based learning activity in order to infer and interpret thematic and cultural meaning and relevance of artwork to Middle Eastern cultures. This lesson is aimed at equipping students with the skills needed to educate others on the richness of a culture, worldview, or religion different from one's own, using art as a medium for conversation. In addition, this lesson is aimed at helping students develop argumentative skills as they defend a work of art and their interpretation of it.

In our Social Studies classes, a key skill is the ability to empathize with diverse communities of people. Through this activity, students will develop a broader view of ancient Middle Eastern societies and explore how the framing of a region by the media can influence our perception of groups of people. In addition, this lesson should equip students to critically consider media coverage of any group of people. This lesson revolves around the use of art to facilitate students' critical arts literacy.

Guiding Essential Questions:

- How did early civilizations/river valley civilizations use representation and art to convey ideas?
- What can we learn about beliefs of artists by looking at the art they produce?

Goals: Students will be able to:

- Assess the characteristics of an object.
- Infer what those characteristics imply about a culture.
- Judge the value of representation to that culture, and to other cultures.
- Evaluate the development of representation between cultures.
- Evaluate the role of cultural diffusion.
- Use visual details from a work of art to infer information about the cultural context of the artwork and artist.
- Identify a society with a work of art produced by a member of that society.

Standards:

Common Core Learning Standards in Literacy in History/Social Studies:

- RH.9-10.9. Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.
- RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.
- SL.9-10.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- SL.9-10.1.C. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
- **College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language - Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**
 - CCRA.L.6 - Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening - Comprehension and Collaboration
- CCRA.SL.1 - Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCRA.SL.4 - Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Depth of Knowledge: D.O.K. 2, 3, 4.

NY State Social Studies Framework:

- 12.G2
- 12.G5

NY SS Standards: NYS SS2 World History; SS5 Economics

NYC Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts Benchmarks:

- Standard 3 - Responding To and Analyzing Works of Art: Students will reflect on, interpret, and evaluate works of art, using the language of art criticism. Students will analyze the visual characteristics of the natural and built environment and explain the social, cultural, psychological, and environmental dimensions of the visual arts. Students will compare the ways in which a variety of ideas, themes, and concepts are expressed through the visual arts with the ways they are expressed in other disciplines.
- Standard 4 - Understanding The Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of The Art: Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society. Students will explore art and artifacts from various historical periods and world cultures to discover the roles that art plays in the lives of people of a given time and place and to understand how the time and place influence the visual characteristics of the artwork. Students will explore art to understand the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of human society.

Assessment Tool: Students will read information and use it to construct an organized opinionated response.

Language Goal: Using causal words (because of, due to, leading to); descriptive language

Differentiation: This lesson is designed to generate accountable talk and concrete evaluative responses that can be used in the differentiation process.

Share Out: Student share-out will serve as a summary, formulate opinions.

Higher Order Thinking Skills: What symbols today signify and denote power and authority? In what ways do people emulate those symbols?

Danielson 3D: How do you think a person could become super-wealthy today?

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY: Pre-visit reading enclosed. A subset of students have researched items from the Arts of the Islamic World Collections and will be serving as docents to their classmates. The teacher has led a special activity with them, helping them to develop observation, inference and interpretation questions that also allow them to share their own expertise and knowledge about works of art from the Islamic world.

ENRICHMENT / EXTENDED THINKING ACTIVITY: follows student handouts.

MODELING OBSERVATION AND INFERENCING SKILLS:



QUESTION SEQUENCE:

Observation questions for this work of art (1-2 min):

Ask students to write their answer to the following questions (1 & 2) in their notebooks, then ask them to do a turn and talk to share their ideas with a classmate.

- 1. Take a minute to let your eye roam around this work of art – what is your eye drawn to?
- 2. How would you describe the figures in this piece?

Have volunteers share their own ideas or what they heard their partner say with the entire group. Indicate locations of details in the image as students mention them so the whole class can follow the conversation.

Inference/Evidence questions for this work of art (1-2 min):

Then ask students to answer the following question (#3) in their notebook. Ask volunteers to share with the whole class. As students make their predictions, poll the class to gauge support for classmates' interpretations and to invite other interpretations. Emphasize that students should try to use evidence and details from the picture to support their inference.

- 3. What part of the world do you think this artwork is from?
 - a. What do you see in the image that makes you say that?

Explain to students that the artwork they are viewing was produced by an artist in Iran (which is located in the Middle East) around 1640 or 1650, and that many of the people in Iran have practiced Islam for many, many centuries. Explain to students that art often includes clues about the values and beliefs of the culture of the artist who made it. Ask students to interpret what they're seeing in the image to answer the question below (4), first in their notebooks, then with a partner and finally with the entire class. As students share their ideas, have a student volunteer record students' ideas on a whiteboard or chart paper.

- 4. What do you think we might be able to learn about the values, beliefs, or cultural practices of the society that this artist belonged to just by looking at this artwork?
 - a. What do you see in the image that makes you say that?

Optionally, you might draw students' attention to details that demonstrate the cosmopolitan and international nature of this scene. For example, you could point out that the male figure kneeling on the left side of the image is wearing a hat and cape typical of the fashion in much of Europe at this time, and that he might thus represent a European traveler, visitor or merchant. You could also point out that the female figures on the right side of the image are wearing clothes with motifs, patterns and cuts commonly associated with Chinese fashion. Finally, you might draw the students' attention to the figure in the middle who seems to be floating above the

ground. Point out that she has dots on her arms, and that those marks were often associated with mystics or sometimes courtesans. Add any of this contextual information to the list of interpretations that students have already created.

If a museum visit is not possible, students may engage with the following three objects online. Alternatively, pass out a handout consisting of these objects and their biographic data to each student.

RESOURCES:

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/242013>

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/324927>

<http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/329230>

Post-visit activity: Students have an extended thinking activity handout. Students will draft historians' accounts of their visit, to be shared with the principal, art teacher, assistant principal, and the parent association.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY:

Interpretation question for this work of art:

Assign students to small groups of 3-4 students. Set up a scenario whereby you explain to them that they are responsible for saving only one work of art that can be used to show future generations important themes about Islamic Art.

- For example, "Imagine that aliens are headed to earth to destroy every museum. There's a bunker with room for just one work of art from each wing of the Met. Which art would you choose to represent the Islamic Art wing and why?"

Have each group take a turn explaining to the large group which object they selected and why. After each group has presented, have the whole class discuss which rationale was the most convincing to them.

- Which group did the best job convincing you that their work of art is worth saving?

MODELING OBSERVATION AND INFERENCING SKILLS:

STUDENT HANDOUT:



QUESTION SEQUENCE:

Observation questions for this work of art (1-2 min):

write your answers to the following questions (1 & 2) in their notebooks, then turn and with a classmate.

- 1. Take a minute to let your eye roam around this work of art – what is your eye drawn to?
-

- 2. How would you describe the figures in this piece?
-

Inference/Evidence questions for this work of art (1-2 min):

- 3. What part of the world do you think this artwork is from?
 - a. What do you see in the image that makes you say that?
-

- 4. What do you think we might be able to learn about the values, beliefs, or cultural practices of the society that this artist belonged to just by looking at this artwork?
 - a. What do you see in the image that makes you say that?
-

OBJECT #1



Human-headed winged bull and winged lion (lamassu)

Period: Neo-Assyrian

Date: ca. 883–859 B.C.

Geography: Mesopotamia, Nimrud (ancient Kalhu)

Culture: Assyrian

Medium: Gypsum alabaster

Dimensions: H. 10 ft. 3 1/2 in. (313.7 cm)

Classification: Stone-Reliefs-Inscribed

Credit Line: Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932

Accession Number: 32.143.1–.2

Question Sequence Observation questions for this work of art (1-2 min):

- Examine the object closely. What **details** do you notice? (3 min)
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- After closely inspecting the object, what is the overall **tone/feeling** of the work? What do you feel it was meant to convey in ancient Assyria?
-

Inference/Evidence questions for this work of art (1-2 min):

- What could be some of the reasons that the statues, which were made in pairs, made to this **scale**?
- If you were an ancient Assyrian walking between these statues, what do you think you would **feel**? What would the **experience** be like?

Interpretation question for this work of art (1-2 min):

- If I told you that this was a depiction of a '*jin*' – the origin of the word 'genie' – and was used for **protection** against evil spirits and chaos, would that change your perception of this piece? How so?
 - What images are used to depict **protection** today?
-

OBJECT #2



Chair back panel with warrior holding lotuses
Period: Neo-Assyrian
Date: ca. 8th century B.C.
Geography: Mesopotamia, Nimrud (ancient Kalhu)
Culture: Assyrian
Medium: Ivory
Dimensions: 11.38 x 2.72 x 0.2 in. (28.91 x 6.91 x 0.51 cm)
Classification: Ivory/Bone-Reliefs
Credit Line: Rogers Fund, 1959
Accession Number: 59.107.7

Question Sequence: Observation questions for this work of art (1-2 min):

- Examine the object closely. What **details** do you notice? (3 min)
-

- After closely inspecting the object, what is the overall **tone/feeling** of the work? What do you feel it was meant to convey in ancient Assyria?
-

Inference/Evidence questions for this work of art (1-2 min):

- What could be some of the reasons that the king is standing on a **lion**? What would this mean to the Assyrians?
 - What does the king's **clothing** tell us about his social status? Give three examples.
-

Interpretation question for this work of art (1-2 min):

- What do you think the **lotus flower** he is holding – the symbol of water, land, and the start and end of the day – was meant to convey to the Assyrian people?
 - What images are used to depict **power** today?
-

OBJECT #3



Limestone male figure
Period: Archaic
Date: last quarter of the 6th century B.C.
Culture: Cypriot
Medium: Limestone
Dimensions: H. 75 1/2 in. (191.8 cm)
Classification: Stone Sculpture
Credit Line: The Cesnola Collection, Purchased
by subscription, 1874–76
Accession Number: 74.51.2460

Question Sequence: Observation questions for this work of art (1-2 min):

- Examine the object closely. What **details** do you notice? (3 min)
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- After closely inspecting the object, what is the overall **tone/feeling** of the work? What do you feel it was meant to convey in ancient Cyprus?
-

Inference/Evidence questions for this work of art (1-2 min):

- Examine the man's body **posture**. What inferences can we make by the way he is holding himself
-
- Examine the man's body **facial expression**. What inferences can we make by the way his face is represented? What kind of social position do you think he held?
-

Interpretation question for this work of art (1-2 min):

- Compare this figure to the **previous two figures**. What are three differences between them and this statue? What can we tell about its relevance in Cypriot society?
-
- Examine the Extended Thinking handout. What similarities do you notice? What inferences can you draw from this?
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ENRICHMENT / EXTENDED THINKING:

Please examine the images below carefully. Then analyze the information that follows. What similarities do you notice? What inferences can you draw from this?



Marble statue of a kouros (youth)

Period: Archaic

Date: ca. 590–580 B.C.E.

Culture: Greek, Attic

Medium: Marble, Naxian

Dimensions: H. without plinth 76 5/8 in. (194.6 cm); H. of head 12 in. (30.5 cm); length of face 8 7/8 in. (22.6 cm); shoulder width 20 5/16 in. (51.6 cm)

Accession Number: 32.11.1

This *kouros* is one of the earliest marble statues of a human figure carved in Attica. The rigid stance, with the left leg forward and arms at the side, was derived from Egyptian art. The pose provided a clear, simple formula that was used by Greek sculptors throughout the sixth century BCE. In this early figure, geometric, almost abstract forms predominate, and anatomical details are rendered in beautiful analogous patterns. The statue marked the grave of a young Athenian aristocrat.



Headless statue of Babaef as younger man

Period: Old Kingdom

Dynasty: Dynasty 4–5

Date: ca. 2475–2450 B.C.E.

Geography: From Egypt, Memphite Region, Giza, Western Cemetery, Mastaba G5230, Harvard-Boston MFA excavations

Medium: Limestone

Accession Number: 64.66.1

Babaef was a vizier and overseer of all construction projects. He was described as "king's son of his body" and "unique associate of his father," though the king himself is not mentioned by name.



Limestone male figure

Civilization: Cypriot, Archaic

Date: 6th c. B.C.E.

Medium: limestone

Accession Number: 74.51.2460

It is possible that the head and body did not originally belong to the same work. The articulation of each part, however, testifies to the first influences of Greek sculpture on that of Cyprus. In contrast to the monumental head, 74.51.2857, all details of this figure's head are executed in great detail. The smiling lips, moreover, animate the musculature of the whole face. The arms at the sides recall the Greek kouroi, and the differentiation of the undergarment and cloak show an awareness of three-dimensional texture as opposed to two-dimensional patterning.

PRE-VISIT CONTEXTUAL READING

About Assyrian religion:

The /šêdu/ were apparently deities in the form of bulls. They were destructive, of enormous power, and unsparing. In a good sense the /šêdu/ was a protecting deity, guarding against hostile attacks. Erech 92 and the temple Ê-kura were protected by spirits such as these, and to one of them Išum, "the glorious sacrificer," was likened. The /lamassu/, from the Sumerian /lama/, was similar in character to the /šêdu/, but is thought to have been of the nature of a colossus--a winged man-headed bull or lion. It is these creatures which the kings placed at the sides of the doors of their palaces, to protect the king's footsteps. In early Babylonian times a god named Lama was one of the most popular deities of the Babylonian pantheon.

Source - The Religion Of Babylonia And Assyria By Theophilus G. Pinches, LL.D.

About Winged Bull in the British Museum, London, England:

Colossal statue of a winged human-headed bull from the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal II
Nimrud (ancient Kalhu), northern Iraq
Neo-Assyrian, about 883-859 BC

Protecting the palace against demonic forces

This is one of a pair of guardian figures set up in the palace of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) at the Assyrian capital Kalhu. Its partner is now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

Stone sculptures of mythological figures, sculpted in relief or in the round, were often placed as guardians at gateways to palaces and temples in ancient Mesopotamia. These figures were known to the Assyrians as *lamassu*. They were designed to protect the palace from demonic forces, and may even have guarded the entrance to the private apartments of the king. The figure has five legs, so that when viewed from the front it stands firm, while when viewed from the side it appears to be striding forward to combat evil. The 'Standard Inscription' of Ashurnasirpal, common to many of his reliefs, is inscribed between the figure's legs. It records the King's titles, ancestry and achievements.

The figure was excavated by Austen Henry Layard, who worked in Assyria between 1845 and 1851. He suggested that these composite creatures combined the strength of the lion (or in this case, the bull), the swiftness of birds indicated by the wings, and the intelligence of the human head. The helmet with horns indicates the creature's divinity.

Source:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/c/colossal_statue_winged_bull.aspx

About Winged Bull in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

From the ninth to the seventh century B.C., the kings of Assyria ruled over a vast empire centered in northern Iraq. The great Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 B.C.) undertook a vast building program at Nimrud, ancient Kalhu. Until it became the capital city under Ashurnasirpal, Nimrud had been no more than a provincial town.

The new capital occupied an area of about nine hundred acres, around which Ashurnasirpal constructed a mudbrick wall that was 120 feet thick, 42 feet high, and five miles long. In the southwest corner of this enclosure was the acropolis, where the temples, palaces, and administrative offices of the empire were located. In 879 B.C. Ashurnasirpal held a festival for 69,574 people to celebrate the construction of the new capital, and the event was documented by an inscription that read: "...the happy people of all the lands together with the people of Kalhu—for ten days I feasted, wine, bathed, and honored them and sent them back to their home in peace and joy."

The so-called Standard Inscription that ran across the surface of most of the reliefs described Ashurnasirpal's palace: "I built thereon [a palace with] halls of cedar, cypress, juniper, boxwood, teak, terebinth, and tamarisk [?] as my royal dwelling and for the enduring leisure life of my lordship." The inscription continues: "Beasts of the mountains and the seas, which I had fashioned out of white limestone and alabaster, I had set up in its gates. I made it [the palace] fittingly imposing." Such limestone beasts are the human-headed, winged bull and lion pictured here. The horned cap attests to their divinity, and the belt signifies their power. The sculptor gave these guardian figures five legs so that they appear to be standing firmly when viewed from the front but striding forward when seen from the side. These lamassu protected and supported important doorways in Assyrian palaces.

Source: <http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/329230?=&imgno=0&tabname=label>

About Assyrian religion, main three gods.

Ishtar, the divine mother of the king, was the wife of Ashur, the supreme god of the empire, defined in Assyrian sources as the "sum total of gods" and the only true god. Ashur was thus, by implication, the "heavenly father" of the king, while the latter was his "son" in human form. The Father-Mother-Son triad constituted by Ashur, Ishtar and the king reminds one of the Holy Trinity of Christianity, where the Son, according to Athanasius, is "the selfsame Godhead as the Father, but that Godhead manifested rather than immanent."

Source: Simo Parpola: Sons of God - The ideology of Assyrian Kingship. Archaeology Odyssey Archives, December 1999

INFERENCE: What is the cultural diffusion impact evidenced here?

"Their wings touched one another; their faces did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward. As for the form of their faces, each had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle."

Source: Ezekiel 1:9-10