PICTURING HISTORY: Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia

A Teacher’s Resource Guide for Using Art to Teach 6th Grade Social Studies and ELA
How to Use These Materials

The materials presented here are developed with the middle school student in mind. The focus is on social studies, English language arts (ELA) and visual arts content. All lesson plans are aligned to the Common Core Standards.

Tips for Using This Guide

- Review the guide and lesson plans. Some of the lesson plans require you to select an image for discussion. Images of art from the collection of the Toledo Museum of Art can be viewed online at http://emuseum.toledomuseum.org/collections. Consider showing these works of art on a smart board in your classroom.

- To make the most of this guide, we recommend completing the pre-visit lesson plan before your visit to TMA. You can customize these lessons with the suggested extension activities to enhance students’ connections with social studies, ELA and visual arts content.

- Take your tour experience back to the classroom by completing the post-visit lesson plan after your TMA field trip. Use the post-visit lessons to help stretch your student’s critical thinking and descriptive writing skills.

This resource is made possible in part by the generous support of the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation.
How were these resources developed?
The materials presented here are the result of the Teacher Leaders program, a year-long collaboration between the Toledo Museum of Art and social studies, ELA and visual arts middle school teachers from the Northwest Ohio area.

Why use works of art to support social studies and ELA?
Research has shown that when works of art are a part of arts-integrated efforts to teach social studies and ELA content, students develop new connections to the material by absorbing the visual content and translating it into new knowledge. In this way, the visual arts offer students a unique window to other places and times. Arts exposure cultivates students’ reflective and multi-sensory thinking, allowing for insightful connections to previous knowledge (schema) while stimulating students’ creative and analytical thinking.

Benefits include:

- **Excitement and motivation:** Museum objects motivate students to learn about the past.
- **Active participation in the learning process:** Participating in hands-on guided experiences in the Museum allows students to take full ownership of their learning experience.
- **Construction of historical knowledge:** Students develop historical thinking skills connecting social studies content to a larger framework of knowledge.
- **Improved student writing:** Research has shown that pre-writing experiences can foster critical thinking and lead to more precise vocabulary use.

What are the benefits of looking closely at art?
Taking the time to observe works of art develops the imagination while improving visual and reading aptitudes through visual literacy. It allows for a different way of learning about the past and making knowledge relevant in a tangible fashion.

“It has surprised me that it is relatively seamless to connect art and visual literacy with ELA and social studies while still following the Common Core Standards.”

– Dawn Pieper (Harvard Elementary)
Where can I learn more about the benefits of arts-integrated approaches to teaching ELA and social studies?

Here are some additional resources you may wish to review:


Toledo Museum of Art School Partnerships website, schoolpartnerships.toledomuseum.org

**Timeline: Investigating Ancient Writing**

**About this Lesson:**

*This lesson was developed by:*

- Karen Angst (Eisenhower Intermediate School)
- Dawn Pieper (Harvard Elementary School)
- Malinda Piotrowski (Byrnedale Elementary School)
- Cathleen Smith (Old West End Academy)
- Angie Stokes (Wayne Trace Jr/Sr High School)

**Goals:**

To gain a better understanding of common themes in the art created by Ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian peoples.

**Objectives:**

- The student will use logic, movement, and collaboration to arrange images chronologically.
- The student will employ close looking to compare and contrast images.

**Common Core Standards Addressed:**

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaboration with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own understandings clearly and persuasively
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, organization, development, and style appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- **Social Studies Model Curriculum: Theme Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere Content Statement 1.** Events can be arranged in order of occurrence using the conventions of B.C. and A.D. or B.C.E. and C.E.

**Materials:**

- Timeline activity card set (on pages 8 and 9 in this book.)

**Step 1:**

Ask the students what a timeline is. If needed, explain that a timeline arranges objects or events chronologically, along an axis. Tell the students that they will be working together to create a timeline with some of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian objects they will be viewing when they visit the Museum. Using 3 or 4 volunteers, ask them to list things they do every day: wake up, eat breakfast, go to school, etc. Then assign a few students these roles and ask them to arrange themselves in chronological order as a timeline.

**Step 2:**

As a group, establish the boundaries of the timeline. Designate where the line will be and where the starting and ending points will be located.

**Step 3:**

Give each student one of the object cards. Ask them to look closely at their object and read the information on the back of the card. Explain to the students that there are objects dated both BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era). They will need to distinguish between them for this activity.

**Step 4:**

After giving them some time to look, ask the students to work together to arrange themselves in chronological order by dates according to the objects on their cards. Ask them to space themselves to reflect the amount of time between the objects.

**Step 5:**

When the students are finished, ask each of them to compare their object with the objects on either side and answer the following questions:

- How is your object similar to the one that came before it?
- How is your object different from the one that came after?

**Step 6:**

As a group, discuss what the students observed about the timeline and the similarities and differences between the objects.

**Discussion Questions:**

- How are the objects on the timeline similar?
- How are the objects on the timeline different?
- How have the objects changed over time?
- How many years does your timeline span?
Ancient Egyptian, Coffin of Ta-mit, 664-325 BCE
Ancient Egyptian, Cosmetic Jar, about 600 BCE
Babylonian, Commemorative Cylinder of Nebuchadnezzar II, 600 BCE
Ancient Egyptian, Amulet: Wedjat, about 664-525 BCE
Ancient Egyptian, Relief of Amun-hotep, about 1290 BCE
Sumerian, Head of a Female Votive Figure, about 2600 BCE
Ancient Egyptian, Jar, 2700-2500 BCE
Ancient Egyptian, Shabti of Henut-wedjebu, about 1350 BCE

Ancient Egyptian, Canopic Jars, about 600 BCE
Ancient Egyptian, Jar, 2700-2500 BCE
Ancient Egyptian, Fragment of a Manger with ibex, 1353-1336 BCE
Ancient Egyptian, Funerary Papyrus of Tamesia, about 100 CE
Lur, Horse Bit, 750-650 BCE
Persian, Rhyton (Drinking Vessel), 200-100 BCE

Ancient Egyptian, Jar, 2700-2500 BCE
Palmyrian, Funerary Monument of Umm’abi, about 200 CE
Ancient Egyptian, Relief of Amun-hotep, about 1290 BCE
Assyrian, Fragment of a Relief of a Winged Deity, about 880 BCE
Persian, Rhyton (Drinking Vessel), 200-100 BCE
Ancient Egyptian, Shabti of Henut-wedjebu, about 1350 BCE
TOUR SUMMARY

Thank you for choosing the Toledo Museum of Art’s Picturing History program for your class field trip! Your Museum experience will be more fun from the start if you remember to do the following:

• Visit toledomuseum.org/visit/tours/school-tours/ to request your tour.
• If you have any children with special needs, please share any necessary accommodations when you make your tour request.
• Divide your class into groups of 12-15 students, and assign one adult chaperone to each group.
• Have each student wear a name tag with her/his first name in large print.
• Arrive on time.

What to expect during your visit?

This tour explores writing systems and symbols used by Ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians through looking at works of art from the TMA collection. Students will use close-looking and critical thinking to identify and interpret what they see. Activities are varied and multi-modal and include a scavenger hunt, storytelling, and image analysis. During their visit, your students will explore the ancient world and make personal connections with the works of art.

“My students loved their visit to TMA! They couldn’t stop talking about what they saw.”
—Karen Angst (Eisenhower Intermediate School)

POST-VISIT LESSON PLAN

Use this lesson plan after your visit to help your students connect their Picturing History field trip experience with the classroom and extend the learning. This lesson is approximately 30 minutes.
Record and Respond: A Closer Look at Ancient Writing

About this Lesson:
This lesson was developed by:
• Karen Angst (Eisenhower Intermediate School)
• Dawn Pieper (Harvard Elementary School)
• Malinda Piotrowski (Byrnedale Elementary School)
• Cathleen Smith (Old West End Academy)
• Angie Stokes (Wayne Trace Jr/Sr High School)

Goals:
To have students visually investigate diverse artifacts in order to compare and contrast the two different forms of writing.

Objectives:
The objective for this lesson is to help students become familiar with the two systems of writing that arose out of the early civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Students will learn how these writing systems came to be, what they looked like, and how and why they were so influential to the development of these early civilizations.

• The student will practice close looking.
• The student will compare and contrast two different writing systems through the incorporation of visual artifacts.
• The student will communicate and explain the function of artifacts, culture, and traditions from ancient civilizations through the exploration of various writing samples.

Common Core Standards Addressed:
• CCSS.ELA Literacy. CCRA. SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
• CCSS.ELA Literacy. 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.

Social Studies Model Curriculum: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere.
Content Statement: Early civilizations (Egypt, and Mesopotamia) with unique governments, economic systems, social structure, religions, technologies and agricultural practices and products flourished as a result of favorable geographic characteristics. The cultural practices and products of these early civilizations can be used to help understand the Eastern Hemisphere today.

Materials:
Paper, pencils and images of works or art with cuneiform and hieroglyphic writing, at least one per student.

Length: 30-40 minutes

Step 1: Provide students with images of works of art with ancient writing on them. Provide an assortment of images, some with cuneiform and others with hieroglyphs. Visit http://emuseum.toledomuseum.org/collections to find suitable images from the TMA collection.

Step 2: Have students select one image to use for this activity.

Step 3: Ask students to make detailed sketches of their chosen image focusing particularly on the writing symbols.

Step 4: Ask students to label their sketches with the following information:
• Materials (of object)
• Visual properties (color, line, texture, etc.)
• Writing system and familiar symbols

Step 5: Ask students to write a reflection based on what they learned on the Museum visit and observed looking at the images. Allow the students 2-5 minutes to complete.

• Starter samples: I learned that..., The ancient world influences us today because ..., Based on what I’ve learned, Ancient Egyptian writing...
• Students will then share their “What they learned” with 2 people. Teacher should have 2-3 students share out with the group.
Discussion Questions:

- What symbols and details did you choose to focus on? Why?
- What new information have you learned about this that was revealed by close examination of its visual properties?
- How does the form of the object affect your interpretation of it?
- Why do you think the writing symbols are on this object?

“...art is a great way to teach prediction, inference, cause and effect and making connections.”

–Karen Angst (Eisenhower Intermediate School)

Extension Activity

Pair students (ideally, each pair will contain one student who worked on hieroglyphs and one who worked on cuneiform). Ask the students to share their images and drawings with each other. Have the students work together to complete a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting their images.
Design a Cartonnage

About this Activity:
This lesson was developed by:
• Angie Stokes (Wayne Trace Middle School)
This activity will allow students to practice their drawing and design skills by recreating the symbols explored throughout the unit.

Goal:
Students will work collaboratively to design an inner coffin for a pharaoh.

Materials:
Roll of paper 24" wide, pencils, scissors, coloring tools such as crayon, chalk, paint, and image of Ankh-tesh Cartonnage available at http://emuseum.toledomuseum.org/objects/56545/cartonnage-of-ankhtesh?ctx=5357eeb7-8c61-4632-ac7a-91fa4142b973&idx=1.

Step 1: Students will look at images of the cartonnage (inner coffin) of Ankh-tesh and list as many elements of art and principles of design as they can identify on the object. Using an outline of the figure of Ankh-tesh on paper, have students work in pairs to redesign the coffin by altering some of the elements and principles (have students switch colors or shapes, add more pattern or movement with additional lines, etc.) Note the colors used in Ancient Egypt as well as important objects (crook & flail) and the crossing of arms.

Step 2: Student teams will now create their own 2D innermost coffin based on their new design. Roll out the paper on the floor and have one student lie down on it while the other traces their silhouette in pencil. Redraw the silhouette to make lines smoother/more symmetrical before cutting out the figure.

Step 3: Have students create their designs in pencil on the figure, dividing up tasks and working together to make major decisions. Use either crayon (the Ancient Egyptians had wax!), paint, or marker to fill in colors. Chalk can be used to cover large areas as well but needs a fixative like hairspray unless you want that old-smudged look.

Step 4: Ask for volunteer groups to present their work and explain the design choices they made. Hang in the hallway for display.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
• BBC resource on the Rosetta Stone: http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/worldhistory/rosetta_stone/
• British Museum resources on Mesopotamia: http://www.mesopotamia.co.uk/menu.html
• Scholastic resources on Ancient Egypt: http://teacher.scholastic.com/lessonrepro/lessonplans/theme/egypt02.htm
• TMA Reference Library: http://www.toledomuseum.org/education/reference-library

GLOSSARY
• Cuneiform: earliest writing system; used by the Sumerians of Mesopotamia.
• Fresco: a method of painting in which the pigments are mixed with liquid and applied to a layer of dry plaster.
• Hieroglyphic: Egyptian writing that uses symbols or pictures as characters.
• Mummy: A dead body of a human being or animal preserved or dried out and wrapped for burial.
• Papyrus: a tall aquatic grass used as a writing surface in ancient Egypt.
• Pharaoh: the title of the ancient Egyptian rulers.
• Relief: a carved sculpture that projects from the surface.
• Sarcophagus: a coffin where the mummy was placed.
• Scribe: a person who writes books and documents by hand.
• Stylized: a schematic, non-realistic manner of representing the visible world and its contents, abstracted from the way that things appear in nature.
• Symbols: something visible that represents something invisible.
Museum Hours of Operation

**Tuesday and Wednesday**
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

**Thursday and Friday**
10 a.m. – 9 p.m.

**Saturday**
10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Sunday**
Noon – 5 p.m.

*Closed Mondays, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day*

---

Admission

**Admission to the Museum is always free.** Special exhibitions or events may require purchased tickets. Members are admitted free to all exhibitions and receive free admission and discounts for special programs, events, and Museum Store purchases.

---

Location

The Museum is just west of Toledo’s downtown business district, directly off Interstate 75, at 2445 Monroe Street at Scottwood Avenue.

📞 419.255.8000
🌐 toledomuseum.org

---

Our Mission

We believe in the power of art to ignite the imagination, stimulate thought, and provide enjoyment. Through our collection and programs, we strive to integrate art into the lives of people.

---

Thank You

This resource is made possible in part by a grant from the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation.

---

More teacher resources from the Toledo Museum of Art are available online at toledomuseum.org