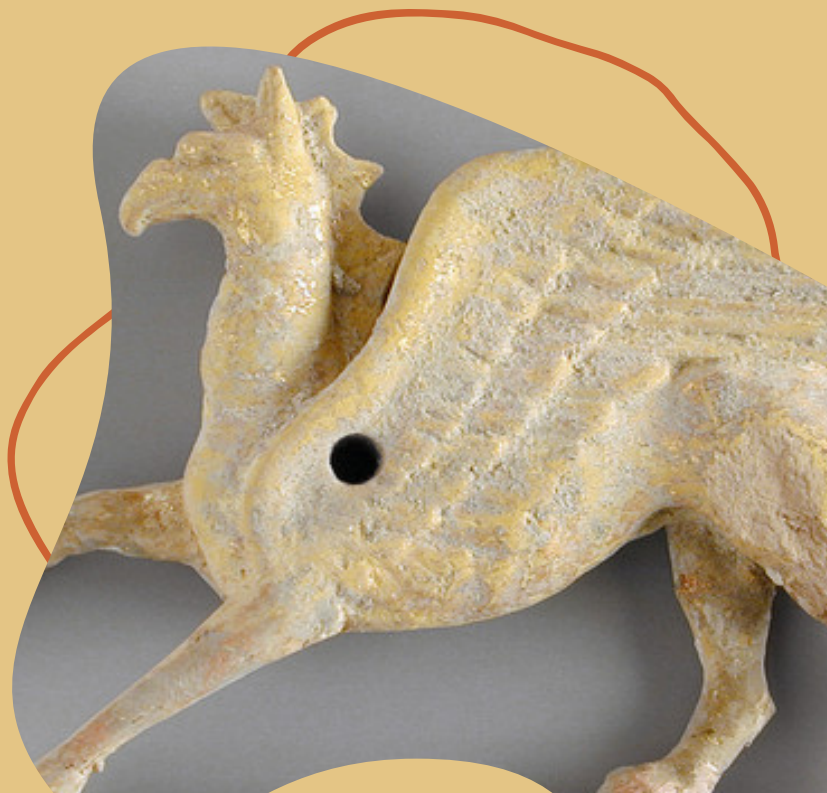




Practical Guide for Teaching Early World Cultures

LACMA Mobile Programs

2022





Front Cover

Top: **Figurine of the Goddess Bastet as a Cat**, Egypt, 21st - 26th Dynasty, 1081 - 525 BCE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Varya and Hans Cohn (AC1992.152.51), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Bottom: **Appliqué in the Form of a Griffin**, South Italy, probably Taranto, 330-320 BCE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Phil Berg Collection (M.71.73.76), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

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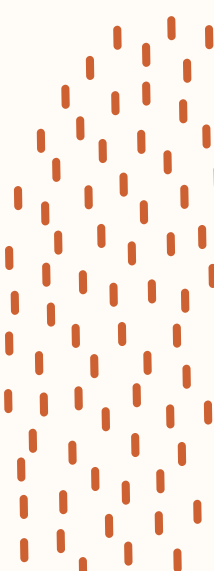
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INTRODUCTION

Thoughtfully integrating world cultures into an updated and more inclusive curriculum can be rewarding, but can also pose challenges especially when looking for materials that are both accurate and culturally sensitive to present to your students. Our Mobile Programs team at LACMA is here to help. We've developed this resource for you to use in your classroom that can also make history more mindful and fun for your students.

The Mobile Programs team prioritizes **student-centered learning** in our Early World Cultures program by implementing an **antiracist, liberatory pedagogy** based on the writings of Paolo Freire and bell hooks. Our approach foregrounds ancestral and descendant community perspectives and aims to correct historical misconceptions that can be harmful to the communities we discuss. This guide includes resources and materials to help you take students beyond their textbooks and build a broader and more inclusive understanding of global art, culture, and history to meet the Grade Six California History-Social Science Content Standards.

This guide begins with materials and strategies that can easily be incorporated into your existing lessons, addresses common questions and misconceptions, and provides additional links and resources to help you pursue more in-depth research as the opportunity and/or need arises. Although our main focus is bringing the museum's primary sources into sixth-grade history-social science classrooms and curricula, our hope is that these resources and techniques can be **applied and adapted** across the subjects and grade levels you teach. As you do so, please consider sharing your feedback through the survey link at the end of this guide so we can better understand and enhance your experience with us. If you're interested in exploring additional offerings from the Mobile Programs or other LACMA programs, see the "[LACMA Mobile Programs Examples and Resources](#)" section.

Right: **Mummiform Falcon with Inscribed Menat**, Egypt, Third Intermediate Period, 1070 - 712 BCE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, William Randolph Hearst Foundation (50.4.19), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA



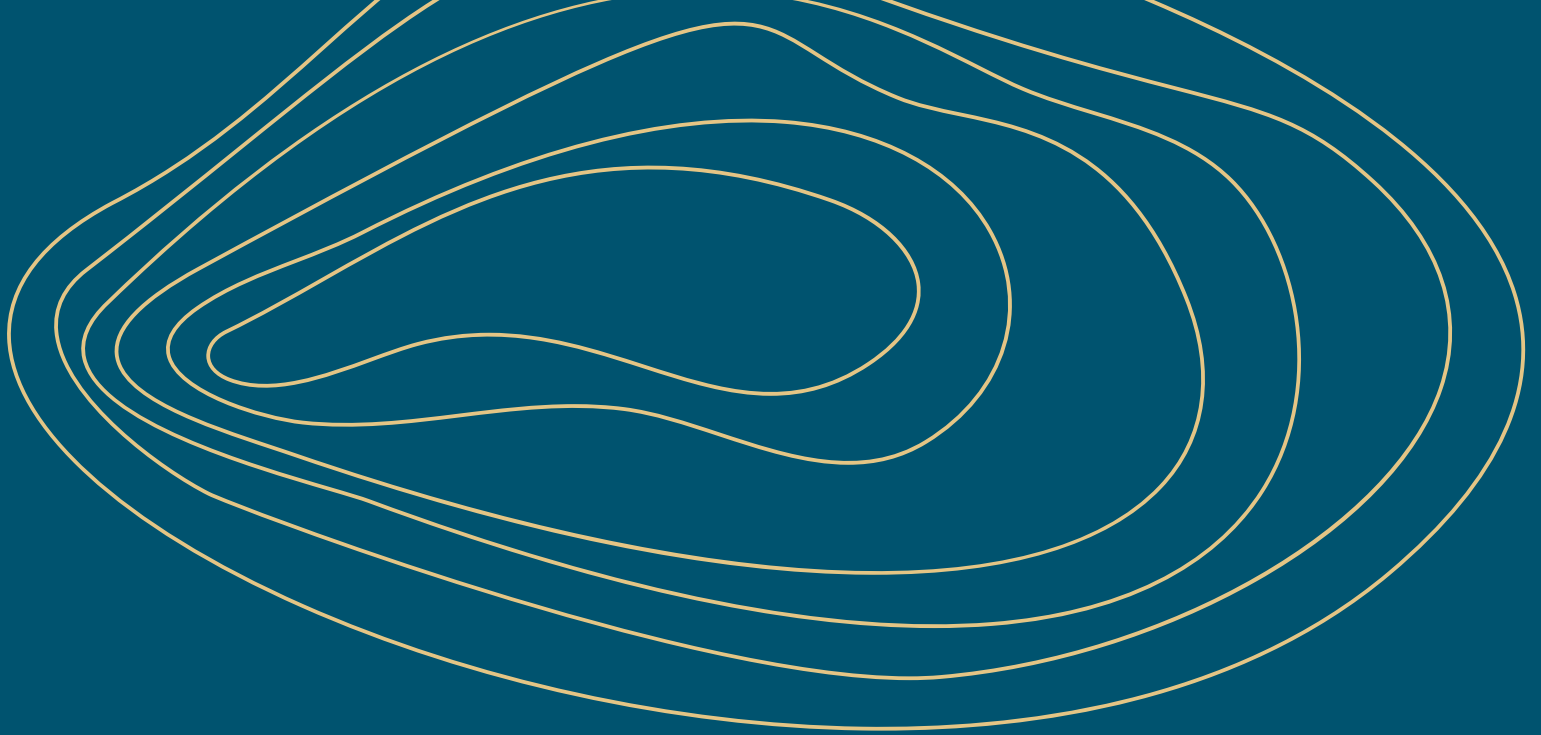
LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is a working statement and will be adjusted as we continue to develop a relationship between LACMA as an institution and the local Indigenous communities of Los Angeles County.

LACMA respectfully acknowledges that the lands on which our museum is built, and the region that we serve, is the **ancestral and unceded territory** of the **Gabrieleño Tongva, Gabrieleño Kizh, Fernandeño Tataviam, and Ventureño Chumash** peoples. Los Angeles County has been—and is—home to many Indigenous peoples whose ancestral lands are here and elsewhere. As an art museum and a collecting institution, LACMA recognizes the role we and similar institutions play in the continual displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands, the theft of cultural objects and ancestors from their Native caretakers, and the erasure and marginalization of Indigenous artists in the stories museums tell. We are committed to working to dismantle the ongoing effects of this colonial legacy, building networks of support with and for Indigenous art communities and tribes, and being better stewards of the lands we occupy.

This acknowledgement marks LACMA's commitment to interrogating our own position in the structural conditions of settler colonialism and how we can work to dismantle them. As such, this statement is a work in progress and will continue to evolve through this process.

Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that have brought us here together, and join us in a refusal to accept oppressive systems as they are.



Acknowledging the Native people of our geography is an important step our Mobile Program team takes before every class. We hope to introduce students to an **Indigenous and non-western** understanding of the past as many of our students have complex, personal histories and connections to this land and the materials we teach.

We encourage all educators to **reflect** on the land we occupy and continue to **encourage critical thinking** with our students about the land we are on and the Native people who are the original stewards of this land. We also encourage you to **build connections** with the people who live in your community who have fought for change, like the student organizers of the Indigenous Education Now Coalition (IEN) who succeeded in petitioning LAUSD to dedicate \$10 million to Native and Indigenous student education. A land acknowledgment is more than a paragraph, but a call to action to help create a better future with and for our students.

RESOURCES for FURTHER LEARNING

[Native-Land Educational Guide](#) | [Indigenous Territories Map](#)
[Fernandeño Tataviam: The Knowledge Keepers of the Land](#)

GLOSSARY

Notable terms our educators utilize in their teaching, as well as terms we move toward and away from, and why.

Ancestral/Descendant “**Ancestral**” refers to the original peoples, traditions, and practices of a particular area. “**Descendant**” refers to the living family members of ancestors. These terms recognize that Indigenous peoples have been here since time immemorial, and are still here today.

Antiracist Pedagogy A practice of liberation directed toward creating a learning environment in which students **actively question** racist systems, norms, and narratives within society. Students’ experiences are **valued and centered** as critical voices in understanding and challenging such systems, though this can only happen in a safe, respectful environment in which students can speak openly and bravely. Educators are also involved in a practice of learning and questioning using this pedagogy.

Early World Cultures Cultures that span many time periods, as well as geographic regions. Generally, we use “**Early World Cultures**” to denote the ancestral cultures from around the world. This includes, but is not limited to, cultures covered in the Grade Six History–Social Science Content Standards for California (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, India, China, and Rome). For more on why Early World Cultures is our preferred phrasing, see the “[Words We Use and Avoid](#)” section below.



Top Right: **Wadjet**, Egypt, New Kingdom, 1500 - 1050 BCE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Frederique Nussberger Tchacos (AC1998.116.5.16), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Right: **Scarab with Four Baboons Worshipping a Lotus Blossom**, Egypt, New Kingdom, 1569-1081 BCE, Los Angeles Museum of Art, Gift of Frederique Nussberger Tchacos (AC1998.116.5.8), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Indigenous Denotes the **Native cultures and groups of peoples** who originally lived in a specific area, such as the Indigenous groups of Los Angeles (the Gabrieleño Tongva, Gabrieleño Kizh, Fernandeseño Tataviam, and Ventureño Chumash, among them), as well as other native groups throughout the world, such as the Maya people from Central America and Mexico, and the Māori people of mainland New Zealand.

Taking the lead from scholars and our LACMA curatorial department, we capitalize the word “**Indigenous**” when referring to “any cultural groups who have been dispossessed of their lands through colonialism, or whose sovereignty has otherwise been threatened.”*

Material Culture The physical objects, tools, art, architecture, and written texts, among other tangible items, that are created and used by a group of people. While material culture offers tangible insight into a group, it is not the sole determining factor of the complexity of a culture. The traditional study of history may sometimes imply that past societies which have left extensive remaining material culture were more sophisticated than societies that have less material culture remaining. However, some types of material culture, such as textiles and wooden objects, are more prone to deterioration than others. Additionally, many sites belonging to Early World Cultures have yet to be studied; our understanding of these cultures expands and shifts as more study is done. No matter the extent of the material culture remaining, **at LACMA, we recognize that all societies and cultures are unique, critical, and equally important to the history of humans throughout time.**

Praxis The process by which theories, ideas, or concepts are turned into practice through an **ongoing cycle of reflection and action**. Paulo Freire wrote about “praxis” in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Worldview The sum of ideas and beliefs that an individual or group has of reality and the world around them. One’s worldview can include their ethics, morals, and emotions, and can heavily influence their attitudes, ideas, philosophies, and religion. In cultural anthropology and in our teaching of Early World Cultures, **worldviews are the foundation** for characterizing and comparing cultures.

*From an email correspondence with LACMA Art of the Ancient Americas curator, Alyce de Carteret.

WORDS WE USE AND AVOID

The language we use is important in understanding the past. The way we talk about history informs the present and ourselves. The words we learn from dictionaries and textbooks may seem neutral in their use, but **their connotations can also do harm**. For example, the use of words such as “primitive” and “barbarian” can strip cultures of their agency and advancements. Even common, seemingly innocuous words such as “civilization” and “ancient” have connotations that implicitly promote imperialist and Eurocentric worldviews. As bell hooks writes in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, “**I know that it is not the English language that hurts me, but what the oppressors do with it**, how they shape it to become a territory that limits and defines, how they make it a weapon that can shame, humiliate, colonize.”

For these reasons and more, this guide includes several terms that are commonly used—even in modern textbooks, resources, and articles—that our educators generally avoid. We also introduce the terms we use as accessible alternatives.

Why we refer to “cultures” instead of “civilizations”

The noun “civilization” has a long history of varied uses, which may account for its various connotations. In *Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century: Setting the Precedent*, Alexis Heraclides and Ada Dialla write that during the nineteenth century, Europeans used the term to categorize countries into levels of progress, with European countries being the pinnacle and the standard by which other countries were measured. The concept of civilization was used by European nations to rationalize imperialism. According to Prasenjit Duara in “The Discourse of Civilization and Decolonization,” in the twentieth century, non-Western thinkers and writers broadened the concept of civilization from singular to multiple as part of their rejection of the European nations that had colonized them.

When applied to the study of early human cultures, the term “civilization” can imply a hierarchy, with the apex being those cultures that left behind grand monuments and evidence of widespread influence in the archaeological record. Thus, we use the word “culture” rather than “civilization” **to avoid the designation of greater value to certain cultures**, and to recognize that each early culture has its own intrinsic value.



Why we refer to “early” cultures, rather than “ancient” cultures

Although the word “ancient” is commonly used—even in the California Content Standards—and can spark enthusiasm in students, we aim to steer away from it when referring to cultures because it also comes with certain implications. The word “ancient” can imply that the cultures we are speaking of are no longer in existence.

However, there are **descendants of these cultures still living and thriving today**. In many areas of the world, these descendants continue to practice traditions and speak the language of their ancestors. We avoid the word “ancient” and use the word “early” to communicate that these groups of people did not simply vanish from history; they live on through their descendent communities.

Top: **Eagle-Headed Deity**, Northern Iraq, Nimrud, Neo-Assyrian Period, 9th century BCE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Anna Bing Arnold (66.4.4), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Right: Assyrians celebrating Assyrian New Year (Akitu) year 6769 (April 1st 2019) in Duhok (Nohaadra). Photo by Levi Clancy.



Why we use “BCE” and “CE” instead of “BC” and “AD”

When using dates, your textbook might still use “BC” and “AD.” These dates are based on Christian terms: Before Christ and Anno Domini (Latin for “the year of our Lord”), respectively; it is best to instead use “BCE” (“Before the Common Era”) and “CE” (“Common Era”) for dating purposes, as they are more **neutral** terms.

Why we avoid the word “primitive”

The use of the word “primitive” has long been applied to Neolithic and Early World Cultures and communities and implies a lack of intellect, sophistication, and technological advancement. Often, it is employed to infer that the technology and practices of these cultures were not as advanced as those we find in the present day. To analyze cultures in terms of what they lacked, rather than what they developed in their own culture and context, is anachronistic. The advancements of such cultures, in and of themselves, **builds on thousands of years** and generations of observation, research, and practice.

Additionally, many of their observations remain accurate and relevant today, such as Babylonian astronomical charts outlined in the [MUL.APIN](#), Egyptian papyri, which detail long-existing diseases and medical conditions, and the concept of the number zero, which developed independently across Mesopotamia, early India, and early Maya cultures. Even our oldest archaeological evidence—for example, the 10,000-year-old [Göbekli Tepe](#) site in Turkey—demonstrates the ingenuity and technological expertise of hunter-gatherer cultures. To relegate these technological, scientific, and mathematical advancements as “primitive” undermines the ingenuity of Early World Cultures.

Below: Göbekli Tepe (Turkey), a panoramic view of the southern excavation field.

"[Göbekli Tepe](#)" by rolfcosar is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#) / Cropped from original.



Why we avoid the term “prehistory”

“Prehistory” is a word assigned by settler-colonialists to label a people and their culture as existing before a Eurocentric understanding of history. Often, the term is misapplied to describe cultures that didn’t have writing systems, with the implication that these cultures were inferior. We avoid this term for the same reason we avoid “ancient” and “primitive”: **to intentionally reframe early cultures as having complex traditions that are still practiced by descendants living today.**

Why we avoid the term “pagan”

According to N.S. Gill in his article, [“The Etymology of the Word Pagan,”](#) the term “pagan” has been used often throughout history in a derogatory manner to describe people who don’t believe in a monotheistic god, such as a Christian god. The word “pagan” comes from the Latin word *paganus*, which means “villager” and also held a negative connotation. During the Roman Empire, once Christianity became more widespread, the word “pagan” was used to describe people who practiced the earlier religions. As these earlier practices began to be banned in the Roman Empire, and Christianity grew into favor, the word “pagan” took on a negative religious connotation. Therefore, we avoid using the word “pagan” and instead describe peoples’ specific religious beliefs.

Why we avoid the term “barbarian”

“Barbarian” is another word that may appear in textbooks but that we avoid using. The word has its roots in the Greek word *bárbaros*, which Greeks employed to describe any person, whether friend or foe, who did not speak Greek. Later, Romans adopted the word and used it in a more derogatory fashion, to describe anyone outside the domination of the Roman Empire. When adopted into English as the word “barbarian,” it retained its connotations of condescension toward “uncivilized” peoples, and eventually acquired another meaning; in today’s common usage, when referring to other peoples or deeds as “barbaric,” it indicates that they are evil and cruel. Because of these associations, we try to use the names of individual cultures, rather than group them all together with the problematic term “barbarian.”

Why we avoid the term “sacrifice”

“Sacrifice” is another common word that we avoid using because of its strong connotations, and because it is commonly misunderstood. When talking about the religious rites that are part of a reciprocal relationship between people and deities—which are found throughout the world and in the earliest known forms of religious worship—we utilize the word “offerings.” Offerings can be made in a variety of locations, including temples, graves, and homes. Offerings can be common gifts, such as food, drink, objects, or dances. They can also be bloodletting and the ritual killings of animals or people. The most common ritual killings offered to deities involved animals; human “sacrifice” has been greatly exaggerated for European political and cultural purposes.

Left: **Adorant with an Offering Pot**, Pakistan, Swat Valley, Gandhara region, 1st century BCE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Anonymous gift (M.87.272.9), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Below: **Offering Scene**, Egypt, Saqqara, 6th Dynasty, 2323-2150 BCE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, William Randolph Hearst Collection (47.8.5), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA





BRINGING THE MUSEUM AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING TO YOUR CLASSROOM

Teaching tools that can prepare your classroom for student-centered discussion and analysis.

LACMA's Mobile Programs are committed to utilizing antiracist pedagogy that centers diverse, anti-colonialist, and Indigenous voices and creates an inclusive space for learners of all ages. To this end, we advocate for **acknowledging multiple worldviews**, both in the context of studying ancestral and descendant cultures, and by **centering student voices and the experiences** they bring to the classroom. Whether or not students are a part of the cultures represented in our lessons, we believe that they bring knowledge to the classroom that is relevant to history. Therefore, we encourage every student to critically examine and use that knowledge to connect the past to themselves, their families, and their communities today.

LACMA Educator Nini Sanchez discusses Early World Cultures with a class of 6th Grade students, 2014. photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

ESTABLISHING A SPACE FOR BRAVE LEARNING

Students' experiences can only be fully valued and centered as critical voices in a safe, respectful environment in which students can speak openly and bravely. As facilitators in a classroom setting, we aim to inspire students to share their knowledge by creating a **brave space**—a secure, open environment for discussion that can encourage your students to share their knowledge and experiences.

Here are some ways we create this space in our LACMA learning environments:

- **Co-create community agreements that establish a secure, open environment for discussion.** By creating these guidelines collectively with your students, community agreements can help the classroom feel like a welcome space where student knowledge is valued. Conversely, when students do not feel welcome to participate in discussions, it can negatively impact their ability to learn and challenge one another's opinions in healthy ways.

We encourage you to create community agreements in discussion with your students, and then post them somewhere in your learning space. The community agreements we use with students in our program, or the many other examples available online, can serve as guides for making your own community agreements with your students.



Above: An example of the Community Agreements used by LACMA's 6th Grade Virtual Mobile Program. photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

- **Invite students to connect to the cultural content by adding their knowledge and sharing relevant personal experiences.** On any given day, students enter the classroom with many diverse life experiences, which they can connect with class ideas and the world at large. We emphasize the connections that students make to the content, rather than presenting the content for its own sake. When students share their personal experiences as they relate to the material, they create more **profound and unique connections** and retain their learning for a longer period of time. The open-ended questions we use in our program encourage students to make and share these connections.
- **Validate and amplify student responses** and their diversity to emphasize a democratic learning environment in which students are empowered to speak and therefore grow. We encourage students to use their voices; this can help to personalize the classroom and create individual ownership of learning, so that educators are not seen as authoritative figures or gatekeepers of knowledge. The responsive teaching strategies we use in our program help to validate and amplify student responses.
- **Involve all types of learners by more frequently and/or intentionally incorporating inclusive techniques.** We refine these techniques through action research, experimenting with what works best for the students/classroom, and implementing **praxis**. Here are some examples of inclusive teaching techniques that we have used in our learning environments: object-based learning (discussed below), visual aids to illustrate ideas, music and other sensory stimuli, pair-shares, spotlighting videos when students share their artwork online, waterfall chats to include all voices in virtual environments, captions, high-contrast presentations, etc.

USING OBJECT-BASED LEARNING

Students are experts on their own experiences, and in a region as diverse as Los Angeles County, they bring **unique perspectives** to the classroom that are influenced by their upbringing, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, knowledge, ideas, and worldviews, some of which may include Indigenous or ancestral perspectives. When we center student voices and use their personal connections to the material as the foundation of our teaching, we can create a truly enriching learning experience.

In learning about ancestral and descendant cultures, our program also utilizes **object-based learning** (OBL). OBL can be implemented by choosing an object that relates to class material and providing space for students to share comments and questions that arise from their observations of the object. OBL can be practiced with objects that can also be seen as **primary or secondary sources**; these objects contain peoples' direct experiences from within a culture, group, etc. (as primary sources) or as an interpretation of these experiences (as secondary sources). Focusing on a specific object, whether it is a primary or secondary source, can ignite true curiosity and discussion on a subject matter, and group observation and analysis can activate understanding.

This approach to learning through objects can support several California Common Core Standards for English Language Arts, including the following:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.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.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.*
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9:** Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

* Though students can focus their observations and analyses on the objects being shown, the Mobile Programs team also encourages students to create personal connections by using their background and knowledge.



The **benefits** of object-based learning include:

- Generating **group discussions**
- Creating a **tangible link** between past and present
- Bringing learning to life by **activating the senses**
- **Sharpening students' observation skills** while encouraging critical thinking
- **Enhancing interest of a topic** and helping build personal connections

We implement OBL using analytical techniques borrowed from the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) and See, Think, Wonder strategies. This involves:

- Giving students **ample time** to observe objects in silence
- Asking students to share their first observations by asking, “What do you see?” “What do you notice?” or “What’s going on here?”
- Having students **develop their observations or speculations** by using the object; for example, asking, “What do you see here that makes you say that?”
- **Paraphrasing student comments neutrally** to validate all thoughts and avoid directing what students notice and observe
- **Prompting students to ask questions** about the object. Emphasize that even scholars don’t know all of the answers to questions regarding objects, and encourage students to come up with their own conclusions based on evidence they see on/in the object, while also being open to others’ conclusions

Using object-based learning as a tool in the classroom provides unique and engaging learning experiences for students. While OBL lessons are planned with a learning outcome in mind, don’t expect students to understand those goals or outcomes immediately. Here are some guidelines for using OBL in the classroom to create an optimal learning environment for your students.

Do:

- Encourage students to challenge their perspectives and expand on their knowledge
- Allow students to focus on something you may not have intended for your lesson; their ideas can transform your lesson plan in ways you might not have considered

Avoid:

- Using words like “clearly,” “obviously,” or “must” when forming a hypothesis
- Forcing your interests, conclusions, or lesson outcome on your students



As with inviting students to connect to cultural content, we invite students to connect to objects using open-ended questions. Again, these strategies encourage **student engagement**, **emphasizing the connections that students make to the object**, rather than presenting the object for its own sake. This further centers their experiences in relation to your material, allowing students to create more **profound and unique connections** and retain their learning for a longer period of time. We have also provided links for finding objects to look at with your students in the Appendices, both from LACMA's collection and from other museum collections.

Above: A student observing an object from LACMA's Art of the Ancient Americas collection, 2019. photo © Museum Associates/LACMA, by Stephenie Pashkowsky



CENTERING ANCESTRAL, DESCENDANT, AND INDIGENOUS VOICES

In addition to centering student voices, our program also strives to center and validate **ancestral**, **descendant**, and **Indigenous voices** in our lessons as much as possible. Despite much resiliency in keeping their traditions and cultures alive, these voices have been historically erased, misunderstood, and appropriated through Western and Eurocentric narratives. It is important to acknowledge the historic and current oppression that affects these communities and to advocate for their stories to be told.

It is similarly crucial to be critical of widely circulated, Eurocentric presentations of history that silence Indigenous and marginalized communities; see Joanna Cidalia Miranda DaCunha's paper "[Disrupting Eurocentric Education through a Social Justice Curriculum](#)" for a more detailed analysis. At LACMA, we aim to center the voices of the cultures about which we teach by focusing on primary sources. We also reflect on and reevaluate our language usage per best practices from contemporary educators and members of the cultures from which we teach.

Above: [Basketry tray](#), Chumash, Santa Barbara Mission, early 1800s. Exhibit from the Native American Collection, Peabody Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. Photo by [Daderot](#).

ACKNOWLEDGING ANCESTRAL, DESCENDANT, AND INDIGENOUS LAND

In centering ancestral, descendant, and Indigenous voices, we advocate for including a **Land Acknowledgment** in your lessons to recognize the original stewards of the land on which we live, work, and learn.

If you are living and/or working in **Los Angeles**, for example, there are many Indigenous tribes that still continue to reside on this land, such as the **Gabrieleño Tongva**, **Gabrieleño Kizh**, **Fernandeño Tataviam**, and **Ventureño Chumash** peoples. L.A. is one of the most racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse hubs in the world. It is also home to one of the largest Native communities in the United States. According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), as of 2010, L.A. had the second-largest population of American Indian and Alaska Natives in the country (after New York City), with 54,000 Native Americans living within the city and 141,000 living in the broader county.

Early results from the [2020 Census](#) suggest that the county's population more than doubled over the past decade, to nearly 328,000; it should be noted that these calculations do not include Native Hawaiians.

As seen in the [Latin American Indigenous Diasporas mapping project](#), L.A. also has one of the nation's largest diaspora of Indigenous peoples who have migrated here from ancestral homelands. More than two hundred languages are spoken in L.A., and it's likely that many histories and cultures are represented in our everyday lives and classrooms.

Below: Rock formations at Vasquez Rocks Natural Area County Park.

"[Vasquez Rocks County Park](#)" by [Rennett Stowe](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#) / Cropped from original.



A cross-departmental team at LACMA has been working on Land Acknowledgments for our programs. From LACMA's working Land Acknowledgement, "[These statements signal] our commitment to building networks of support for local Indigenous people, and to being better stewards of the land we occupy. [These are] a work in progress that will continue to evolve through a process of collaboration and education."

Here is a shortened Land Acknowledgment draft that can serve as an example:

"LACMA respectfully acknowledges the Gabrieleño Tongva, Gabrieleño Kizh, Fernandeno Tataviam, and Ventureño Chumash peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Los Angeles County, the region this museum serves."

Involve your students in acknowledging the land. Prompt them to find out whose cultures steward the land they're on using the following map: [Native Land map](#)—this resource, which is actively being updated, shows the Indigenous group(s)/lands in our area, as well as around the world.

Here are further resources to help you write a Land Acknowledgment:

- [Territory Acknowledgement on the Native Land website](#)
- [Indigenous Land Acknowledgement from the Native Governance Center](#)

In creating and utilizing your Land Acknowledgment, it is also important to know this acknowledgment is only the first step in centering ancestral, descendant, and Indigenous voices. Consider ways to **incorporate Indigenous cultural learning from Indigenous voices**—both past and present—throughout your curriculum as well. Take care to **encourage critical thinking** of Eurocentric sources among your students within these cultural discussions. The following sections can assist in creating this learning experience.

CRITICALLY ANALYZING HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS AND INCLUDING MULTIPLE VOICES

Another way to center ancestral, descendant, and Indigenous voices is to **critically analyze how information is presented in any resource**, including school textbooks. Is the content in these resources neutral to all parties involved, or does it focus on a particular voice? While it is often necessary to also include primary accounts of events, it is important as well for both you and your students to critically analyze these sources, as they can be strongly informed by personal, cultural, and political bias.

For example, Alexander the Great is a notable figure within the study of Early World Cultures. He traveled to, made contact with, and invaded a wide range of locations and communities. His exploits and battle strategies were well documented by early historians and are well studied by contemporary scholars. However, in addition to presenting these sources to students, also consider including the voices and perspectives of those cultures he made contact with, such as the Egyptians, Persians, and Indians. Did these cultures view, and experience, Alexander's campaigns as opportunities for cultural exchange, or as hostile invasions from a foreign power?



Above: Portrait of Alexander the Great. Marble, Hellenistic artwork, 2nd-1st century BCE said to be from Alexandria, Egypt. "[Alexander the Great's Bust](#)" by Andrew Dunn is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#) / Cropped from original.



If possible, offer a variety of accounts of historical events and cultures, and **allow for your students to assess the different perspectives in their own way**. Not only will this build a more robust and multifaceted view of history, these discussions can also **encourage students to share and acknowledge multiple viewpoints and interpretations**. This is a practice that makes student voices feel heard and valued, rather than excluded and “othered.” It may take time to thoroughly integrate throughout each lesson, but it is necessary to work on this, as many students are from diverse backgrounds and should be learning about their cultures in a more positive light.

For further information on how to encourage fact-checking and critical research in the classroom, refer to [“How can I become a fact-checker/researcher?”](#) in the “Responding to Student Questions” section.

The [“External Resources”](#) section at the end of this guide provides further resources for discussing Indigenous cultures. These resources often include activities and lessons that highlight Indigenous voices, which you can incorporate into your own lessons.

Left: [Head of Buddha Shakyamuni](#), Afghanistan, Gandhara region, Hadda, 4th-5th century CE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Anonymous gift (M.55.1), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA



BIASES IN THE CURRICULUM

In the United States, the quality of textbooks and materials produced by each state varies greatly, and some may tell history with significant biases, privileging the voices of invaders and colonizers, while diminishing other voices. The State of California History–Social Science Framework makes a concerted effort to tell history from the perspectives of multiple cultures. However, certain biases still exist throughout the curriculum.

Left: **Standing Woman with Crescent-shaped Head**, Colombia, Caribbean Lowlands, Zenú, unknown date, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Muñoz Kramer Collection, gift of Stephen and Claudia Muñoz-Kramer and Camilla Chandler Frost (M.2007.146.622), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Center: **Pot with Concentric Swirls**, Thailand, Ban Chiang culture, 3rd millennium BCE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lenart (M.74.32.6), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Right: **Hand Drum (warup)**, Papua New Guinea, Torres Strait Islands, circa 1850 CE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Purchased with funds provided by the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation with additional funding by Jane and Terry Semel, the David Bohnett Foundation, Camilla Chandler Frost, Gayle and Edward P. Roski, and The Ahmanson Foundation (M.2008.66.12), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

The [California framework for sixth grade](#) begins with the period dating from 2.5 million BCE through 4000 BCE and includes the evolution of human ancestors, migration around the world, and the domestication of plants and animals. The next period of the framework, from 4000 BCE through 100 BCE, focuses on several “civilizations”—a term they define as “complex urban societies.” The emphasis on “complex urban societies” implies that rural or nomadic cultures are somehow “simple,” and is problematic both because of what it includes and what it excludes.

In emphasizing selected civilizations, the framework ignores these huge regions of the world during the time period:

- Most of Africa (including the regions currently called Western Africa, Eastern Africa, Middle Africa, and Southern Africa; the cultures of these regions are not mentioned following the spread of early humans from Africa, which potentially contributes to the perception of these cultures as “primitive”)
- Almost all of North America
- Large parts of South America
- Australia
- Much of Asia
- The Caribbean

The sixth-grade framework, as it progresses to later time periods, also places a heavy emphasis on empires, which demonstrates an implicit value on cultures that expanded through military domination and extraction of resources from other cultures. This emphasis also reveals a view of history as a succession of groups gaining power over one another. This is often at the expense, and at times, erasure of groups that were “conquered,” despite the fact that many of these cultures and their traditions continue through descendant communities.

While the exclusion of certain cultures within a curriculum is not always intentional, nor done with malicious intent, it is part of a legacy of emphasizing Western, Eurocentric cultures and history. In at least **acknowledging the existence of ancestral, descendent, and Indigenous counter-narratives**, educators can offer students an opportunity to think critically about biases in the curriculum.



DISCUSSING CULTURES IN AN INCLUSIVE AND RESPECTFUL WAY

One feature of our attention to language is the focus on not “**othering**” the many cultures represented in the curriculum. Othering refers to a tendency that humans have displayed throughout history to divide humanity into two—between one’s own culture and the “other.” The “other,” because they live by different cultural norms, are seen as uncivilized. Othering often leads to inhumane behavior, as the outsiders are seen as lesser beings. It can also lead to treating outside groups as monolithic. Cultures are not monolithic; and it is harmful to claim that all individuals within a culture, including your own students, have the same experiences. This notion often perpetuates the violence of racism and mistreatment of groups. Instead, teaching intersectionality can begin to work against the idea of a culture having a monolithic identity. Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term “intersectionality” discusses more about that concept in [this TED video](#).

We try to honor all cultures, past and present, by attempting to **understand and appreciate them on their own terms**. Instead of trying to translate cultural ideas into Western equivalents (for example, simplifying the Fenghuang as a “Chinese phoenix”), it is important to understand these ideas within their cultural context. Additionally, we specify the specific origin of an art object whenever possible. So we refer to objects as from Japan, or Korea, rather than as Asian.

Above: A Fenghuang on the roof of the Main Hall of the Mengjia Longshan Temple in Taipei, Taiwan. [“Longshan Temple - Fenghuang”](#) by Bernard Gagnon is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#) / Cropped from original.

It can also harmful to use **past-tense language** when discussing cultures that exist today, or whose descendants are around today. Instead, if we teach continuity (which, in the context of Indigenous cultures, better describes how Indigenous communities used innovations and transformations to establish a continuity of traditions from past ancestral traditions), we counter the notion that these communities are stuck in the past. For example, when talking about Hinduism, it is important to acknowledge that many people practice Hinduism today. One way to talk about this in class would be to include quotes from contemporary Hindus about how they practice the religion and what Hinduism means to them, etc.

Right: An aarti swagatham Hindu wedding ritual in progress. "[A Hindu wedding ritual in progress](#)" by [Alicia Nijdam](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#) / Cropped from original.



Finally, it is imperative that we teach students to **value different worldviews**. While simply knowing of other cultures is beneficial to broadening one's perspective, incorporating respect and multiple perspectives into the conversation can encourage cultural appreciation, rather than cultural appropriation. In cases of appropriation, an aspect of a culture is taken and used in a way that is divorced from its original context, and even worse, may perpetuate incorrect and negative stereotypes. In contrast, cultural appreciation involves respecting cultural practices, connecting and understanding customs, and whenever possible, centering the voices of that culture. Avoid asking students to dress up in the "costume" of a culture they are not a part of, while encouraging research and conversations with people of descendant cultures. By practicing appreciation over appropriation, we can avoid the pitfalls of misrepresenting the cultures we wish to learn more about.

Left: A photo from the Hindu festival of colors, Holi. "[The Upcoming Holi Festival](#)" by [Vivekku1998](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) / Cropped from the original.



DISCUSSING RELIGION AND MYTHOLOGY WITHIN EARLY WORLD CULTURES

A common question from students when discussing traditions and religions of Early World Cultures is, “Are these myths and stories *real*?” It can be difficult to offer a succinct answer, especially when the concepts of myths and stories themselves are incredibly complex.

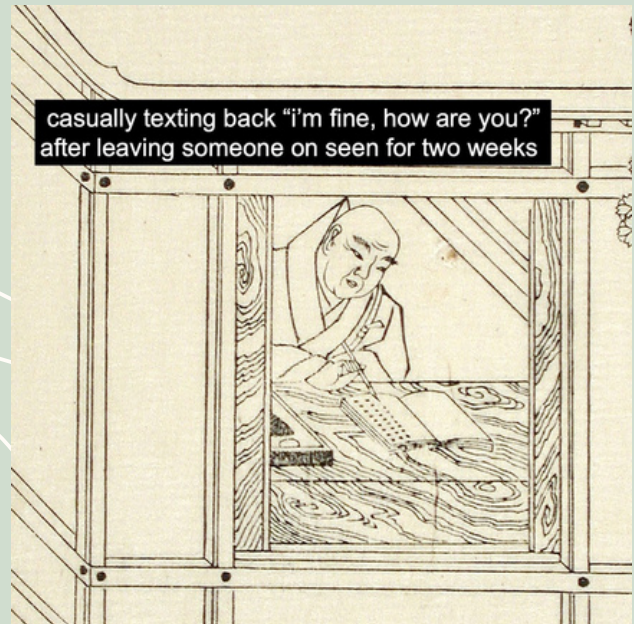
For one, the use of the word “myth” can have the connotation of something that is not objectively true—that it is a narrative suited to entertain rather than to inform. In responding to this question, it is important to **emphasize the roles of these religious stories in the cultures from which they originated.**

What might seem like “just stories” from an outside perspective may be the basis for cultural worldviews and practices. For example, figures in early Greek religion such as Zeus, Hera, Ares, and Athena were not just protagonists and antagonists of stories; they also represented ideals important to early Greek life, such as leadership, maternity, war, and strategy, respectively. Rick Riordan, the author of the Percy Jackson book series, [said about mythology](#), “When I use the term myth, I use it in its first and most basic sense: a traditional story about gods and heroes, not in its later, more secondary connotation as something false or made up.” The figures present in some mythological stories, including the Percy Jackson series, are not just “characters” but abstract concepts personified, as well as actualized holy/divine entities to those believers of a particular faith. Consider asking your students about ideals that mean a lot to them. How would they personify these ideals, and what kind of stories can they create with these figures to emphasize those values?



Right: [The Hope Athena](#), Italy, Ostia or Rome, Roman, 2nd century CE Roman copy after a Greek Original of the 5th century BCE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, William Randolph Hearst Collection (51.18.12a-b), photo © Museum Associates/LACMA

Additionally, there is a great deal of **contextual nuance** in interpreting the religious oral histories and traditions of these cultures—aspects that might seem “strange” to an outsider might make perfect sense to one who is familiar with the historical and cultural context. Contemporary inside jokes, pop culture, or even “meme” culture can be relevant examples to students. Some memes require knowledge of a previous body of work in order for one to “get the joke,” and one who is outside that frame of reference—an outsider to the culture—might see the meme as nonsensical.



Various examples of memes from LACMA's official instagram which all utilize works from LACMA's collection. [1] [2] [3] [4]

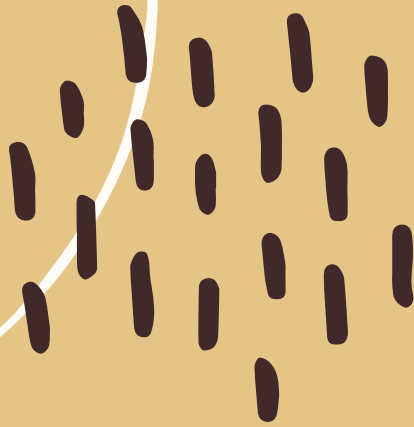
Finally, it is important to consider these religious stories not as “just stories” but as **oral histories and explanations for the world around us**. Consider what would happen if these religious stories were framed, instead of as tales told for entertainment and awe, as the historical and scientific narratives of their culture, created from observation and evolving from repeated retellings, from generation to generation.

For example, many early cultures had highly developed knowledge of astronomy, which they wove into the fabric of their religion and culture. The early Maya, for example, utilized large and precise observatories, such as the El Caracol, the Observatory, at Chichen Itza, to track the movements of the planets Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars. Tracking these planetary positions, in addition to holding religious relevance, with planets such as Venus being connected to deities like Kukulcan, also had an agricultural basis in tracking dry and rainy seasons. Similarly, the early Egyptians designed their pyramids around astronomical events that had religious and agricultural significance, such as the rising of the star Sirius. Sirius was a symbol of their god Anubis, and its rising was a reliable predictor of the flooding of the Nile.

In answering the question of whether these myths and stories are “real,” our educators offer the general idea that it depends on one’s interpretation, as well as whether one is a part of that culture or not. To outsiders, these stories might not have truly “happened” in the scientific sense, with worlds being created in the span of a few days or as the result of cosmic warfare. But they do provide an intimate look into a culture’s worldview, traditions, environment, and innovation, and should be valued as such.

Below: El Caracol, the Mayan Observatory at Chichen Itza. Yucatán, Mexico. "[El Caracol Observatory Chichen Itza](#)" by [Mario Roberto Durán Ortiz](#) is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#) / Cropped from the original.





Responding to Student Questions

A guide to fielding student questions and redirecting their learning to broader, more inclusive understandings of global arts and cultures

Exploring Early World Cultures makes possible fascinating explorations of different communities throughout the world—and throughout time. We can even see the origins of familiar concepts like philosophy, justice, and science. However, the study of these early cultures comes with its fair share of misinformation that has been repeated and popularized throughout the years.

Much of this misinformation stems from a lack of understanding of ancestral and Indigenous practices and beliefs, further misunderstood through lenses of imperialist and Eurocentric understanding. Indigenous traditions that differed from Western worldviews, such as polytheism, ancestor worship, or coexistence with (rather than dominance over) the land, were seen as strange or even morally reprehensible, rather than simply different. Entire distinct cultures and time periods were lumped together and made monolithic. Consider how five millennia and numerous political and societal changes in early Egyptian history are simplified, or how the multicultural and multiregional Roman Empire is seen as a singular culture. This misinformation and “othering” can be harmful in how early cultures are studied and understood.

Textbook definitions and analysis are not all-encompassing resources, since scholars are constantly learning more about the past. LACMA has researchers, art historians, curators, and educators who are consistently adding new information to what we already know about the Early World Cultures.

WHERE DO THE LACMA OBJECTS COME FROM AND WHERE HAVE THEY BEEN FOUND?

The Mobile Programs team would like to acknowledge the contribution of LACMA Art of the Ancient Americas curator, Alyce de Carteret in creating this section.

Museums are often seen as reliable sources of information, and even an authority, on objects in their collections. Many might even assume that museums know every detail about the objects they house—what it is, what it was used for, and where it came from. In many cases, however, this information is unknown and is still being actively researched.

By observing an object's form and design we can make educated guesses on where an object came from and what it might have been used for. However, when we don't have the context of where the object was originally deposited or how it was first found, or the **provenience**, a lot of information has already been lost. Something we might know, at least in part, is an object's **provenance**, or the history of an object's ownership. We might, for example, know how many times this object has been owned and exchanged by different people and parties in the recent past, and be able to answer questions such as: Who were some of the owners of this object? Where else has this object lived? How has the object moved through modern art and antiquities markets? What has been lost that we should, in theory, know?

In a sense, objects have multiple "lives." This can include the "life" it had in its original cultural context, the "lives" it had as it moved through modern art and antiquities markets, and/or the "life" it has had as a museum object, studied and observed by staff and patrons.

Right: **Preaching Sakyamuni Buddha**, Korea, Joseon dynasty, dated 1755, Hanging scroll, ink and color on silk, Image: (approximately): 132 x 160 in. (335.28 x 406.4 cm) Sinheung-sa, Gangwon Province, Korea



This work has been repatriated from LACMA to South Korea.

During its modern life, an object might have arrived at new places or ownership through morally questionable means, such as the settler/colonial looting of ancestral, descendant, and Indigenous communities. Objects that have been pillaged or questionably acquired may not have reliable documentation, where documentation exists at all. In many cases, Indigenous objects/works in museum collections have no **provenience** and limited or questionable **provenance**, suggesting their “life stories” may have lost or hidden chapters. Not only have we lost critical information about the cultural context of these objects, but descendant communities have also lost their connection to these objects.

Museums have recently begun to reconsider both their collections and their collecting strategies, and many museums have been in consultation with descendant communities. LACMA has repatriated, or returned, many objects that had been stolen, such as these Korean Buddhist works, and even now, are working to ensure that ongoing museum exhibits include the voices and worldviews of the cultures from which the objects originate. In preparation for LACMA’s *The Portable Universe* exhibit in 2022, for example, curators worked alongside Indigenous leaders from the Arhuaco culture in Colombia to more accurately understand the context in which these objects were created and used.

Additionally, it is a vital part of the Mobile Programs’ mission to discuss the complicated issues of provenience and provenance when we bring culturally-relevant objects into the community. There is still much work to be done to ensure that the stewardship of museum collections does not perpetuate the same colonialist practices of cultural dispossession, exploitation, and extraction that led to their formation. These conversations about the broader concepts and ethics related to looting are incredibly complex, but are always ongoing.

Right: **Whistling Vessel with Jaguar Attributes**, Colombia, Calima Region (Yotoco Goldwork Style), 100 BCE – 800 CE, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Muñoz Kramer Collection, gift of Camilla Chandler Frost and Stephen and Claudia Muñoz-Kramer, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA



WHERE DID THESE CULTURES GET THEIR RESOURCES TO CREATE ART?

Many cultures utilized the **natural resources found around the areas they lived and occupied**. Cultures that settled near riverbanks, for example, were often able to use nutrient-rich mud to create clay and make ceramic art. Early World Cultures and Indigenous peoples have an intimate relationship with the land, plants, and animals in their traditional territories. These cultures and peoples were—and still are—**stewards and managers of the land**, shaping, cultivating, and caring for their environments. However, geography and the natural environment did not solely determine the resources Early World Cultures had access to. These peoples and cultures also interacted with one another through complex, long-distance networks of **trade and exchange**. The concept of wild, natural landscapes devoid of humans is a Western invention.

Additionally, different biomes yielded different types of resources such as stone of varying colors, hardness, and texture. Depending on the type of stone, these could be used in architecture, sculptures, and everyday tools such as palettes. Pigments and dyes also could be found in nature from materials, including different types of earth and plants, and even from bugs and crustaceans. While synthetic materials have become more common in art-making, natural materials are still utilized today.

It is also important to note, particularly when studying Early World Cultures, that many objects and monuments have eroded over time and do not represent what they looked like when they were made. For example, many Greek and Roman marble statues were colorfully painted to reflect vibrant clothes and a variety of complexions, but often these colors have faded to show the surface of the stark white marble we see today.

Additionally, many objects that were made of material like reeds or plants have degraded over time, thus **limiting our knowledge of them**. Many of the objects we bring into the classroom environment also may have been damaged and had pieces that have broken off. To honor the objects as the creators originally intended, we share with students when objects have eroded over time or have been altered.

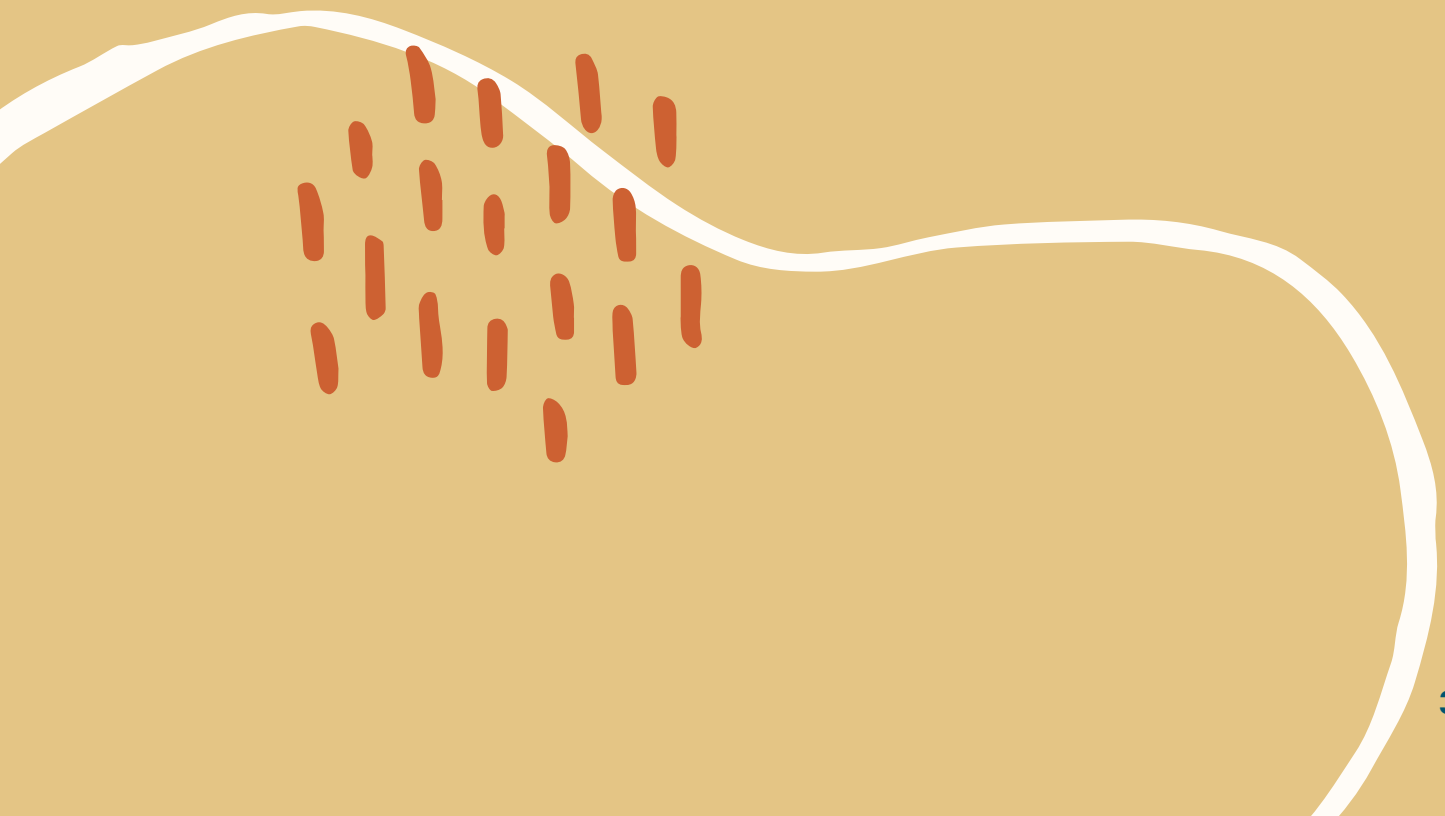
DID EARLY HUMANS LIVE ALONGSIDE DINOSAURS? DID THEY EVOLVE FROM MONKEYS? DID THEY LIVE IN CAVES?

The evolution of humanity, along with its connection to the animals and land around us, is a complex but fascinating conversation to have in the classroom.

A common misconception students may have, relating to early humans, is that they lived alongside dinosaurs. We can share that most of the large non-theropod dinosaurs went extinct about 66 million years ago, that it would be another 10 million years before primates began to evolve, and that *Homo sapiens* did not appear on the scene until around 200,000 years ago. Thus, **millions of years separate the dinosaurs from even the earliest modern humans.**

Similarly, while humans did not “evolve from” monkeys and apes, we do share a **common ancestor**, which lived about 25 million years ago. About 8 to 6 million years ago, human evolution split off from that of gorillas and chimpanzees, our closest evolutionary relatives.

While caves provided natural protection from the elements, **early humans occupied a variety of biomes** beyond these shelters. Humans have a long history of migrating and adapting to even the harshest environments—from cold tundra to dry savannah to arid desert. Many of these cultures still thrive in these biomes today.



WERE EARLY WORLD CULTURES ASSISTED BY ALIENS? WERE THE PYRAMIDS BUILT BY ALIENS?

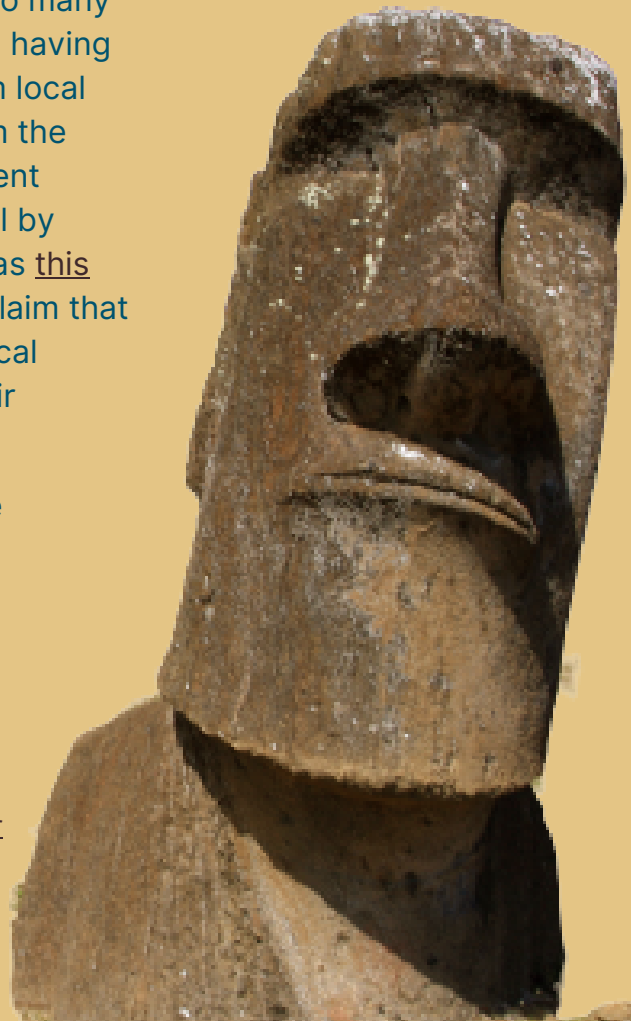
Shows such as *Ancient Aliens* on the History Channel have perpetuated the false idea of Early World Cultures being assisted by extraterrestrial means in the construction of their monuments, or even in building their cultures. This idea is incredibly problematic in the way it **removes agency of early and Indigenous peoples**. Often, the implication is that these cultures were not “advanced” or intelligent enough to create architecture, infrastructure, and technology on their own, and therefore must have required outside, extraterrestrial help to do so.

There is much evidence, both from archaeology and from the modern livelihoods of descendant cultures, that these **cultures were very much capable of the cultural and technological advancements of their societies**. For example, Alexander Stille’s article, [“The World’s Oldest Papyrus and What It Can Tell Us about the Great Pyramids”](#) mentions the construction of the Pyramids of Giza, including architectural plans and building techniques, which were well documented through 4,500-year-old papyri uncovered by French and English archaeologists. These papyri even detail the specific quarries their limestone blocks come from and the food eaten by and the wages paid to the building teams.

Similarly, the origins and construction of the large Moai statues of Rapa Nui were seen as “mysteries” to many outside observers, despite the local population having explanations for their creation. The claims from local Rapa Nui people that the statues “walked” from the quarries in which they were made to their current locations were initially dismissed as apocryphal by outside scholars—until further research, such as [this video by National Geographic](#), supported the claim that the builders of the statues used rope and vertical movement to literally **“walk”** the statues to their destinations.

Primary written and oral sources such as these emphasize the collective—and very much terrestrial—ingenuity of Early World Cultures. To offer that they were assisted by aliens devalues not only their efforts but their societies as a whole.

Right: Moai at Rano Raraku, Easter Island.
“**Moai at Rano Raraku - Easter Island**” by [TravelingOtter](#)
is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#) / Cropped from original.



WERE THE EGYPTIAN PYRAMIDS BUILT BY ENSLAVED PEOPLES?

Jonathan Shaw wrote about this topic in the article, "[Who Built the Pyramids?](#)" Contrary to popular belief, the Pyramids of Giza were **not** built by enslaved peoples. While Egyptian society did have enslaved peoples, the pyramids, along with many other prestigious monuments, were made by **experienced builders and architects**. Evidence of a purpose-built village for workers in Giza supports that these builders were often handsomely compensated for their labor with housing and the best-quality food. Additionally, some graffiti near burial spots (one of which read "The Friends of Khufu Gang") might demonstrate worker's pride and solidarity in their work.

CAN I STUDY THESE CULTURES IF I'M PART OF _____ RELIGION/COMMUNITY?

Yes! Student curiosity regarding study of other cultures can be supported through a purely academic approach. Students are free to study other beliefs and cultures just as much as they are able to practice and experience their own. Educators can approach teaching about world cultures by providing information and supporting resources outside of their textbooks, such as **artwork, stories, and, if accessible, personal anecdotes**. It should be emphasized that students are not under any obligation to conform to the cultures they learn about in the classroom, but rather accept that they can exist **outside** of their personal beliefs and culture, as discussed in the Ackland Art Museum's [Five Faiths Project](#) introduction.

This is also a great opportunity to introduce **cultural appreciation** to students and to center student voices. Encourage students to draw comparisons between their experiences and the target culture while still being respectful of the cultures they're learning about. By giving students the space to understand their own cultures in relation to the cultures they learn about in the classroom, students may gain a better understanding of how they define culture and what it means to the communities they learn about.

HOW CAN I BECOME A FACT-CHECKER/RESEARCHER?

Encourage students to think about their interests. **Everything has a history**, and sometimes finding out the origins of those interests can help enrich their experience with it. For example, what is the history of basketball? Of skateboarding? Of anime? Of video games? Of hip-hop music? Often, such things don't spring up out of nowhere but had some sort of intermediary period between when it was being developed and when it became **solidified as a concept**. In many ways those concepts are **still** being played with, deconstructed, and reconstructed.

Emphasize to your students that they should conduct their own research instead of depending on their teacher to have all the answers. Once students have an idea of what they want to research, point out that Google searches, Wikipedia articles, and YouTube videos can be excellent **starting-off points**. In terms of accessibility, these are great ways to get students into research, as well as transitioning into observing more **academic, peer-reviewed sources**. While it is a given to encourage **critical thinking** in their reading of resources, it is also important to emphasize open-mindedness—to question the biases of resource authors and creators, and their own biases.

As a final note, it is best to always **question and critically analyze** the information presented in the students' textbooks. Research is ongoing today because of the work of archaeologists and other scholars, and new information is often presented, which means that textbooks have to be revised. It is also important to consider the ways in which cultures are being written about in textbooks, who is writing these textbooks, and to acknowledge if voices are missing. Textbooks are just one source of information; there are lots of places to access more knowledge—including the students' own first-person knowledge.

CONCLUSION

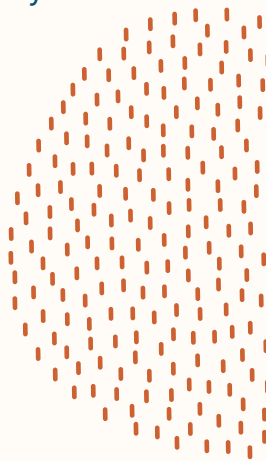
In today's world, it is critical to take students beyond their textbooks to build a broader, more **inclusive understanding of global art, culture, and history**. We must work to dispel historical misconceptions, harmful practices, and loaded language that can be harmful to the communities we discuss. Wherever you are in your process—figuring where to begin or building on an already strong foundation—the LACMA Mobile Programs team is honored to be on this journey with you providing resources and support.

Although the main focus of our program is to bring the museum's primary sources into sixth-grade history–social science classrooms and curricula, we hope you can apply and adapt these resources and teaching techniques across the subjects and grade levels you teach. Along with those presented above, additional resources and offerings are provided in the Appendices of this document, and include "[LACMA Mobile Programs Examples and Resources](#)" as well as "[External Resources](#)."

If you have also signed up for our **LACMA Ancient World Mobile Program**, we are excited to support you and your classroom in connecting with history and one another. If you want more information on signing up for our program, visit our [Education and Public Programs](#) page on the LACMA Website. You can also email us at awmmobile@lacma.org with any further questions or comments regarding our offerings.

Finally, whether you sign up for our Mobile Program or not, please consider sharing your feedback through the survey link below so we can better understand and enhance your experience with us. Your responses support our growing community of educators with additional online resources.

[Click here to start the survey!](#)



ART ACTIVITIES

Art Projects created by our LACMA Mobile Educators which can further support your students in learning about Early World Cultures



Environment-Inspired Silhouette Patterns:

In this activity, students will create containers with silhouette patterns and geometric shapes inspired by their environment and based on designs and motifs from Early World Cultures.

photo © Museum Associates/LACMA by Nini Sanchez

Fantastical Creature Collage:

In this activity, students will create their own fantastical creatures by combining animals together, inspired by traditions and rituals from Early World Cultures.

photo © Museum Associates/LACMA by Polly Dela Rosa



Creating Aged-Looking Paper:

In this activity, students will create aged-looking paper, inspired by methods of communication and exchange in Early World Cultures.

photo © Museum Associates/LACMA by Amanda Wada



LACMA MOBILE PROGRAMS EXAMPLES AND RESOURCES

LACMA MOBILE PROGRAMS COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

Because we work with students over the course of just two days, and do not have a lot of time for co-creating our community agreements, we use the following community agreements as starting points and then invite students to add additional agreements to our learning environment:

- Questions and comments are welcome—we all agree to value what our classmates are thinking about and wondering
- Raise your hand (and use the chat when in virtual environments)—we agree to stay active and contribute, each as we are able
- Practice mutual respect—everyone, LACMA educators included, agree to be respectful of others
- Take space, make space—we agree to bravely share and caringly receive ideas*
- Stretch if you need to—we agree to take care of ourselves and our needs
- Anything else? *It is critical to include the students in this process, because they are also part of the community that is being created in the classroom*

* As defined by [Jackie Wong](#), taking space “is being affirmed, seen and held with care,” whereas making space “is about shifting balances of power so that the people who are taking up less space, and who have historically taken up less space, are invited to step into being affirmed, seen, and held with care.”

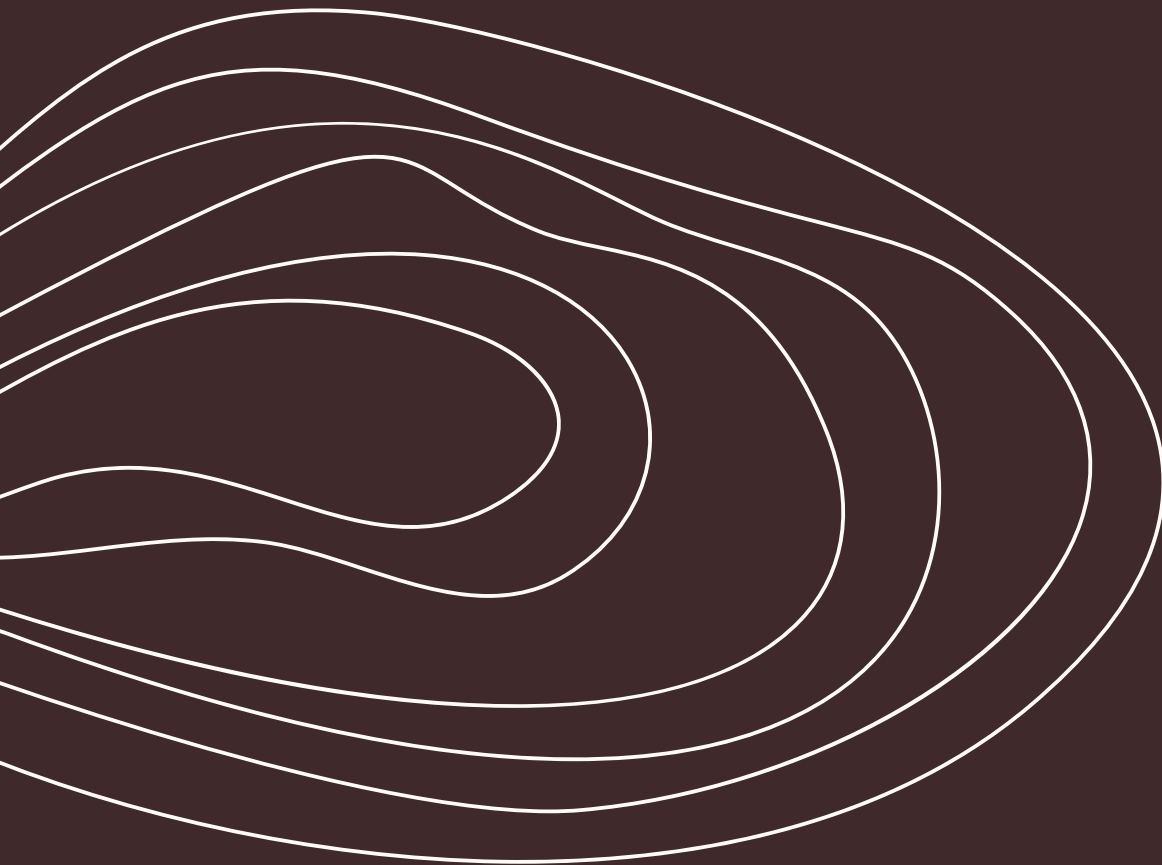
LACMA MOBILE PROGRAMS OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

We use open-ended questions to encourage students to make and share personal connections to the content and curriculum we teach:

- What can someone living a thousand years from now learn about you if they saw the contents of your backpack?
- Do you have a favorite dish that originates from those areas of the world?
- Which plants and animals do you notice most often around your home or city?
- How was making art, learning, and writing in this way different, or new, for you?

While discussing an object:

- If you had this object in your home, what would you use it for?
- What is the oldest thing you've ever held in your hands?
- If you owned this object, what would you use it for?
- Can you think of any objects you own that are similar in shape/size/use as this object?



LACMA MOBILE PROGRAMS RESPONSIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR VALIDATING AND AMPLIFYING STUDENT RESPONSES

Some examples of how we validate and amplify student responses are:

- Praise student involvement by verbalizing and/or using body language and mannerisms to show that their personal connections are valued. On virtual platforms, we also give praise via reactions, emojis, and the chatbox. Examples of verbal or written praise include:
 - “One thing I appreciate about what you just said is...”
 - “Join me in showing some appreciation for...”
- Paraphrase students’ commentary to reinforce the value of what they have shared. Before moving on, acknowledge their comments, and/or ask follow-up questions, such as:
 - “What I’m hearing is [paraphrase]; is that correct?”
 - “Interesting, what makes you say that?”
 - “What did you observe/notice that made you think about that?”
 - “I like how you described this idea/topic/object, would you like to explain more about _____?”
- Build off of and/or make connections between student comments, which can also help create a sense of community:
 - “What can we add to this idea?”
 - “Does anybody want to add to that?”
 - “Does that connect to [previous comment]?”
 - “How might that relate to [previous student’s] observation that _____?”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM LACMA

- **LACMA's Collection**: LACMA is an encyclopedic museum that includes art and objects from across cultures, time periods, and geographies
- **LACMA Evenings for Educators**: Includes classroom resources, art projects, recent lectures
- **LACMA Sketchfab**: Three-dimensional models of objects from LACMA's collection
- **LACMA YouTube**: Check out these playlists and professional development offerings
 - Communities Create LA!—art projects developed for our local communities
 - Educator Programs—workshop and lecture recordings from Evenings for Educators
 - Make Art @ Home—simple art projects; some projects are also explained in Spanish
- **LACMA Teachable**: These courses provide more information about specific cultures and topics for sixth and seventh graders, additional art lessons for K–fifth graders and educator-specific courses

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Antiracism

- [Being Antiracist](#)
- [What Antiracism Really Means for Educators](#)

Cultural Appropriation

- [Cultural Appropriation: What's an Educator's Role?](#)
- [How to Avoid Cultural Appropriation in Your Lessons](#)

Diverse Artists to Incorporate Throughout Your Curriculum:

- [2021 Artists List for Teachers](#): A collaborative list collecting biographical and practice-related information on artists from diverse backgrounds.
- [Alisha Mernick's Pocket Guides](#): A list of guides about multiculturalism and more from artist and art educator Alisha Mernick.
- [Anti-Racist Art Teachers: Representation Matters](#): A resource with links to contemporary artists representing diverse identities that educators can use to engage and inspire students.
- [Creative Growth](#): A collection of contemporary artists with disabilities.
- [LACMA x Snapchat: Monumental Perspectives](#): Artists use augmented reality to explore monuments, representation and history in the Los Angeles area. The art can be viewed at site-specific locations across Los Angeles or experienced by anyone around the world, wherever they are.
- [Serpent River Book by Carolina Caycedo](#): Artist Caycedo gives a walk-through of her artist book *Serpent River Book*. She demonstrates how the book is folded into a serpent-shape object, explains the meaning behind the visuals she chose, and shows the map that inspired the project.
- [Utilizing Contemporary Artists in Your Classroom by Flavia Zuñiga-West](#): A podcast from Everyday Art Room featuring artist and art educator Flavia Zuñiga-West talking about the importance of including contemporary artists in lessons and how teachers can do this in their own classrooms in an accessible manner.

Exploring Early Homo Sapiens

- [There Was No “First Human”](#)
- [What Ancient DNA Reveals about American Prehistory](#)
- [Where Did Humans Come From?](#)

Indigenous Communities

- [Debunking Myths about Native Americans in the United States](#)
- [Indigenous Land Acknowledgement from the Native Governance Center](#)
- [Mapping Indigenous LA](#)
- [IllumiNative](#)
- [Territory Acknowledgment on the Native Land Website](#)
- [We Are Here: Indigenous Diaspora in Los Angeles](#)

Life in Early World Cultures

- [Assassin’s Creed Discovery Tour](#): Please note the main game mode and storyline for the Assassin’s Creed video game franchise feature scenes of violence and content that might not be suitable for younger audiences. Discovery Tour is a separate game mode that can be used for educational purposes. More educational resources relating to these games can be found on the official Ubisoft website.
 - [Life in Early Egypt](#)
 - [Life in Early Greece](#)
- [How the Pyramids of Giza were Built](#)
- [The Origin of the Zodiac](#)
- [Rediscovering Early Greek Music](#)
- [Persepolis Reimagined](#)
- [UCLA Experiential Technologies Center](#)
- [Who Built the Pyramids of Giza?](#)

Object-based Learning

- [A New Way of Teaching in Arts West](#)
- [The works of Doctors Helen Chatterjee, Thomas Kador, Leonie Hannan, and Rosalind Duhs](#)
- [Object-based Learning at a Glance](#)
- [Object-based Learning in Higher Education: The Pedagogical Power of Museums](#)
- [See, Wonder, Think](#): LACMA's version of Harvard's Project Zero's See Think Wonder strategy
- [Teaching Historical Inquiry with Objects](#): A self-paced professional development course by The Smithsonian Institutions
- [Visual Thinking Strategies](#)

Object Repatriation and Provenance

- [The Importance of Provenance](#)
- [Repatriating Artworks](#)

Objects to Use in Your Classroom

- [3-D, manipulable objects from the British Museum Collection](#): especially strong on Egypt, but there are some sections on Buddhist art
- [3-D, manipulable objects from the Minneapolis Institute of Art Collection](#): includes many models from around the world, particularly from Asia
- [Google Arts and Culture](#): website link contains collections from several museums, many of which actually have "street views" of the museum itself, so that people can "visit" a museum online. Check out some of the museums and exhibitions (including at LACMA).

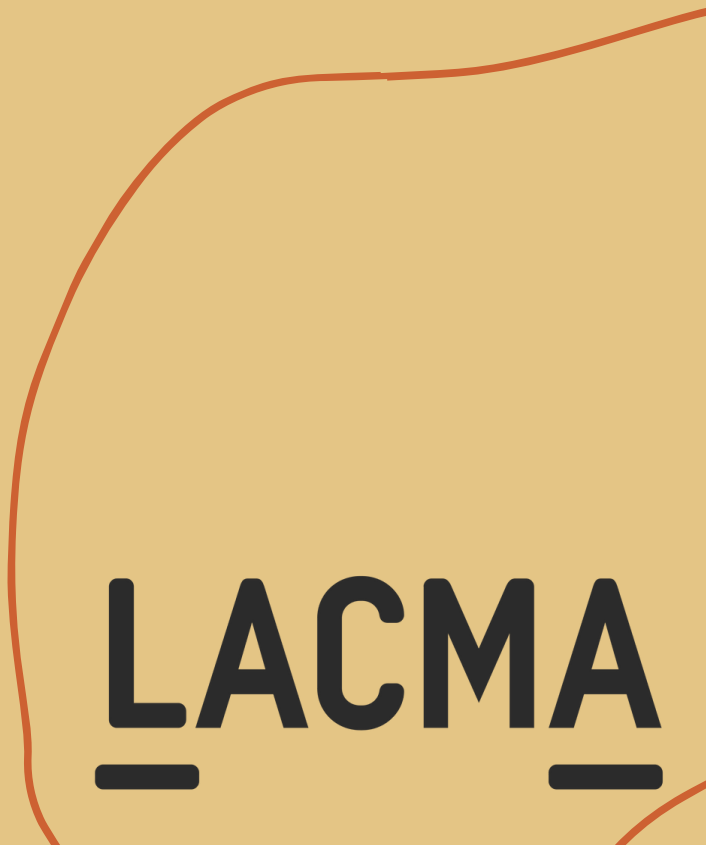
Religion, Stories, Legends, and Folktale

- [A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools](#)
- [Animated Videos of Journey to the West](#)
- [Crash Course: Mythology](#)
- [The Five Faiths Project](#) by the Ackland Art Museum at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- [Maya Stories, Concepts of the Natural World, and Time](#) (Smithsonian)
- [Middle Grade Mythological Fiction](#)
- [Teaching about World Religion](#)

Social Emotional Learning

- [3 Ways to Make Social-Emotional Learning REAL for students](#)
- [CASEL](#) (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning)
- [Practicing Trauma-Informed Pedagogy in the K-12 classroom](#) (Hammer Museum)
- [Using the Arts to Nurture Mindfulness in the Classroom](#) (J. Paul Getty Museum)
- [Why We Can't Afford Whitewashed Social-Emotional Learning](#)





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