

FIRST GRADE CURRICULUM MATERIALS

LACMA's Permanent Collection

THese curriculum materials present six artworks from the permanent collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). The goal of these materials is to have students view art objects from various cultures, describe the objects, and consider their commonalities and differences.

A Shinto sculpture from Japan in the shape of a fox and a lithograph by twentieth-century African-American artist Romare Bearden are featured in these materials. Two highly decorated plates are also included. One plate is from the Maya culture, painted with the image of a mythological bird who was a messenger of the lords of the under-world. The second plate, made in sixteenth-century France, is decorated with a ceramic snake and an assortment of other animals found in nature. Two landscape paintings are also included in the materials; one, a twenty-foot hand scroll, was made in China over two hundred years ago. The other painting illustrates the Southern California landscape, painted by contemporary artist David Hockney.

Each of the six objects is accompanied by background information. Suggested activities for looking, thinking, and writing are included to assist students as they explore the artworks. The activities are also designed to have students connect the objects to their own experiences. Developed in alignment with Grade One California State Content Standards for Visual Arts and English Language Arts, these materials are designed for classroom use and intended to stimulate critical thinking, support creative expression, and promote meaningful experiences with works of art.

This curriculum was written by Lisa Vihos, edited by the LACMA Education Department, and designed by Jenifer Shell and Eunice Lee for *Art Programs with the Community: LACMA On-Site*.

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Plate with Mythological Bird

MEXICO, MAYA, AD 200–600

THIS CERAMIC PLATE WAS MADE BETWEEN 1,400 and 1,800 years ago in present-day Mexico by an artist of the Maya culture. The image painted on the plate is a depiction of the *muan*, a supernatural mythological owl that serves as a messenger of the lords of the underworld. Like other birds, owls such as this were considered by the Maya to be omens or messengers between humans and the divine. Due to their natural affinity for night and caves, owls held special ties to the dark underworld.

- *What are some clues that tell you that this creature is a bird? Based on the way he is depicted, what kind of personality does he seem to have? Is there anything about the way he is shown that tells you that he is connected to the nighttime?*

The plate is painted with red, cream, and black slip. Slip is a kind of liquid clay made of finely ground pigment, clay, and water, which is applied to the surface of the clay vessel using a brush. When the plate is fired, in this case in a pit, the slip fuses onto the surface creating a long lasting, colorful finish.

- *This stylized owl is made from different kinds of lines and shapes. How would you describe the lines on this plate? What types of shapes do you notice?*

Plates like this were used for both functional and funerary purposes. Marks on the plate's surface indicate that it was used, possibly during large feasts associated with religious observations, marriages, and victory celebrations, all of which formed an important part of life for the Maya. Noble men and women could display their power and success by providing guests with generous quantities of fine food and drink served on elaborately decorated plates and vessels. When a noble man or woman died, friends and relatives placed ceramics in the tomb that contained food and beverages for the deceased; many plates have been found in burial contexts, including tombs.

- *What special occasions do you and your family celebrate with food? Who attends these celebrations, and why are they held? Does your family use special plates or dishes at these events? If so, what makes them special?*

Maya artists, such as the one who created this plate, were integral members of elite Maya society; some were even the sons of kings and queens. Maya artists wore elaborate clothing and fine jewelry, and were highly educated members of the nobility. In addition to being trained in the arts of the court, artists were trained in mathematics, history, and mythology. They were capable of working in a variety of media other than ceramic and paint, including stone, wood, paper, and stucco.



PLATE WITH MYTHOLOGICAL BIRD
MEXICO, MAYA, A.D. 200–600
CERAMIC, DIAMETER: 14 IN.
GIFT OF THE ART MUSEUM COUNCIL IN HONOR OF
THE MUSEUM'S TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY M.90.168.13
PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

Large Oval Rustic Dish with Fish and Reptiles

1528–1545, SCHOOL OF BERNARD PALISSY

THIS CERAMIC DISH WAS MADE ALMOST FIVE hundred years ago in France. Do you notice anything unusual about this dish? If you look carefully, you will see that it is decorated with a number of little creatures made out of clay, including a toad, several fish, a dragonfly, and a lizard. Right in the middle of the dish is a large, squiggly snake.

- *What other creatures, insects, or natural elements can you find on the plate? Have you ever seen a plate that looked like this one? What do you think it would be like to try to eat from a plate like this? Why do you think the artist made such an unusual plate?*

In the 1500s a French artist named Bernard Palissy made many dishes like this one with little creatures all over them. Palissy was interested in a wide variety of subjects including geology (the study of the earth), philosophy (the study of ideas), and garden design. Fascinated by both science and art, Palissy found a way to satisfy both of his passions through his artwork.

In order to capture accurately in perfect detail insects, reptiles, and other small creatures, Palissy would use real specimens that he found already dead and use them to make molds and castings for the clay replicas that appear on his ceramics. He also used leaves and shells in the same way. Literally making art from the things that he found in nature, Palissy developed this very particular style of ceramics, which earned the name *rustic ware* because of its emphasis on things that could be found in nature, or out in the country (*rustic* means “typical of country life”).

- *Look at the variety of creatures and other natural elements on this dish and describe what you think the French countryside was like in the area where Palissy lived. Was there a lake or a stream nearby? Tall grass? Wildflowers? If you could go to this place, what sounds would you hear? What smells would you smell? What would you see?*

Palissy started out his career very poor and unknown, but he persevered and eventually became a favorite of Catherine de Médicis, queen of France (r. 1547–59). His work was so popular that many artists tried to imitate him – there are many examples that look like his work but were not actually made by him. By examining the glaze colors (he used very rich blues and greens and not a lot of yellow or purple) and Palissy’s precise modeling of the creatures, experts can usually tell if a plate was made by Bernard Palissy himself, or by someone imitating him or working under his guidance. In recent years, many of his molds and castings were discovered during excavation for the pyramid entrance at the Louvre, in Paris, where his studio formerly stood.

Experts believe that an artist from the School of Bernard Palissy made this plate. That does not mean Palissy actually ran a school, but it is a term used by art historians to refer to someone who works in the same style as a master artist, perhaps even under that artist’s supervision.



SCHOOL OF BERNARD PALISSY
(FRANCE, 16TH CENTURY)

LARGE OVAL RUSTIC DISH WITH FISH AND REPTILES, 1528–1545

LEAD-GLAZED EARTHENWARE (PALISSY WARE), LENGTH: 20¼ IN.

WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST COLLECTION 49.26.2

PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

Shinto Sculpture in the Shape of a Seated Fox

MOMOYAMA PERIOD, 1573–1615

AN ARTIST IN JAPAN CARVED THIS WOOD sculpture of a fox over four hundred years ago. The fox is seated at attention with his feet planted firmly on the ground, ears perked up, and long, bushy tail standing straight up behind him. His eyes are narrowed and his mouth is open to reveal his tongue and teeth. This fox seems to be ready for action.

- *If this fox were a real, living fox what do you think it would do next? Is this an animal you would want to meet in the woods? Why or why not?*

This fox would have stood guard at the gated entrance to a Shinto shrine honoring Inari, the god of rice. Originally, the fox played at least two roles – he would have served as Inari’s messenger and as a guardian of the shrine. Shinto worshipers often visit shrines for special occasions. On those occasions, believers approach the shrine, make offerings, and submit prayers for a bountiful crop, all under the watchful eye of guardian figures, like this fox. Since the Inari is associated with rice and grain, rituals dedicated to planting are held in his honor each spring.

- *How has the artist made the fox seem alert? In what ways are these important characteristics for the fox’s roles?*

Shinto, the indigenous religion of Japan, recognizes the special powers of nature, which are manifested in deities called *kami*. Parts of nature, such as a rock or a waterfall may be a *kami*, and many of them have an animal that mediates between them and the human world. Inari is one such *kami*. Whereas the deity Inari was initially associated with prosperity in agriculture, in more modern times, Inari has also come to be worshiped by business owners as a guardian of commerce and manufacturing.

There are thousands of locations throughout Japan where a fox is believed to have worked a miracle. In these places, one can find a shrine dedicated to Inari. There is one major shrine dedicated to Inari – the Fushimi Inari Shrine – which occupies an entire mountainside on the outskirts of the city of Kyoto. The path that winds up to the top of the mountain contains shrines with fox sculptures, similar to this one, and is lined with thousands of bright-red colored gates.

Aside from being associated with Inari, the fox is also described in the folktales of Japan (and other cultures as well) as being extremely clever and capable of bewitching people. Japanese foxes have a “trickster,” or mischievous, element to their characters, similar to the role coyotes play in the lore of the American Southwest.

- *Do you know any other folktales about foxes? Read Aesop’s Fables, and also stories about the French fox, Reynard. You can also read tales about coyotes to learn more about the trickster.*



SHINTO SCULPTURE IN THE SHAPE OF A SEATED FOX
JAPAN, MOMOYAMA PERIOD, 1573–1615
WOOD WITH WHITE PIGMENT AND SUMI INK, 13½ x 4½ x 10½ IN.
GIFT OF THE 1993 COLLECTORS COMMITTEE AC1993.40.1
PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

Traveling to the Southern Sacred Peak

MIDDLE QING DYNASTY, ABOUT 1700–1800, ZHANG ROUCHENG

THIS PAINTING WAS CREATED BY CHINESE artist Zhang Roucheng about two hundred and fifty years ago. The parts shown here are small sections of the entire painting, which is actually about twenty feet long. The painting is made in a format called a handscroll. In this particular handscroll, the landscape depicted is the mountainous region in China's Hunan Province. On close examination, one can see various details: boats in the water, a long wall, and buildings perched on the mountains.

- *Imagine what a journey through this landscape would be like. Would the weather be warm or cool? What kinds of sounds would you hear? How long would a journey through a landscape like this take? What kind of transportation would you use to travel through such a landscape?*

Handscrolls were an important format in Chinese art in the 1700s, dating back to the eighth century. Viewing a handscroll was an intimate experience, often enjoyed by the scroll's owner either alone or with a small group of interested friends. The scroll would be held in both hands by the viewer and unrolled

from right to left on top of a table. Each scene in this handscroll blends into the next one, and is revealed only as the viewer unrolls it. In this way, the images are experienced in time as well as visually, much the way one would actually experience moving through the landscape.

Notice the seals that are stamped in the upper right corner of one of the sections of the handscroll. Chinese seal stamps were made from cast bronze, carved wood or stone, or molded ceramic. Then they were inked and pressed onto the surface of the scroll, the same way that rubber stamps are used today. The seals were used to identify the owner of the scroll and also to express appreciation to the donor.

Throughout this particular hand scroll one can find six seals of the Qianlong Emperor (r. 1736–96). Zhang Roucheng was a court painter under this emperor and he was, most likely, commissioned, or paid, to make this painting.

- *Imagine you have been commissioned to make a twenty-foot-long drawing of your own neighborhood. What different landmarks would be important to include when describing the place that you live?*



ZHANG ROUCHENG
(CHINA, 1722–1770)

TRAVELING TO THE SOUTHERN SACRED PEAK
MIDDLE QING DYNASTY, C. 1700–1800

HANDSCROLL, INK AND COLOR ON PAPER, 13 3/4 X 249 1/16 IN. (SEVEN DETAILS)

FAR EASTERN ART COUNCIL FUND M.81.21

PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

Falling Star

1979, ROMARE BEARDEN

THIS COLORFUL PRINT WAS MADE BY THE ARTIST Romare Bearden more than thirty years ago. In the image, a woman wearing brightly colored clothes stands sideways and holds a cup in one hand. Other objects in the scene include a table and lamp, the edge of a bed, and a laundry basket. The artwork's title comes from the falling star – a small yellow object with white lines behind it – seen through the window.

- *Look closely at this image. What is the first thing that catches your eye, and why? What details do you notice about the woman and the objects that surround her in this room?*

This artwork is a lithograph, which means that it is a type of print. Many of the lithographs that Bearden created throughout his career, such as this one, are based on collage images that were photographically transferred onto the printing surface. Throughout his life, Bearden experimented with many different mediums and artistic styles, but he is best known for his richly textured collages. He used pieces of magazine photographs, painted papers, foil, fabrics, posters, and art reproductions as his materials.

- *Identify the areas in the image where Bearden used cut paper to create flat areas of color. What other paper, fabric, or painted paper do you notice in this artwork?*

Bearden often used familiar images, themes, and motifs throughout his life, including the guitar, family life, women, rituals, memories of his childhood in North Carolina, urban scenes, and music – especially jazz and blues. This print includes imagery seen in many of his other artworks: handpainted paper, female figures in profile, interior scenes, and views through windows that create pictures within pictures.

Bearden's style was influenced by personal memories and numerous other sources. He drew from a range of artistic traditions, including painters such as Giotto, Paul Cezanne, Pablo Picasso, and Henri Matisse, as well as African sculpture, Byzantine mosaics, Japanese prints, Chinese landscape paintings, and contemporary artists. Historical, literary, and musical sources also influenced him, yet his art and life were consistently informed by his African American culture, heritage, and traditions.

- *Decide on a subject for a collage project (individually or as a group). Use images from magazines, cards, posters, and other reproductions as your materials. Listen to a selection of music while creating your collage. When you are finished, look for colors, textures, forms, or symbolic images that visually represent the space, mood, time, or tempo of the music.*

Romare Bearden had a long and distinguished career. He was born in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1911, and when he was a toddler his family moved north and settled in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City. He considered New York his home for the rest of his life. In 1935 Bearden graduated from New York University with a degree in education. He took art classes in the evening and began working for the New York Department of Social Services, where he remained until 1969. He received many awards and honors, including the National Medal of Arts in 1987. Among his many friends, he had close associations with such artists, intellectuals, and musicians as James Baldwin, Duke Ellington, Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, Alvin Ailey, Stuart Davis, and Jacob Lawrence. In addition to creating artwork, Bearden often wrote scholarly articles on art and art history and actively promoted the work of younger artists.



ROMARE BEARDEN
(UNITED STATES, 1911–1988)

FALLING STAR, 1979

COLOR LITHOGRAPH, 23 1/4 x 18 1/8 IN.

PURCHASED WITH FUNDS PROVIDED BY JOAN PALEVSKY (AC1997.100.1)

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PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

Mulholland Drive: The Road to the Studio

1980, DAVID HOCKNEY

BRITISH ARTIST DAVID HOCKNEY CREATED this painting nearly thirty years ago. The artist has filled this very large canvas with many bright, bold colors. The colors are related to the colors one would normally see in nature (blues, greens, reds, and oranges), but the artist has created an image that is not exactly like the real world. It is as though he has exaggerated the colors and shapes that he saw along the road.

- List all the different colors that the artist used in this painting. What kind of mood do the colors convey?

There is a quality to the picture that makes it a little cartoonlike, as opposed to a realistic representation of the world. Like many twentieth-century artists, Hockney is not so interested in showing the world exactly as it is but in a way that is filtered through his own imagination, which reflects his own delight in the visual world. The bright colors of this painting are typical of the colors Hockney uses in all of his paintings. On the subject of bright colors, he once said, "I like it and surround myself with it because I think, frankly, it makes life a bit more joyful."

- Do you have a color that you especially like; one that makes you happy when you see it? What color is it? Find out the favorite color of others in your class. Do you think it is possible that looking at a painting can make you happy? Why or why not?

Hockney shows us an interesting view of the drive he made each day between his home and his studio along a road called Mulholland Drive. The

road winds and snakes its way along the crest of the Santa Monica Mountains. On the north side of the mountains is the San Fernando Valley, and Hockney represents this with a gridlike map. On the side of the mountains closer to us is the lush, colorful landscape of southern California.

- Find the road in the painting and make a list of all the different kinds of things that the artist passed on his daily journey. Think about a road that you travel every day. Make a list of things that you remember seeing on your daily journey. What do you hear on your daily journey? What do you smell?

It is interesting to compare this painting to the Chinese landscape *Traveling to the Southern Sacred Peak* by Zhang Roucheng. In some ways, Hockney is creating the same sense of movement and time that is conveyed by the hand scroll, but he is doing it in one large image. In a hand scroll, the viewer only gets to see a little bit of the journey at a time; in Hockney's painting of Mulholland Drive, Hockney allows the viewer to see the whole journey all at once.

David Hockney was born in Bradford, England in 1937. He studied art at the Royal College of Art in London. In 1963 he came to New York, where he met the famous pop artist, Andy Warhol. Hockney was intrigued by the laid-back lifestyle of Southern California and settled here in the 1960s, where he has lived ever since. He has painted portraits, landscapes and a series of swimming pools. He has worked in many different media including painting, printmaking, photography, set design, and writing.



DAVID HOCKNEY

(ENGLAND, ACTIVE UNITED STATES, B. 1937)

MULHOLLAND DRIVE: THE ROAD TO THE STUDIO, 1980

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 86 X 243 IN.

PURCHASED WITH FUNDS PROVIDED BY THE F. PATRICK BURNS BEQUEST M.83.35

© 2010 DAVID HOCKNEY. PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA