

SECOND GRADE CURRICULUM MATERIALS

LACMA's Permanent Collection

OVER TIME AND THROUGHOUT VARIOUS CULTURES, ARTISTS HAVE created works of art that share experiences and communicate ideas. These curriculum materials discuss six items from the permanent collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), and represent art from a variety of times and places, including a vessel from the Maya culture; ceramic, stone, and wood sculptures from China, India, and Japan; and paintings by artists Mary Cassatt and Diego Rivera.

A number of these artworks were created to be used in events or celebrations. As students study these pieces, they may discuss the ways objects are used in various cultures, past and present, including special items used in their own lives. Some of the artworks in these materials portray individuals with helpful or compassionate qualities.

Each of these six objects is accompanied by a description and background information about the culture in which the object was made or the artist who created the work. Suggested activities for looking, thinking, and writing are included to assist students as they explore the artworks and related historical information. This curriculum was developed in alignment with Grade Two California State Content Standards for Visual Arts and English Language Arts; it is designed for classroom use and is intended to stimulate critical thinking, support creative expression, and promote meaningful experiences with works of art.

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Vessel with Glyphic Text

GUATEMALA LOWLANDS, MAYA, ABOUT 400–550 AD

THIS CLAY POT WAS MADE ABOUT 1,600 YEARS ago by a Maya artist in Guatemala. It has thin, delicate walls and a round compact shape. Vessels like this were used by the Maya as a serving vessel for ceremonial feasts. The shape and size of the pot make it look as though it would feel just right to hold it in your two hands.

- *Think of something that you use every day that is just the right size and shape for the job it needs to do, like a mug or a vase. When you look at this vessel, does it give you any clues as to how it might have been used?*

The Maya artist who made this pot added a special message around its rim; however, unless we know how to read Maya, we would have a hard time guessing what the message says. Mayan language was written using hieroglyphs or small pictures. Each glyph is a symbol that stands for an idea, word, or syllable, and so individual words can be represented in a variety of different ways (pictorially or phonetically).

- *Look carefully at the rim of the pot and count how many different glyphs you can find. Can you tell what any of the pictures are? Do you see any faces? Any animals?*

Scholars have been able to translate Maya hieroglyphic writing, and as a result, have learned a great deal about the people and culture by reading the texts that exist. Some of these texts are in special books, called codices, and some are carved into stone slabs or painted on vessels, as in this example.

In Maya culture, scribes like artists, were upper class members of society who were educated in math, history, religion, and much more. Equally revered, both scribes and artists worked with a brush and both communicated ideas through symbols. The Maya artist who created this pot covered it with intricately drawn designs using 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 a clay vessel using a brush. When the pot is fired, the slip fuses onto the surface creating a long lasting, colorful finish.

The glyphs on the rim of this pot explain that it had a very special purpose. It was used by an elite Maya man for drinking cacao in ritual ceremonies. To the Maya, cacao—the main ingredient in chocolate—was a very important commodity. While corn was the main staple for eating, cacao held a special place in Maya civilization. It was sought after by royalty, and it was also used as a form of money. Furthermore, the name of the person who owned this chocolate pot is written on the vessel.

- *Can you think of an object that you use at home, school, or maybe in a place of worship that has a special meaning? Think about that object and share what you know about it in a class discussion. Is the object decorated in a special way? How is it used? What special meanings does it have? Design or make an object that has a special meaning to you.*



VESSEL WITH GLYPHIC TEXT

GUATEMALA LOWLANDS, MAYA, A.D. 400–550
CERAMIC WITH RED, CREAM, AND BLACK SLIP, 7 x 8½ IN.
MUSEUM ACQUISITION FUND AC1992.129.1.
PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

Jizō Bosastu

C. 1070–1120, JAPAN, LATE HEIAN PERIOD

THIS SCULPTURE WAS MADE ABOUT ONE thousand years ago in Japan. It shows a figure that is apparently deep in thought, with eyes almost closed and a calm, tranquil facial expression. Notice the gracefully curving lines of the drapery forming repeated arcs that move gently down the front of the body. Even the placement of the hands seems to add to the overall feeling of serenity and of this figure.

- *Close your eyes and make your face as calm and serene as the face of this statue. How does the rest of your body feel when you relax your face this way?*

The artist provides us with some clues that indicate that this figure could be a Buddhist monk or a holy man. For example, he is wearing the robes and shaven head typical for a monk. Also, his empty right hand is positioned to grasp a *shakujō*, or jingle staff. A Buddhist monk would carry such a staff to warn insects and small animals of his approach so that they would have time to move and he would not inadvertently step on them. While this figure is always depicted in the guise of a monk, there are clues that tell us he is an important figure in the Buddhist religion named Jizō. To understand the importance of Jizō and who he is, it is important to first know a few things about Buddhism.

Buddhism was founded in the sixth century BC in India by a man named Siddhārtha Gautama. (Buddhism was introduced into Japan in the fifth century AD.) He was a wealthy and pampered prince who gave up all his worldly possessions in order to seek and attain enlightenment, or a state of perfect bliss. After much trial and error, and eventually long periods of meditation, Siddhārtha achieved enlightenment, becoming the Buddha.

Through meditation and following the teachings of Buddha, any person is potentially capable of breaking the cycle of rebirth and suffering. Once someone has achieved enlightenment, he or she enters nirvana, or paradise.

An enlightened being may also choose to postpone the entrance into nirvana to assist others on the same path. Such an individual is called a *bodhisattva* (*bosatsu* in Japanese). Jizō was a bodhisattva, working to help others along the path to enlightenment. He is very popular in Japan and is worshiped as the protector of children, mothers in childbirth, travelers, and others in distress. His devotion is unique because it is unswerving and unconditional, and he assists all people.

- *Look carefully at Jizō. Based on how the artist has depicted him, what type of person do you think he is? How has the artist communicated this? Try to imagine what he might say if he could speak to you.*

Jizō stands on a lotus flower base. The lotus is a symbol of enlightenment because the pure, beautiful flower rises up above murky waters. In his left hand, Jizō holds a wish-granting jewel that signifies his power to transcend suffering. The jewel in the middle of his forehead is meant to represent his “third eye”; again, another symbol of his enlightened state.

- *A bodhisattva assists others on their journey to becoming enlightened. What are some ways that you help others? Make a list of all the things that you do (or could do) for your family, friends, school community, neighborhood, or the world. As a class, come up with a project that you could do together to help others.*



JIZŌ BOSATSU

JAPAN, LATE HEIAN PERIOD, C. 1070–1120

WOOD, 75 1/8 x 24 x 24 IN.

GIFT OF ANNA BING ARNOLD M.74.117.

PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

Funerary Sculpture of a Bactrian Camel

ABOUT 700–800 AD, CHINA, MIDDLE TANG DYNASTY

THIS SCULPTURE DEPICTS A TWO-HUMPED Bactrian camel from the ancient kingdom of Bactria in present-day Afghanistan. The camel was made in China about 1,300 years ago, during the Middle Tang dynasty (618–908 AD). This is a very lively camel, in the midst of doing its work. It is saddled up and ready for what might be a long journey. Notice how the artist shows us the camel in midstride with its head raised and mouth open as if to call out, perhaps to other camels in the herd.

- *Look at the camel's saddle. Can you see any of the things it might be carrying for the journey? If you were going on a long trip across the desert, what would you take with you?*

The Tang dynasty marked a period in Chinese history that was prosperous and productive. Many foreign visitors and other emissaries came to China at this time. All of China was unified and there was constant trade going on across the whole of the country from east to west and back again. A network of trading routes called the Silk Road extended five thousand miles from China's then-capital Chang'an (now Xi'an) to Constantinople (now Istanbul), the capital of the Byzantine empire, and in the east, to Japan. Silks, ceramics, lacquerware, and metalwork from China were exchanged for items from Byzantium such as horses, ivory, wood, furs, gems, silver, glass, and fragrances.

Due to their ability to store fat (which enables them to go for long periods of time without drinking water), camels are well-suited to transporting goods through the vast stretches of desert along the Silk Road. Camels are also of great value, since they seem to be able to indicate approaching sandstorms through a change in their behavior. Add to these qualities their strength and docile nature, and it is easy to understand why the camel was very important to the process of trading goods across China.

- *Think about things that the United States trades with other countries, such as foods or clothing. How are these items transported? How does trade connect us with other cultures? How does it help us understand people who live in other places?*

This camel is an example of a *mingqi* (pronounced "ming-chi"), a clay replica of a person, animal, or another object that was made to go into the tomb of a deceased individual. In China, it was believed that when a person died, the soul divided in two: one soul goes to heaven, and the other soul stays with the body. To provide for the souls that remain on earth with the body, Chinese tombs were filled with *mingqi*. The number, size, and detail of the objects were an indication of the social status of the deceased; the more prosperous and important the deceased, the more elaborate the *mingqi*. We do not know whose tomb this camel came from, but he or she was probably a very prosperous person due to the large size of this sculpture and the high level of detail it displays.

- *If you shared the belief that the soul needed to be provided for after death, what clay objects do you think would be important to include in a tomb? Think about people, animals, tools, or other useful items. Why do you think it was important to include a camel for someone in the Tang dynasty?*

The camel is made of fine white earthenware clay that was molded in sections and joined together before a first firing in a kiln. The sculpture was then covered with white slip (liquid clay), followed by the combination of green, brown, and yellow glazes. This colorful glazing technique is called *sancai* (pronounced "sahn-sy"), and was used primarily for the decoration of tomb figures like this Bactrian Camel during this time period.



FUNERARY SCULPTURE OF A BACTRIAN CAMEL
CHINA, MIDDLE TANG DYNASTY, C. 700–800
MOLDED EARTHENWARE WITH MOLDED, MODELED, AND APPLIED
DECORATION AND POLYCHROME (SANCAI) GLAZE 34¾ X 29½ IN.
WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST COLLECTION 46.16.22
PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

Ganesha, Lord of Obstacles

12TH CENTURY, INDIA, TAMIL NADU

THIS STONE SCULPTURE WAS CARVED ABOUT one thousand years ago by an artist in India. It depicts Ganesha (ga-NESH-uh), the Hindu god of good fortune and the destroyer of obstacles. Ganesha, with the head of an elephant and the body of a human, is worshiped by many Hindus before undertaking important activities including traveling, taking a test, making a business transaction, or going on a job interview. In many Hindu homes throughout the world, a statue of Ganesha graces the entranceway. According to legend, rubbing the belly of a Ganesha statue will bring good luck. This is evident in this image, where the sculpture has changed color through the rubbing of the belly. This particular Ganesha statue would have been placed in a niche in a temple wall or within a shrine in a temple complex.

- *Hindu belief is that this religious sculpture, like other sculptures of Ganesha, brings good fortune and helps remove obstacles. Name some objects or actions that are considered to bring good fortune. Why do you think people in every culture create things for that purpose?*

Ganesha is wise, but his impulsive nature sometimes leads him to make mistakes. He loves sweets, especially steamed rice flour balls filled with coconut and dried fruit, called *modakas*. Ganesha fills the world with laughter, and he rides a tiny mouse named Mushika. He is often depicted with four or more arms in which he holds various attributes or objects, which symbolize his divine power. In this example, beginning with Ganesha's lower right hand and going clockwise, he holds a broken tusk, an ax, a noose, and a *modaka*, which he is scooping up with his great trunk.

Ganesha's mother is the goddess Parvati and his father is Shiva, one of the three principle gods of Hinduism. Much beloved by the Hindu people,

there are many religious stories about Ganesha, including multiple variations of a single tale. One popular version of how he got his elephant head is as follows:

Shiva was away from home for a long time and Parvati became lonely. She shaped a boy out of clay and breathed life into him; the boy kept Parvati company and became like a son to her. One day, she was going to take a bath and asked the boy to guard the door. While the boy stood on guard, Shiva returned home. The boy did not know who Shiva was and would not let him enter. Shiva became enraged and chopped off the boy's head, not realizing that this was his son – although he soon discovered his error. Parvati was very sad and sent Shiva out to find her son's head.

Shiva's blow had been so fierce that the head had gone deep into the forest and he could not find it. He was sitting down, tired and dejected, when an old elephant came along and asked why Shiva looked so sad. The god explained the terrible mistake that he had made, and the elephant, who had lived a good, long life, offered the god his own head. Shiva gratefully cut it off and brought it back to Parvati. Together, they brought their son back to life, this time with a new head. Shiva thanked his son for having been such a fearless protector, named him Ganesha, and deemed that from that time on, he would be the lord of good fortune and the remover of obstacles. As for the old elephant and his sacrifice, his spirit was set free and he went directly to paradise. In honor of the elephant's selfless act, many temples in India keep elephants as respected guests. The creatures are lovingly cared for and lead colorful processions through the towns and villages on holy days.

- *Collect other images of Ganesha. (Many images can be found on Collections Online at www.lacma.org by searching for "Ganesha.") In what ways are the images similar to this one? How are they different?*



GANESHA, LORD OF OBSTACLES
INDIA, TAMIL NADU, 12TH CENTURY
GRANULITE, 32 X 21 X 11½ IN.
GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. PAUL E. MANHEIM M.74.122.2
PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

Mother about to Wash Her Sleepy Child

1880, MARY CASSATT

THIS DEPICTION OF A MOTHER AND HER CHILD was painted a little over a hundred years ago by Mary Cassatt, an American artist living in Paris. The painting shows a mother lovingly washing her child who is sprawled across her lap. The mother cradles the child in one arm and reaches her other hand into a bowl of water. The mother looks attentively into her child's face, while the child looks up, sleepy yet happy, content to be tended to by its mother.

- *Imagine what the mother might be saying to her little one. Do you think the child is getting ready for bed, or just waking up? Does the child seem to be enjoying getting a sponge bath? What do you think the child is thinking about?*

Mary Cassatt is well-known for her many portrayals of mothers and children. More than one third of her works address this theme. This painting is thought to be one of the very first instances in which she painted this subject. Working in the style of the French impressionists, she uses small touches of color to build up the image. Interested in depicting the effects of light on the natural world, impressionists often painted outdoors to capture certain times of day and particular atmospheric conditions. As a woman artist painting in the late nineteenth century, Cassatt did not always have access to the same public subjects as her male counterparts; however, she did not let these limitations stop her from painting. Instead, she found subject matter that would allow her to express a unique vision and voice as a woman.

The colors that Cassatt chose for this painting are bright and seem to be somehow filled with light. One way she achieved this effect was to use a lot of white in a number of different ways.

You can see that she also uses a fair amount of pink and a variety of blues – sometimes in places where you would not expect to see blue, for example in the skin tones.

- *Look for all the different places that Cassatt used white in this painting. What other colors did she mix with white? How would you describe the colors in this painting? Are they warm or cold, bold or quiet? How does Cassatt's choice of colors affect the mood of this painting?*

Cassatt, like a number of French impressionists, often focuses in closely on her subjects, cropping the sides of the scene in a tight manner. This compositional device is something that Cassatt would have observed in contemporary photography and Japanese prints. Another way in which Cassatt was influenced by Japanese art is the way in which she compresses and flattens the space in her paintings. Notice how the bowl does not recede back into space but seems to be tipped up, toward the surface of the canvas, allowing us to see not only the pattern inside the bowl but the mother's delicately drawn hand. At the invitation of painter Edgar Degas, Cassatt exhibited at five of the impressionist exhibitions held from 1879 to 1886. It is thought that this painting may have been shown at one of these exhibitions in April 1880.

- *Draw or paint two family members or friends. What will you focus on? How will your choice of colors influence the mood of the image? In what ways will your framing – what you choose to include and to leave out – influence the meaning of your image?*



MARY CASSATT

(UNITED STATES, ACTIVE FRANCE, 1844–1926)

MOTHER ABOUT TO WASH HER SLEEPY CHILD, 1880

OIL ON CANVAS, 39 7/16 x 25 7/8 IN.

MRS. FRED HATHAWAY BIXBY BEQUEST M.62.8.14

PHOTO © 2010 MUSEUM ASSOCIATES/LACMA

Flower Day

1925, DIEGO RIVERA

THIS PAINTING WAS MADE ABOUT EIGHTY years ago by Mexican artist Diego Rivera.

It depicts a person selling calla lilies at an open air market. The cloth that binds the enormous bunch of flowers to the seller's back extends symmetrically out from the central knot just below the seller's chin in two triangular bands. Kneeling at the feet of the flower seller are two women, one with a set of gently looping braids and the other carrying a child on her back. The two women and the flower seller are arranged in such a way that their heads form a triangle from which the flowers burst forth at the top of the canvas.

- *What kind of shapes do you see in this painting and can you describe how they are arranged? Does the artist's arrangement of shapes create an image that is stable or chaotic?*

The forms that Rivera uses to create his image are solid and massive. Bold, rich colors define one shape from another, with all of the shapes combined together in a small space. Everything from the flowers to the figures' hands to the four dark heads are large and solid; they almost seem as if they cannot be contained by the edges of the painting. There is a simplicity to the forms as well, and the unusual shape of the bright calla lilies is contrasted with the more regular shape of the dark heads and the clothing that each person is wearing.

While we can easily recognize the subject matter of this painting, the manner in which Rivera works is highly stylized. His influences range from pre-Columbian art to a number of modern art movements, such as cubism.

- *Compare the shapes and colors of Rivera's Flower Day to the kinds of shapes and colors in the glyphs of the Vessel with Glyphic Text (included in these materials). What kinds of similarities or differences do you notice?*

Beginning in the early 1920s and continuing through to the 1950s, Rivera painted large public murals in both Mexico and the United States. His mural work promoted Socialist ideals and also celebrated the popular heritage of Mexican culture. In nearly all of his work – even when the subject matter involved industry or cities – Rivera found ways to exalt nature and the connection between indigenous people and the bounty of the earth. This connection is emphasized in *Flower Day*, and verges on a kind of reverence. Note the flower seller's bowed head and hands clasped in a gesture that is reminiscent of prayer.

Along with the mural work for which he is most famous, Rivera created many easel paintings and graphic works as well. *Flower Day* is one of his earliest paintings of a flower seller, which must have been a very compelling subject for him as he returned to it more than two dozen times.



DIEGO RIVERA
(MEXICO, 1886–1957)
FLOWER DAY, 1925

OIL ON CANVAS, 58 X 47½ IN.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY FUND 25.7.1

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