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Aztec, Central Valley of Mexico



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Calima, Colombia



IMAGE ESSAY #3

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Image List



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Aztec (Mexico)

Image Essay #1



Coiled Rattlesnake, 1100 – 1520 CE

Aztec, Central Valley of Mexico

Basalt

Height: 13''

WAM accession number: 29.0002

LOOKING AT THE OBJECT WITH STUDENTS

This smoothly polished, compact stone sculpture shows a rattlesnake's body coiled up in a woven pattern. The most detailed parts of the sculpture are the snake's head and tail. The head features the snake's open mouth displaying ferocious fangs and a long tongue that splits in two at the tip. The tongue hangs straight down which emphasizes both straight and vertical lines within the round object. The rattles at the tip of the snake's tail are symmetrically rendered and the rattle consists of four segments indicating that this is a young snake. The rest of the snake's body winds around itself in thick, fat coils. There are two small holes drilled into either side of the snake's neck. The reason these were added is still unclear. The eyes were probably once filled with an inlay of semi-precious stone. Typically, Aztec sculpture uses sharp lines and a balanced distribution of weight and form. The rigidity of the sculptural work may be a reflection of strict Aztec society.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Many **Pre-Conquest** temples and pyramids from the Valley of Mexico feature snakes as a decorative motif. Snakes are the most prominent animal in Aztec art. They were often associated with blood, the essence of life, and with sacrifice to the gods. The shedding of the snake's skin may have been viewed by the Aztecs as a metaphor for life, death and rebirth. This association makes snakes important icons of creation, origins, and cycles of life. Several theories exist regarding the role of snakes in Aztec society. Large snakes were often depicted on walls surrounding temples, perhaps because they were considered guardians of these sacred space. The snakes threatening expressions support this idea. Some believe that snakes were placed inside temples as part of cult worship. Snakes also posed a serious threat to the Aztec people because there was no antidote for rattlesnake bites. The powerful role of snakes to the Aztecs remains a mystery despite extensive research.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think snakes were used as decoration on the outside of religious temples?
2. If you were an Aztec who lived in the Central Valley of Mexico, why might a rattlesnake be such a frightening and powerful symbol to you?
3. Name two characteristics typical of Aztec sculpture. Do you think the way a piece of art is designed can reflect the ideas of the society in which it was created? Why or why not?



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Image Essay #2



Gold Ceremonial Tweezers, 900 – 1100 CE

Calima, Colombia

Repousee Gold

Height: 7 ¼”

WAM accession number: 57.262

LOOKING AT THE PAINTING WITH STUDENTS

These tweezers depict an **anthropomorphic** (an-throw-po-mor-fic) figure with a large head connected to a smaller head by a short simplified torso. The top head has large bumps coming from either temple and **earspools** pierce each ear. The mouth is open, displaying an even row of stylized teeth. The cheeks are round and plump, making the face look very naturalistic. Notice how the eyebrows and nose are raised. Below the larger head is the torso with arms at either side, elbows bent, hands in fists. Attached to the end of the torso is a smaller head, also three-dimensional with prominent eyebrows and an open mouth revealing teeth.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Most **Pre-Conquest** societies including early Colombian society probably included an elite religious and political class who used gold objects like this one. This elite social group would have included priests, warriors, rulers, as well as artists who specialized in metalwork or ceramic work. (Objects such as these gold tweezers would have helped the elite nobility to maintain its power during life and assure their continued social position even in death.) Many such objects have been found in large burial sites.

Men living in Pre-Colombian society used tweezers to remove their facial hair in Peru and southwestern Colombia. This pair of tweezers was probably only ceremonial. Tweezers made for daily use were much simpler than these. The elaborate form of these tweezers implies that they were probably made for a noble person or member of the elite class. Tweezers have been found at many Pre-Colombian burial sites.

In early South American cultures, metal was also associated with the two most important celestial bodies: the sun and the moon. Gold and silver were associated with myths and legends that involved the sun and the moon. All of these associations added to the power of the perceived importance of gold and its wearer in Pre-Colombian society.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who do you think these tweezers were made for? Why?
2. Pretend that you are an archeologist and found these tweezers at a large burial site. Can you think of a possible reason these tweezers may have been buried here?
3. The color of metal was symbolic to early South American cultures. What celestial body was gold associated with? Why do you think this is important?

Image Essay #3



Profile Head, 600-900 CE

Maya (Mexico/Guatemala)

Stucco

Height: 11"

Accession Number: IL.2002.30.51

Loaned by the Directors of the Austen-Stokes Ancient Americas Foundation

LOOKING AT THE PAINTING WITH STUDENTS

This **stucco** profile of a man is an excellent example of classic Maya art. It is sculpted with a high degree of **realism** and remarkable attention to detail is taken in describing the face. Follow the line of the figure's profile beginning at the top. You can see that the tapered forehead slopes down to his long pronounced nose, his lips are parted, and his chin is sunken. The figure's eye is heavy-lidded and on the side of his face, an **earspool** depicts a square nosed serpent. This serpent **earspool** matches others that were worn by Maya rulers. At the back of the head there is a break, which indicates that the figure probably wore an elaborate headdress. The profile's half-moon eye, serpent **earspool**, slightly parted lips, long sloping nose and forehead all exemplify physical ideals in Maya culture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Stucco sculpture was one of the most important art forms in the Maya region. To make stucco, artists had to excavate large amounts of **limestone**, which they would burn using wood. Some speculate that the enormous amounts of wood needed to make stucco sculptures may have contributed to deforestation in the area. Human profile panels such as this one were often found on the **facades** (fah-sades) of Maya buildings such as temples. Priests, warriors, nobility, and kings were the most popular subjects for profile sculptures.

Most nobility in ancient Maya culture underwent ritual deformations as infants in order to conform to cultural ideals of beauty. At birth, a board was fastened around the skull for several days. The pressure was enough to create a long tapered forehead such as the one depicted here. It is possible that this head shaping would have been done to make the head look like an ear of corn. Corn or **maize** was the staple crop of the ancient Maya and according to Maya myth, all of humankind was originally created from it. In fact, the corn god, **Yum Kaax** (yum-kosh) was often depicted with a husk attached to a sloping elongated head. A similar type of board was also affixed to the nose, which elongated the bridge so that the slanted forehead appeared to continue in a straight line down to the tip of the nose.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Looking at the facial characteristics of this profile, what tells us he might have been a member of royalty?
2. Why do you think there is a break at the back of the figure's head?
3. Name possible reasons the ancient Maya would shape their heads.

Image Essay #4



Kero, 1400-1532

Inca (Peru)

Wood

Height: 12 ¼''

Accession number: IL.2002.30.19

Loaned by the Directors of the Austen-Stokes Ancient Americas Foundation

LOOKING AT THE OBJECT WITH STUDENTS

This **kero** (or **qero**) is carved from a single piece of wood. The mouth of the **kero** is wider than the rest of the form which is quite simple except for the creature grasping the side and rim creating a handle. Three horizontal lines are carved around the vessel. One line is very close to the top, the second line is half way down the vessel and the third is one quarter of the way from the bottom of the **kero**. The body of the creature on the rim is sharp and angular providing an interesting contrast to the conical form of the **kero**. Look at the creature's tail, it wraps around the circumference of the vessel. The creature's head looks like an **abstracted** jaguar and its tail resembles a lizard. This combination of animals was known as a **katari**.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Keros were conical vessels used by the Inca for drinking on festive occasions, collecting the blood of sacrificial llamas, and for various rituals. In one ritual, ancient Incans would pour **chicha** into the ground as an offering to the gods. In another ritual, Incans drank **chicha** from **keros** to solidify the political relationship between rulers and their political subordinates. **Keros** served as symbols of an Inca ruler's generosity and reminder of his dominance. Gold and silver **keros** were crafted for the elite and wood **keros** were made for a ruler's subordinate. Before the Spanish invasion, most wood **keros** were decorated with **incised** geometric decoration. After the Spanish arrived, **keros** were decorated with painted scenes.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What was the function and purpose of a **kero**? Who would have used this **kero** and how do we know?
2. What is a **katari**?
3. Looking at its surface decoration, is there a way to tell when this **kero** was made?

Image Essay #5



Plaque with Seated Ruler, 600-900 CE

Maya (Mexico/Guatemala)

Jade

Height: 3"

Accession Number: IL.2002.30.55

Loaned by the Directors of the Austen-Stokes Ancient Americas Foundation

LOOKING AT THE OBJECT WITH STUDENTS

This small jade plaque depicts a Maya ruler sitting with his legs crossed. He is wearing a simple loincloth, anklets, bracelets and a small beaded necklace. The ruler's head is facing left and his pose is also depicted on other Maya jade plaques and painted vases. His right arm is bent back and held close to his body with his fingers in a specific arrangement and his left hand is placed on his knee. The figure is wearing a headdress which depicts the Principal Bird **Deity**. The bird's jaw extends out and above the ruler's head and the bird's feathers fall over the his shoulder.

Look at the **composition** of the plaque. The image almost extends to the edges. The border of the plaque is barely visible and when scholars compare this to other plaques it is clear that the border around this plaque is meant to be seen as the entrance to the Underworld or Xibalba (shee-bal-bah). Therefore, the seated ruler should be viewed as a deceased ancestor enclosed in the jaws of the Underworld. This plaque may have been intended as an offering for a ruler's burial.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jade was viewed throughout Mesoamerica as an extremely valuable material, even more precious than gold. During the Spanish Conquest, Cortes's men learned that green stones were so highly valued that gold was easily traded for green glass beads. Even the Maya word for green and blue "yax" connotes preciousness.

This plaque was carved in **low relief** by a master **lapidary** artisan. The size and variety of the drill marks indicate that the artist was highly skilled. Because jade is such a difficult stone to carve the artist may have painted the surface before cutting, carving and drilling the stone. Notice the figure's eye. It is elegantly crafted with a simple drill mark made at the perfect angle to create a classic Maya half moon eye.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do we know jade was important to the Maya?
2. What is the significance of the border around the plaque?
3. What processes and techniques did the artist use to make this plaque? Was the artist skilled? What evidence can see to support your answer?

Image Essay #6



Male Figure, 1400-1532 CE

Inca (Peru)

Silver

Accession number: IL.2002.30.25

Loaned by the Directors of the Austen-Stokes Ancient Americas Foundation

LOOKING AT THE OBJECT WITH STUDENTS

This small silver figure depicts an Inca nobleman. His hands are placed flat on his chest with fingertips touching. The figure's head is disproportionately larger than the rest of his body and contains the most amount of detail. The face is naturalistically modeled with large heavy-lidded eyes and an **archaic smile**. The figure's earlobes appear stretched. This would have occurred because of the **earspools** that noblemen wore. The bulge in the figure's cheek indicates that he is chewing on coca leaves which was part of an elite Inca ritual in **Pre-Conquest** society. The sculpture is smoothly polished and the nobleman's body is composed of simple tube-like shapes. The cylindrical cap the man is wearing, the chewing of coca leaves, and his stretched earlobes all identify the figure as a member of an elite social class.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Silver figures such as this have been found buried alongside sacrificial victims all over the Inca Empire. The figurines were clothed in elaborate ceremonial clothing with brightly colored textiles, feathers, and shells. They were presented as ritual offerings or as burial goods. Only the elite in **Pre-Conquest** society wore objects of silver and gold. They were believed to ensure noble social status in life and in death when placed as offerings in tombs. Because of its color, silver was often associated with the moon or with moonlight. Silver is frequently mentioned in Inca myths and rituals and was referred to as the "rain of the moon". When the Spaniards arrived in South America, the gold and silver artifacts they discovered dazzled them.

Silver requires greater technical ability and knowledge than the working of gold. This is because it must be smelted and refined before it can be made into objects. The ancient Peruvians mastered a variety of silver techniques: pouring, refining, laminating, finishing and polishing including **filigree** making.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. This object was made for a member of an elite class. What does that say about the relationship of art to social class? Is this situation still true today? What does this say about these ancient societies?
2. How do you think the Spanish colonists reacted when they first encountered Inca art?
3. How do we know that Inca artists were sophisticated metalsmiths?

Image Essay #7



Head of Xipe Totec, (she-pe-to-tek) 1100-1520 CE

Aztec

Wood

Height: 4 ½”

Accession Number: IL.2002.34.74

Loaned by the Directors of the Austen-Stokes Ancient Americas Foundation

LOOKING AT THE OBJECT WITH STUDENTS

This small wooden head depicts the lifeless face of the deity **Xipe Totec** (she-pe-to-tek). Although the wood has been well preserved, the surface shows some wear. The sculpture is simple and there is delicate attention to the details of the face. The figure's eyes are almost closed, his cheeks are sunken, his earlobes are stretched from **earspools**, and his mouth is wide open. If you look closely at the area below the lower lip, you will see a small hole. This was probably used for a **labret**. Although you cannot see in this reproduction, there is a line at the top of the head that extends to the ears. Behind this line are a series of about fifty circular drill holes, perhaps for attaching hair. There is also a rectangular shape cut out of the back of the head - this indicates that the head was probably stuck on top of a staff and used as a mask.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This sculpture represents someone wearing the flayed skin of another person. This ritual was performed in honor of **Xipe Totec** (she-pe-to-tek), who was known as 'our lord the flayed one'. He was a god of planting and springtime. In the Aztec calendar, the month of March was devoted to **Xipe Totec** (she-pe-to-tek). Priests in ancient Aztec culture practiced a ritual which imitated the cycle of **maize**. This ritual related to the concepts of springtime, to fertility and the shedding of skin. During the ritual, a priest would wear the skin of a sacrificial victim for twenty-one days, until it rotted off. A new clean person would then "emerge" like plants that sprout out of the soil.

There are many images of **Xipe Totec** (she-pe-to-tek) in stone, ceramic, and wood that survive, however, wood sculptures such as this one are rare. The soil in Mexico is very humid and under these conditions wood is very difficult to preserve. Although the thought of someone wearing flayed skin is gory to people living today, the ancient Aztecs depicted **Xipe Totec** (she-pe-to-tek) with great attention to detail, indicating the importance of this deity.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What clue tells us that this sculpture was probably used as a mask in a ritual?
2. Who was **Xipe Totec** (she-pe-to-tek)? If you were an ancient Aztec why would **Xipe Totec** (she-pe-to-tek) be important to you?
3. Why is it rare that this sculpture has survived so many years?

Image Essay #8



Dancing Figure with Headdress, 600-900 CE

Maya, Jaina (hey-nah)

Campeche, Mexico

Ceramic

Height: 14"

Accession Number: IL.2002.30.52

LOOKING AT THE OBJECT WITH STUDENTS

This dancing ceramic figure is wearing a very elaborate costume consisting of a **deity** headdress, **backrack** and jewelry. He is a member of the Maya elite and this piece captures him participating in a ritual. We can feel movement when looking at this sculpture. The figure's right arm is placed across his stomach, his left hand is flexed and reaching out toward us and his legs are bent slightly. The headdress is removable and there is a hole where the **backrack** is attached. There is also a sense of weight about this piece. We feel the heaviness of the belt which supports the backrack as well as the figure's large necklace and **earspools**. Notice the base the figure is standing on, which is unusual but necessary to balance his weight. The figure's headdress is made up of feathers surrounding the head of a **deity**. The **deity** creature has round eyes and fangs. Look at the headdress upside down. Here is another face; this image looks like a Maya god. Under the weight of the costume, there is a stocky body. The limbs are simple with little detail. His eyes are half open and lips are parted which indicate that he is in a trance like state while performing a ritual dance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This figure was found on the island of Jaina (hey-nah). The island of Jaina (hey-nah) functioned as a necropolis or burial ground, for the Maya elite. It may have been part of the mainland or connected to the mainland by a causeway in ancient times. Ceramic figures such as this one were produced for tombs as burial offerings and scholars estimate around 20,000 burials on the island. Many of the Jaina (hey-nah) figures were made in a mold and mass-produced for mourners bringing bodies of deceased relatives. Other figures such as this one, were most likely hand made. The figure's posture and the great attention to the detail in his costume prove to us that he was hand crafted.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Look at the posture and costume of the figure. Who is this man and what is he doing?
2. Where was this sculpture found? What was its purpose?
3. How do we know that this figure was not made in a mold?

Image Essay #9



Composite Animal Pendant, 800 – 1500 CE

Veraguas-Gran Chiriqui, Panama

Gold and copper **alloy**

Height: 3 ¼”

WAM accession number: 57.301

LOOKING AT THE PAINTING WITH STUDENTS

This gold **composite** pendant combines the physical characteristics of a frog, a crocodile and a shark. A double-headed crocodile is coming from the creature’s mouth. This motif is seen frequently in **Pre-Conquest** Panamanian art. Smaller crocodile heads sprout from the creature’s “shoulders” and support the double-headed crocodiles seen coming out of the animal’s mouth. The head appears to be a frog with large bulging eyes. Along the creature’s spine are open designs in the shape of triangles, much like spines on the back of a crocodile. The creature’s limbs have **stylized** crocodile heads at their ends. A large, fish-like tail protrudes from the creature’s end. Finally, the open mouth, seen only in profile, displays an impressive set of pointed teeth, enlarged versions of crocodile or shark teeth.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the Panamanian upper class would most likely have worn gold ornaments such as this pendant as well as gold ear and nose ornaments. A pendant like the one you see here would have been worn either by a chief or by one of his warriors. Fierce aggressive animals are often combined in ancient Panamanian jewelry. Some of these composite animals may be emblematic of specific **Pre-Conquest** chiefs. It is believed that chiefs may have combined the salient qualities of various animals into individual emblems of their power.

A warrior would probably have worn this pendant during battle. The intent was to dazzle and frighten the enemy with the power of gold and the fierceness of the composite creature. Additionally, gold was associated with status and power within the society, so such an ornament would indicate that the wearer was an important person.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who do you think would have worn this pendant?
2. Name some adjectives that describe the pendant. Why do you think this pendant would have been worn in battle?
3. What does composite mean? Why might a chief or his warrior wear a composite pendant such as this one?

Image Essay #10



Head of Xochipilli, (shok-e-pil-le) 1100-1520 CE

Aztec (Mexico)

Obsidian

Height: 5 ½”

Accession Number: IL.2002.30.75

Loaned by the Directors of the Austen-Stokes Ancient Americas Foundation

LOOKING AT THE OBJECT WITH STUDENTS

This elegant **obsidian** sculpture represents the Aztec **deity Xochipilli** (shok-e-pil-le) . The head appears extremely smooth, but under close examination we see several small abrasions on the surface which indicate that an incredible amount of time went into carving the hard stone. There are very few details on his face. For example, there are no indentations under the nose where we would expect to see nostrils. Notice the area where the eyes are located. It is much rougher in texture than the rest of the head. This area of the sculpture was not meant to be seen, but was probably once inlaid with stone. Details such as the small wrinkles in his forehead and his parted lips, give the portrait an expressive quality. It looks as though he might be about to ask us a question.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Xochipilli (shok-e-pil-le) was known as the “flower prince”. He was the patron god of creativity and was associated with eating, music, poetry, and dance. **Xochipilli** (shok-e-pil-le) had dual roles in Aztec society; he represented vitality and creative power but also punished those who over-indulged.

Obsidian is an extremely hard volcanic rock that is very sharp like glass. It was flaked and broken off of larger stones and made into tiny **effigy figures**, small **lancets** and occasionally, larger pieces of sculpture like this one. Rarely is this amount of obsidian seen in one piece. Many pieces of Aztec sculpture were destroyed after the Spanish Conquest. The breaks at the top of the head and neck tell us that the object was broken off of a larger piece of sculpture.

There is an interesting history surrounding **Head of Xochipilli** (shok-e-pil-le). In the 19th century it was brought to the National Museum in Mexico City, where scholars declared it a forgery. (Remember, this amount of obsidian was rare to see in one piece of sculpture.) After 1910, the sculpture left the museum, possibly because it was thought to be a fake. The head was purchased by a dealer who believed it to be real, and the sculpture was sold to its present owner who was finally able to verify its authenticity using scientific testing.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Look at the figure’s face. What two facial characteristics make up his expression? What does this expression say to you?
2. Who was **Xochipilli** (shok-e-pil-le) and why did the ancient Aztec people worship him?
3. Why might scholars who lived before scientific testing, have believed this sculpture was a forgery?

Lesson Plan

Create Your Own Secret Glyphs

Grade Level

Elementary School

Interdisciplinary Connections

Visual Arts, Social Studies, Language Arts

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. Discuss how the ancient Maya alphabet is similar or different than ours.
2. Create their own picture alphabet.
3. Send a secret message to a classmate.
4. Receive a secret message from a classmate to decode.

Vocabulary

Hieroglyph- a system of writing mainly in pictorial characters.

Lesson Materials

Envelopes
Paper
Colored pencils or markers
Pencil
Ruler

Background

In honor of the ancient Maya, students will create their own picture alphabet. They will send a secret message and decoder key to a classmate in a sealed envelope. Using their classmates decoder students will reveal the message.

Procedure

1. Discuss and look at Maya **hieroglyphs**.
2. Distribute materials to students.
3. On a sheet of paper, have the students create 26 boxes (one for each letter of the alphabet) using a ruler.
4. In each box, have the students write one letter and draw a simple picture or symbol to represent that letter. Ex. Symbols can represent the phonemic sound made by the letter (e.g. a picture of a bird can stand for the letter "b"), or can be abstract designs created by the students. This is the key to the **hieroglyphic** code.
5. Have the students compose a message to a classmate using the picture symbols they created and then have them seal the message in an envelope. Be sure that the students include the copy of the key so that their classmate can decode the message.

Closure/Assessment

1. Ask students to share their picture alphabets and describe the system they created.
2. Ask students to discuss how the Maya alphabet is similar/different to the English alphabet.

Lesson Plan

Ancient Anthropomorphic Art

Grade Level Elementary School
Interdisciplinary Connections Social Studies, Visual Arts

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. Become familiar with design elements and functions of Ancient American gold and silver objects.
2. Understand the term **anthropomorphic**.
3. Begin to understand the **repousse** technique.

Vocabulary **Repousse** - metal which has been hammered into a raised design from the back.
Anthropomorphic- ascribing human characteristics to non-human things.

Lesson Materials Lightweight cardboard
Gold and silver tempera paint or gold and silver foil
Scissors
Glue
String
Pencil
Paper
Images 2 & 9 from this kit

Lesson Description

Students will choose an everyday object that they will give human characteristics to. Students will then create their own **anthropomorphic** object inspired by the gold and silver artwork found in ancient American art.

Procedure

1. Discuss Images 2 and 9 with the students. Use the Review Questions to facilitate discussion.
2. Review the word **repousse**. View Image 2 to see **repousse** technique.
3. Review the word **anthropomorphic**. Use Image 2 to see an example **anthropomorphic** art.
4. Have students choose an everyday object they would like to give human characteristics to. For example, they might create a cup with ears or a car with legs.
5. Distribute materials to students.
6. Have students cut the basic shape of their proposed object out of paper. This shape will be the model for the final design.
7. Students will use their paper patterns to trace the design onto cardboard and cut the shape out.
8. Students will then add surface details to their sculpture by gluing pieces of cardboard and string onto the body. The raised surface design illustrates the **repousse** technique.
9. After everything is glued, students can paint over their objects with gold or silver paint or use foil to cover the object.

Closure/Assessment

1. Have each student discuss the design and function of his or her work.
2. Students should explain how their objects are **anthropomorphic**.

Lesson Plan

Discovering Ancient Maya Artifacts

Grade Level

Upper Elementary –Middle

Interdisciplinary Connections

Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. Review information about the ancient Maya.
2. Look at images of Maya artifacts
3. Work in pairs to learn about an artifact, listing key facts on a note card.
4. Create drawings of the artifact.
5. Share their drawings and information about their artifact with the class.

Lesson Materials

Books containing information and images of Maya artifacts (see SELECTED BOOKS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS in this kit)

Object 3, 5 and 8 from this kit.

4 x 6 note cards (one for each pair of students)

8 ½ x 11 paper (one sheet for each pair of students)

pencils

erasers

crayons or colored pencils

Lesson Description

Students will explore images of various ancient Maya artifacts. They will work in pairs to research information about the object listing facts on their note cards. Students will draw the object and present it to the class, sharing what the artifact reveals about ancient Maya culture.

Procedure

1. Distribute books with Maya images to the class. You can also use Object 3, 5 and 8 from this kit as examples.
2. Distribute remaining materials to the class.
3. Have students work with a partner to choose one artifact that they would like to research. On a note card, have them write what it is, what it's made of, it's purpose and any other interesting facts.
4. Have student pairs collaborate to create a drawing of their artifact.

Closure/Assessment

1. Using their note cards, student partners should present their artifact to the class.
2. Ask students to share their drawings and explain what the artifact tells us about ancient Maya life.
3. Display drawings with their note cards in the classroom.

Lesson Plan

Who Made This? Ancient American Artifacts

Grade Level Late Elementary School, Middle School, High School (4th-12th Grades)
Interdisciplinary Connections Visual Arts, Social Studies

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. Research artifacts from one of three ancient civilizations: the Aztec, the Inca, or Maya.
2. Create an artifact that reflects one of these civilizations.
3. Share their artifact with the class.
4. Identify their classmate's artifacts and determine which cultures they came from.

Lesson Materials

Books about the Aztec, Inca and Maya (see SELECTED BOOKS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS pages in this kit)

Internet access (see WEBSITES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS page in this kit)

For more images of Aztec, Maya and Inca art see Objects 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10.

Paper for writing notes

Various art materials to create representations of ancient artifacts (paper, markers, clay, paint etc.)

Lesson Description

Students will create an artifact representative of one of three ancient civilizations. Students will then use clues to identify their classmate's objects and determine which culture they came from.

Procedure

1. Discuss with students how we learn about cultures based on its artifacts.
2. Explain to students that they will be selecting an artifact to study from either the Aztec, Inca or Maya civilizations.
3. Assign artifacts from the following categories: religion (including mythology and gods and goddesses); daily life (including tools, jewelry and clothing); arts and entertainment (including games, sports and dancing); communication (including hieroglyphic and calendars); and war (including weapons and shields).
4. Ask students to choose an Aztec, Maya or Inca artifact.
5. Students should answer the following questions on notepaper.
 - What is this object?
 - What is the object made of?
 - Of the five categories (religion, daily life, arts and entertainment, communication and war) where does your object belong?
 - What was the object used for and how?
 - What civilization used this object?
 - What does your object tell us about the civilization it is from?
 - What civilization used this object?
 - What does your object tell us about the civilization it is from?
6. After studying one of the three cultures, ask students to recreate an artifact/object that might have been used/made by that culture. (This may also be assigned for Homework Assignment.)
7. Students should present their artifacts to the class. Students will not disclose any information about their object. Instead the class will play "20 Questions" to identify the objects purpose and origin. Students can ask the presenter "yes" or "no" questions about what the artifact is made from, the artifact's use and design.
8. After all the artifacts are revealed, the students will group the artifacts by civilization (Aztec, Inca or Maya). Students will discuss what each artifact reveals about the culture in which it was created.



Lesson Plan

Who Made This? Ancient American Artifacts (Cont.)

Closure/Assessment

1. Ask students what they think archaeologists will find from our society 1,000 years from now, and what their finding will say about us?
2. What objects might lead to the misinterpretation of our culture?
3. Students will research artifacts from either Aztec, Maya or Inca cultures.
4. Students will create a reproduction of their artifact.
5. Students will ask questions in order to successfully identify their classmates artifacts



Lesson Plan

Traveling to the Ancient Americas

Grade Level

Middle School

Interdisciplinary Connections

Visual Arts, Social Studies, Language Arts

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. Identify elements that comprise a civilization.
2. In conjunction with their social studies textbook, students will learn about the cities of the ancient Americas.
3. Investigate aspects of daily life in an ancient American city.
4. Create a travel brochure and postcard for ancient travelers to the ancient American city students researched in class.

Lesson Materials

Reference material with information about ancient American cities
(see the [SELECTED BOOKS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS](#) pages and [WEBSITES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS](#) page in this kit).
8 ½ x 11 paper folded in half lengthwise for travel brochure
poster board (or any other type of thick paper) cut into 4x6 pieces for postcards
Pencils/ Pens
Markers
Construction paper
Glue
Scissors

Lesson Description

Students will create brochures and postcards that would have been used for ancient travelers visiting an ancient American city.

Procedure

1. Ask students how they define the word civilization. Discuss that civilizations can be comprised of many elements including: government, transportation and roads, communication, food, economics, clothing and art. List the elements on the board.
2. Organize class into small groups. Groups should use reference material to choose an ancient American city they would like to use for this lesson.
3. Explain to students that they will be creating a travel brochure for their city. Students will use reference material to investigate the elements of a civilization (discussed above and listed on the board).
4. Students will create a travel brochure for their city. Students should imagine that it is possible to visit their ancient city. The brochure should include the elements of a civilization listed on the board with at least one illustration.
5. For Homework, students will create a postcard to a friend (image on one side and a message on the other) describing an imaginary visit to their ancient city.

Closure/Assessment

1. Ask students in what way were all of the ancient American cities the same/different?
2. Discuss with students if it were possible to visit these ancient cities what other information would they like to have before they arrived?
3. Students will understand the elements that comprise a civilization.
4. Students will share their brochures and postcards with the class.

Lesson Plan

Mesoamerican Codex Books

Grade Level

Middle School

Interdisciplinary Connection

Language Arts, Visual Arts, Social Studies

Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. Understand that the 3 existing Mesoamerican **codex** books are important because they provide what little we know about how ancient people lived including their religious ceremonies, astronomy and the Maya calendars.
2. Review aspects of daily life in Mesoamerica.
3. Create their own version of a **codex** book based on their life.

Vocabulary

Codex- a book made in a fan fold with the pages joined; the book is read along one side and turned over and read along the back side. Only three codices are still in existence today; they provide what little information we have on life and society in Pre-Conquest Americas. Hundreds of codices existed until Spanish missionaries and settlers in region burned them or they rotted in the humid climate.

Lesson Materials

Examples of Mesoamerican glyphs, designs or **codex** books (See [SELECTED BOOKS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS](#) pages in this kit.)
Plain brown paper grocery bags
Tempra paint: red, black, yellow, white
Paint brushes
Black markers
Iron (optional)

Lesson Description

Using information about Mesoamerican daily life, students will create a **codex** book based on an aspect of their lives.

Procedure

1. Discuss how books give us information about history. Present the definition of **codex** (see above). Have students reflect on information about Mesoamerican daily life and chose one aspect of their lives that they would like to write about and illustrate.
2. Distribute materials to students.
3. Have students cut two strips of equal length and width out of the non-seamed side of the bag. Have students crumple and uncrumple the strips several time. Iron the strips to give the paper a distressed leather look. (optional)
4. Have students should glue the strips together to make one long strip. Allow to dry.
5. Fold the strip in half lengthwise and then in half again. There will be four sections total.
6. Have students write sentences lengthwise across the strip, about their life (e.g. school, sports, family, etc.)
7. Have students write on the front and backsides using pencil and marker.
8. Ask students to illustrate their writing on both sides of the strip. Students can use references to incorporate Mesoamerican glyphs and designs in traditional colors.



Lesson Plan

Mesoamerican Codex Books (Cont.)

Closure/Assessment

1. Ask students to discuss why Mesoamerican codex books are important.
2. Ask students to share their books with the class. What aspect of their lives did they chose to write about and why?

Videos for Classroom Use

* **Ancient Inca**

This 29 - minute video from the *Ancient Civilizations for Children* series includes a teacher's guide. The film looks at daily life in ancient Inca culture by exploring religion, farming and food from the ruins of the lost city of Machu Picchu.

Produced, written and directed by Ann Carroll. A production of Schlessinger Media, 1998.

* **Ancient Maya**

From the *Ancient Civilizations for Children* series, this 28 - minute video includes a teacher's guide. Ancient Mayan life is explored through people, food, religious beliefs, inventions and hieroglyphics.

Produced, written and directed by Ann Carroll. A production of Schlessinger Media, 1998.

* **The Aztecs**

This 47 - minute video explores Aztec culture and history from the role of human sacrifice in the Aztec religion to their agricultural advances. Commentary by scholars, maps and contemporary accounts give an overview of events that shaped and destroyed the Aztec empire.

Produced and directed by Ruth Wood, written by Elizabeth Baquedano. Cromwell Productions Ltd., 1999.

* **The Aztecs**

This film from the *Indians of North America* video collection is 30 minutes long and recommended for grades 5-8. Shot on location, the video shows many Aztec cities and the culture's influence on modern civilization after their conquest.

Produced and directed by Paul Shannon, written by Lori Meisle. Schlessinger Video Productions, 1993.

* **The Aztecs and the Maya**

From the *History's Ancient Legacies* series this 25 - minute video is recommended for intermediate grades and provides history on the Aztecs and the Maya.

Written by Judith Underhill, produced by Lara Lowe and directed by Bob Carruthers. Ambrose Video Publishing, 1998.

* **Lost Kingdoms of the Maya**

This National Geographic Society special is a 60 - minute video which explores the forests of Central America and Mexico. Scientists look at artifacts, reconstruct cities and decipher the hieroglyphics of the ancient Maya.

Produced and directed by Christine Weber, written by Patrick Prentice, narrated by Susan Sarandon. National Geographic Video, 1993.

* **Lost Mummies of the Inca**

From the *Ancient Mysteries* series, this 45 - minute video describes the ancient death cult of the Incas in which the dead were treated as if they were still living.

Narrated by Leonard Nimoy. Produced by Steven Talley for FilmRoos, Inc. A&E Network, 1996.

* **The Maya**

As part of the *Indians of North America* video collection, this 30 - minute video is recommended for grades 5-8.

Shot on location, the film brings the history of the Maya to life, showing their cities and how their descendents live today.

Produced and directed by Paul Shannon, written By Lori Meisle. Schlessinger Video Productions, 1993.

Lesson Plan

The Art Market

Grade Level High School
Interdisciplinary Connections Social Studies, Art History

Lesson Overview

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. Research art from three ancient civilizations: the Aztec, Inca and Maya
2. Select one work of art from each civilization. Each piece should represent one of the following criteria: reflects the cultures religious beliefs, communicates social status and is functional.

Lesson Materials

Social Studies Textbook
Various resources on the ancient Aztec, Inca and Maya (see SELECTED BOOKS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS, WEBSITES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS, and VIDEOS TO USE IN THE CLASSROOM found in this kit.)
Images 1,3,4,5,6,7,8, and 10 from this kit
Index cards

Lesson Description

Students will participate in an activity that utilizes social studies learning about the Aztec, Maya and Inca civilizations and their art to select art objects based on certain criteria.

Procedures

1. Present the following scenario to the students: Your art brokerage firm has been contacted by a wealthy art collector. She recently traveled to Mexico and Peru and wishes to purchase three pieces of ancient American art to add to her collection. It is your job to research the art of the Aztec, Maya and Inca and select one piece from each civilization for your client to add to her collection. The first piece should reflect the cultures' religious beliefs, the second piece should communicate social status and the third piece should be functional.
2. Allow students to research Aztec, Inca and Maya civilizations using above resources.
3. After selecting their objects according to the above criteria, students should prepare a presentation for their client (the class). This presentation should convince the class that the objects are outstanding examples of ancient art that meet the above criteria and should be considered for purchase. Students should use one note card for each piece and list key facts for their presentation. The presentation should also include visuals of the artworks.

Closure/Assessment

1. Students will research the art of the Aztec, Inca and Maya.
2. Students will choose 3 art objects that correspond with the 3 criteria in the objectives.
3. Students will give a presentation to the class about their selected objects.

Lesson Plan

Clay Composite Creatures

Grade Level High School

Lesson Overview

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. State the definition of a **composite**.
2. Create their own version of a **composite** creature using clay.

Vocabulary

Composite- made up of various different parts: a composite animal is made up of various parts of different animals.

Lesson Materials Pencil & paper for sketching
Self-hardening clay
Images 4 & 9 from this kit.

Lesson Description

Students will review Images 4 & 9 and discuss why ancient Americans created **composite** creatures. Students will then create their own version of a **composite** creature in clay.

Procedures

1. Discuss Images 4 & 9 with students focusing on the **composite** creatures in the imagery.
2. Distribute materials to students. Ask students to use parts of animals they admire most to create a **composite** deity or mythological being. Students may wish to sketch different ideas on paper before beginning with the clay.

Lesson Plan

Look Like a Maya: Self-Portrait

Grade Level

High School

Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies, Visual Art

Lesson Overview

After completing this lesson, students will be better able to:

1. State the different ways that the ancient Maya modified their bodies to attain their standard of beauty.
2. Create a self-portrait using colored pencils that apply ancient Maya standards of beauty.

Lesson Materials

8 1/2 x 11 paper
Pencils
Erasers
Colored Pencils
Images 3,6,7,8 and 10 from this kit

Lesson Description

Students will review Images 3, 6, 7, 8 and 10 and will discuss that ways the ancient Maya modified their bodies including ear stretching, head and nose binding, eye rearrangement and facial piercings. Students will then create a self-portrait including these elements.

Procedures

1. Discuss Images 3, 6, 7, 8 and 10 with students. Use the Review Questions to facilitate discussion.
2. Ask students how ancient Maya standards of beauty are different or similar to our standards today.
3. Distribute materials to students. Ask students to create a portrait of themselves as an ancient Maya. They may choose to focus on their face or may include their entire body. Students should include the physical characteristics they learned about in the images (or in class). If they are including their bodies in the portraits students should consider clothing/costume and accessories (jewelry and headdress). Encourage students to think about how the physical characteristics they choose may indicate social status. For example, only the elite would wear jade jewelry or a headdress.
4. Students may lightly sketch their self-portraits in pencil before moving on to colored pencil.

Closure/Assessment

1. Ask students to describe how they included elements of Maya beauty in their self-portraits.
2. Ask students to discuss how Maya ideals of beauty were similar/different to our own today.

Vocabulary

ABSTRACTED: an image that can be based on representation but is less about depicting realistic details and more about form and pattern.

ANTHROPOMORPHIC: ascribing human characteristics to non-human things.

ARCHAIC SMILE: a smiling expression seen in ancient Greek art.

ALLOY: a mixture of two or more metals.

BACKRACK: part of an ancient American costume worn on the back of the body.

BASALT: a dark grey to black igneous rock.

CHICHA: beer made from fermented corn.

COMPOSITE: made up of various different parts: a composite animal is made up of various parts of different animals.

CODEX: a book made in a fan fold with all the pages joined; the book is read along one side and turned over and read along the back side. Hundreds of codices existed until Spanish missionaries and settlers in the region burned them or they rotted in the humid climate. Only three codices are still in existence today; they provide what little information we have on life and society in Pre-Conquest Americas.

COMPOSITION: the arrangement of various elements into an overall form.

DEITY: a god or goddess.

EARSPOLS: jewelry worn through the ears which can resemble rods or plugs. Earlobes must be stretched to accommodate them.

EFFIGY FIGURE: a crude figure.

FAÇADE: the front of a building.

FILIGREE: thin, delicate ornamental work which often looks like curled wire: it is used especially in works of gold and silver.

HEADRESS: a covering or ornament for the head; these may be worn for ceremonial occasions by priest or rulers as indications of their power.

HEIROGLYPHS: a system of writing mainly in pictorial characters.

INCISED: carved

JADE: two different minerals, nephrite and jadeite, used as gemstones or for carving. They are usually green in color.

Vocabulary

KATARI: fantastical animal with feline and reptilian characteristics.

KERO: conical drinking vessel.

LABRET: a ceramic, stone, shell or metal ornament worn through a piercing below the lower lip or rarely, in the cheeks.

LANCET: a sharp instrument used to make small incisions.

LAPIDARY: a cutter, polisher or engraver of precious stones.

LOW RELIEF: sculpture carved from a flat surface in which the images are low to the surface.

MAIZE: corn

MESOAMERICA: the geographical term used in Pre-Conquest studies to indicate Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and parts of El Salvador.

OBSIDIAN: a dark natural glass formed by the cooling of molten lava.

PRE-CONQUEST: the time period in the Americas before the Spanish Conquest in the early 16th century.

QERO: a wooden cup or goblet.

REALISM: art that is based in observation and accurate representation.

REPOUSEE: metal which has been hammered into a raised design from the back.

STYLIZED: to represent or design according to a style or stylistic pattern rather than according to nature or tradition.

XIPE TOTEC: (she-pe-to-tek) Aztec deity known as “our lord the flayed one”.

XOCHIPILLI: (shok-e-pil-le) Aztec deity known as “the flower prince”.

VESSEL: a hollow container used especially to hold liquids.



Videos for Classroom Use

* ***Maya Lords of the Jungle***

This 60 - minute video visits ancient sites on the Yucatan Peninsula where new discoveries are forcing a re-examination of the ancient Mayan.

Written, produced and directed by John Angier. PBS video, 1998.

* ***The Mayans***

From the *Ancient Civilizations* series, this 47 - minute video explores Mayan history, including their mastery of math, hierarchical society, use of human sacrifice to induce rain, and art and architecture.

Produced by Ruth Woods, directed by Bob Carruthers, written by Elizabeth Baquedano. Films for the Humanities, 1999.

* ***Mystery of the Maya***

There is a companion book and teacher's guide cataloged separately to accompany this 38 - minute video. The film explores the culture, science and history of the Mayas by looking at their architecture, math, calendar and writing systems.

Produced by Barrie Howells, directed by Barrie Howells and Roberto Rochin. The National Film Board of Canada, 1996.

Note To the Teacher

This kit is designed to help your students learn more about the Ancient Americas by viewing images from the Walters Art Museum collection. The scope includes art from Pre-conquest Central America spanning about one thousand years beginning 600 C.E.

You will find ten images of objects from the Pre-conquest period. There are objects from a variety of cultures to include the Inca, Maya and Aztec. Many of the images in this kit are of objects used religious or ritual ceremonies. You and your students can compare and contrast the religious and ritual practices of the various cultures and see how they were continually influencing each other.

In addition to the images, there is a map, essays about the museum objects; lesson plans for elementary, middle grades and high school, and bibliographies with resources to assist you in your class presentation. Resources include: a vocabulary list, books for you and your students, websites, videos and other art tools.



Selected Books for Students

- * Baquedano, Elizabeth. ***Aztec, Inca & Maya***. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1993.
- * Coulter, Laurie. ***Secrets in Stone: all about Maya Hieroglyphs***. Boston: Little Brown, 2001.
- * Dineen, Jacqueline. ***The Aztecs***. New York: New Discovery Books, 1992.
- * Fisher, Leonard Everett. ***Gods and Goddesses of the Ancient Maya***. New York: Holiday House, 1999.
- * Lourie, Peter. ***Lost Treasure of the Inca***. Honesdale, Pa.: Caroline House/ Boyd's Mills Press, 1999.
- * Newman, Shirlee Petkin. ***The Incas***. New York: F. Watts, 1992.
- * Odijk, Pamela. ***The Incas***. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Silver Burdett Press, 1990.
- * Platt, Richard. ***Aztecs: the Fall of the Aztec Capital***. New York: DK, 1999.

* Indicates the resource is available through the Enoch Pratt Free Library System

Selected Books for Teachers

- * Carrasco, Davis, ed. *Mesoamerica's Classic Heritage: from Teotihuacan to the Aztecs*. Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2000.
- * Cawthorne, Nigel. *The Art of the Aztecs*. San Diego: Laurel Glen Pub., 1999.
- * Coe, Michael D. *The Maya*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999.
- * Fagen, Brian M. *Kingdom's of Gold, Kingdom's of Jade: the Americas before Columbus*. London; New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991.
- * Laughton, Timothy. *The Maya: Life, Myth and Art*. New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1998.
- * Malpass, Michael Andrew. *Daily life in the Inca Empire*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996.
- * Miller, Mary Ellen. *The Art of Mesoamerica: from Olmec to Aztec*. London; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001.
- * Miller, Mary Ellen. *Maya Art and Architecture*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999.
- * Palka, Joel W. *Historical Dictionary of Ancient Mesoamerica*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2000.
- * Roberts, Timothy Roland. *Gods of the Maya, Aztecs, and Incas*. New York: MetroBooks, 1996.
- * Schele, Linda. *The Blood of Kings: Dynasty and Ritual in Maya art*. London: Sotheby's Publications in association with the Kimball Art Museum, 1986.
- Townsend, Richard F. *The Ancient Americas: Art from Sacred Landscapes*. Chicago: Art Institute, 1992.
- * Whittington, Michael E., ed. *The Sport of Life and Death: the Mesoamerican Ballgame*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001.



Web Resources for Teachers & Students

Welcome to Maya Adventure!

www.smm.org/sln/ma/top.html

From the Science Museum of Minnesota, this site highlights science activities as well as the history of ancient and modern Mayan culture.

Rabbit in the Moon

www.halfmoon.org/index.html

This website has detailed information on Mayan hieroglyphic writing, the Mayan calendar as well as Mayan games and culture.

Aztec Calendar

www.azteccalendar.com

Provides an introduction to the Aztec calendar. This site includes a calendar converter where you can see the date in glyphs.

The Sport of Life and Death: The Mesoamerican Ballgame

www.ballgame.org

This is an excellent interactive site for teachers and students. Contains game facts, a lively game demo and classroom connections.

Mayan Kids

www.mayankids.com

An informative, kid friendly, all encompassing website about the ancient Maya.

Mesoweb

www.mesoweb.com

Lots of links and additional resources for Mesoamerica.

ArtLex on Pre-Columbian Art

www.artlex.com/ArtLex/p/precolumbian.html

Provides examples of Pre-Columbian art with illustrations and descriptions.



TRK Borrowing Policy

Please...

1. Return this kit in person or by mail on or by its due date.

A valid credit card number is required to borrow Teacher Resource Kits. A \$25.00 fee will be charged for kits that are returned up to one month late. Borrowers will be assessed the purchase cost of kits borrowed if materials are returned more than one month late. The box the TRK was sent in can be reused for its return.

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3. Fill out the TRK Evaluation so that kits can be improved with your input and student feedback.

Please return the Teacher Resource Kit to:

**Department of School Programs
Division of Education and Public Programs
The Walters Art Museum
600 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-5185**



Other Art Resources for Teachers

Teacher Resource Packet: Los Angeles County Museum of Art

“Ancient West Mexico: Art of the Unknown Past”

This packet includes an introductory essay, six slides or 4 overhead transparencies, lesson plans and a bibliography for children and adults. \$10 Purchase form is available on line at: www.lacma.org

Teacher Resource Packet: The Art Institute of Chicago

“The Art of the Ancient Americas”

This packet includes 20 slides of objects from all over the ancient Americas. There are English and Spanish versions of chapters about art of Mesoamerica and Central and South America. The manual contains lesson plans and reproducible maps, timelines and illustrations. Recommended for grades 6-12. \$30 for more information:

Online: www.artic.edu/aic Email: trc@artic.edu Phone: 312-443-3719

Teacher Resource Packet On-line: Dallas Museum of Art

“Ancient American Art”

This packet is available on-line for teachers to print.

[www.dallasmuseumofart.org/Education/Teaching Packets/tpframeset.htm](http://www.dallasmuseumofart.org/Education/Teaching%20Packets/tpframeset.htm)

Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. has the largest local collection of Pre-Conquest art. It is a world-class collection which contains outstanding objects from all areas of the ancient Americas. The museum and gardens are open 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday and are free to school groups. Docents lead tours in a variety of topics related to Pre-Conquest history and can be tailored to your class curriculum. You may schedule a tour by calling:

202-339-6409. www.doaks.org