

THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

THE SOUNDS OF THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinion.

OVERVIEW

Students will examine medieval bells and discuss the sensory experience of daily life in medieval Europe.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Image of [Bell](#) (WAM 54.79)
- Image of [Refectory Bell](#) (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Cloisters Collection, 2014.87)
- Image of a decorated initial from [Antiphonary for the Abbess of Sainte-Marie of Beaupré](#) (WAM W.760)

GUIDING QUESTION

- How was the medieval world experienced through sound?

ENGAGEMENT

The sounds of medieval Europe included a variety of music and instruments. Music was an integral part of daily life and was used in feasting and celebration or in religious settings.

Bells were used to call the faithful to services throughout the medieval world. Bells also marked deaths, and they were even believed to ward off storms and other dangers. Large bells, usually suspended in bell towers and operated with ropes, signaled the time to rise, to pray, and to attend chapter meetings for the community. Smaller bells were used for meal times. Although many churches had bells, few medieval examples survive because they were often recast when they were damaged, or melted down so that the metal could be reused.

Within the monastery, the singing of psalms and other songs would have emanated from church during the scheduled hours of divine office, day and night; and meals were accompanied by reading aloud from sacred texts. In addition to these sounds of the monastery's spiritual life, other noises, such as the splash of running water in fountains and the bleat and squawk of livestock and animals involved with the work of the community, would have resonated within the village.

Antiphonaries, or prayer books, contained musical prayers that were sung at specific hours of the day.

Large medieval bells were cast of bronze through a process called bellfounding. By the eleventh century, the casting of bells followed standard practices. Although the lost-wax method was sometimes used, the most common method was to model the bell's contour in clay and place the "false bell" between two molds. Once the three components were in place, the false bell was chipped out, leaving a space to be filled with molten metal. Decorations and inscriptions were applied to the false bell in wax, leaving a negative imprint in the covering mantle. The result was a positive relief in the finished bell.

LOOKING AT THE OBJECTS WITH STUDENTS

- Describe and discuss daily life in medieval Europe.
- How do you think instruments like these were used in the medieval world?
- Describe the shape and decoration of the instruments. How do you think the decoration is connected to the purpose or use of the instruments?
- Imagine the sounds of these instruments. How would you play these instruments? How does the size and shape of the instrument affect the tone or sound?

- What materials and processes were used to create instruments in the medieval world?
- Describe and discuss the role of music and musical instruments in our lives today. How is this similar to music in the medieval world? How is it different?

EXTENSION

- Research medieval music, composers, and instruments. Compare and contrast the role of music in the medieval world and in our lives today.
- Explore medieval antiphonaries and musical manuscripts from the Walters' collection [online](#).
- Listen to examples of popular medieval instruments or compositions.



[Bell with Saints Peter, Paul, John, and Thomas](#), 14th Century (Medieval)



[Refectory Bell](#), 13th Century (Medieval)



[Antiphony for the Abbess of Sainte-Marie of Beaupre](#), 13th Century (Medieval)