THE WALTERS ART MUSEUM
COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

ANCIENT PORTRAITS

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 explore portraits from Ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Mesopotamia.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Images of Funerary Portrait of a Priest (WAM 22.475)
- Images of Portrait of a Man (WAM 23.209)
- Images of Head of Ptolemy II (WAM 22.109)
- Images of Woman's Head with Diadem (WAM 23.241)

GUIDING QUESTION

- How did ancient artists illustrate people?

ENGAGEMENT

A portrait is a work of art that represents a specific person, group of people, or an animal. Portraits throughout the ancient world were created for political, funerary, or religious purposes. Some portraits were used to illustrate the power of rulers and leaders. These portraits were prominently placed in public locations for all to see. Private funerary portraits were commissioned by wealthy patrons to commemorate their deceased loved ones. These portraits were often placed in family tombs or shrines along with short inscriptions describing the subject. Religious portraits often illustrated specific gods or goddesses and were located in ancient temples or monuments.

Portraits from ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Greece illustrated perfect or idealized features while portraits from ancient Rome focused on a lifelike rendering of the subject, emphasizing the age and experience of respected individuals. The attributes or accessories of the portrait subject communicated important details about their role in an ancient community. Facial features, headdresses, hairstyles, clothing, and jewelry indicate the subjects' identity or social status.
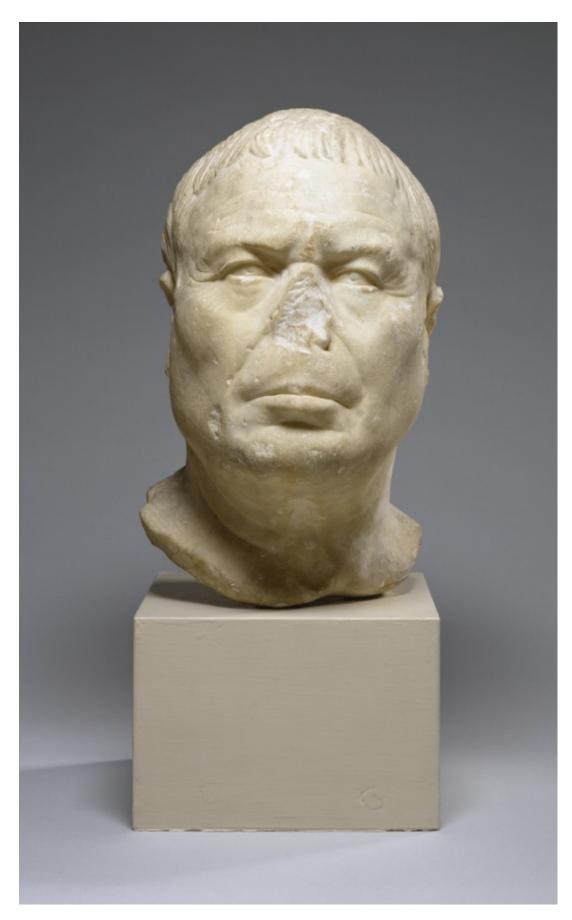
LOOKING AT THE OBJECT WITH STUDENTS

- What lines and shapes are used to create the portrait?
- Compare and contrast the portraits from Ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Mesopotamia. How are the portraits similar? How are they different?
- Describe the facial expressions of each portrait. How do you think the person is feeling? What did you see that made you say that?
- Discuss the features and accessories of each portrait. What do these reveal about the subject's identity?
- What role do you think each person played in their ancient community?
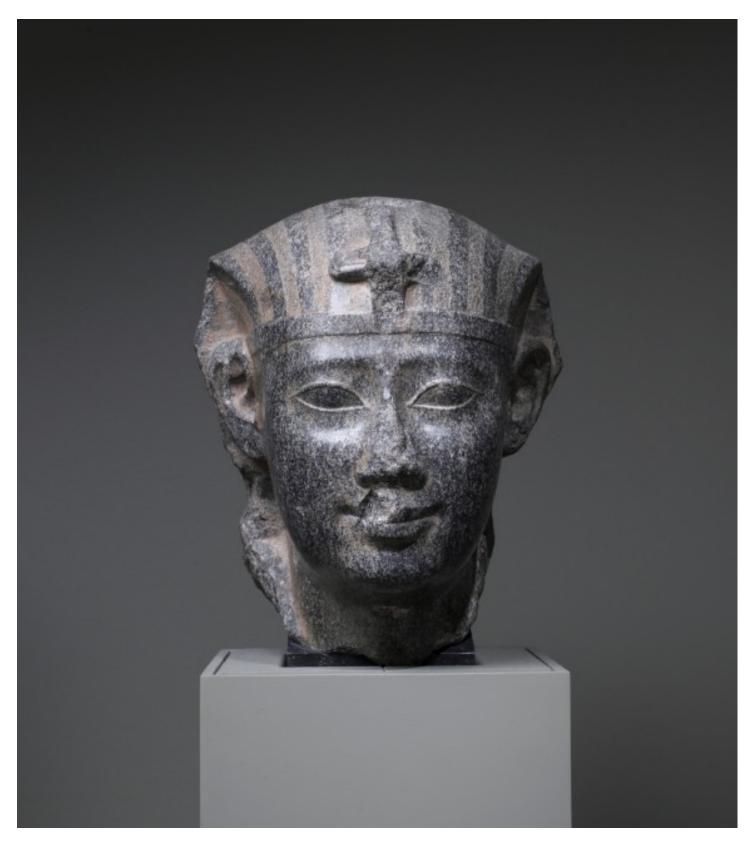
EXTENSION

- Explore sculpture materials and techniques throughout the ancient world.
- Research portraiture from different cultures and time periods. How have portraits changed throughout history?
- Create your own portrait! Think about the features and accessories to include and what they will tell the viewer about your identity.
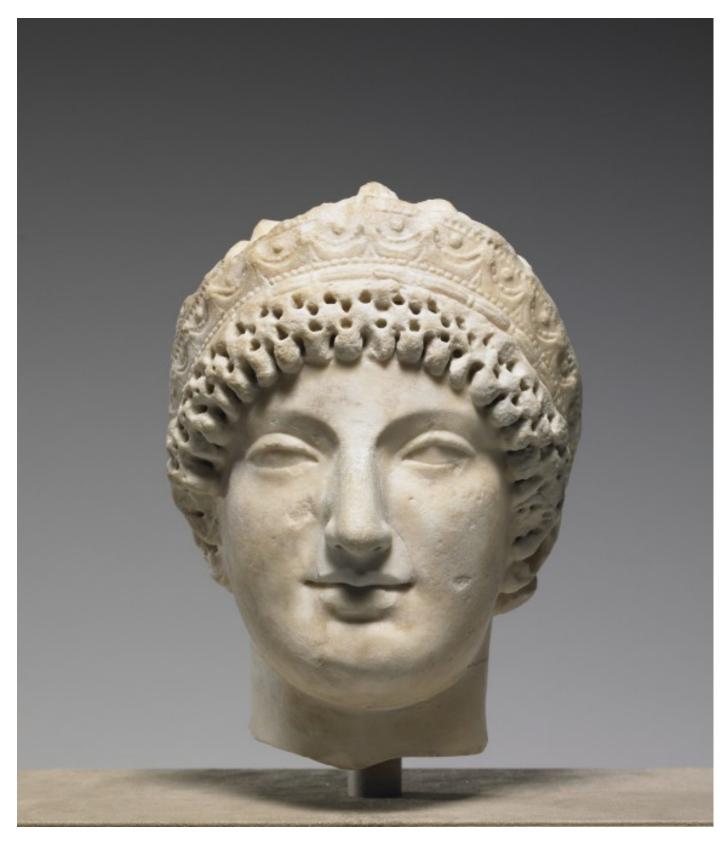
Funerary Portrait of a Priest, 1st-2nd Century CE (Syria)

Portrait of a Man, ca. 40 BCE (Rome)

Head of Ptolemy II, ca. 280 BCE (Egypt)

Woman's head with Diadem, 1st Century BCE – 1st Century CE (Greece)