

GRADE 1 ACTIVITY

Art & Identity



Cylinder Seal with a Combat Scene, Iran, ca. 521–330 BCE. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. Illustration by Sydney Lee.



Cylinder seals are **tube-shaped stamps** that were used for signing documents in the past (like a written signature).

Identity & Cylinder Seals

Throughout time and all over the world people have used art to express who they are. **Identity** is all the different things that make you, you! Your identity includes who you are to other people, what you do, your likes and your dislikes.

Cylinder seals are tube-shaped stamps that were used for signing documents in the past (like a written signature). Cylinder seals were used by people who lived a long time ago, across many ancient civilizations.

Cylinder seals had symbols on them that were like an ID. Each symbol in a cylinder seal represented something powerful and meaningful to the person who wore it. A symbol is a simple image that represents something else. For example, a paint brush symbol can represent an artist.

Above, you can see symbols on an illustration of a cylinder seal in the Walters collection. Let's explore its symbols more on the next page.



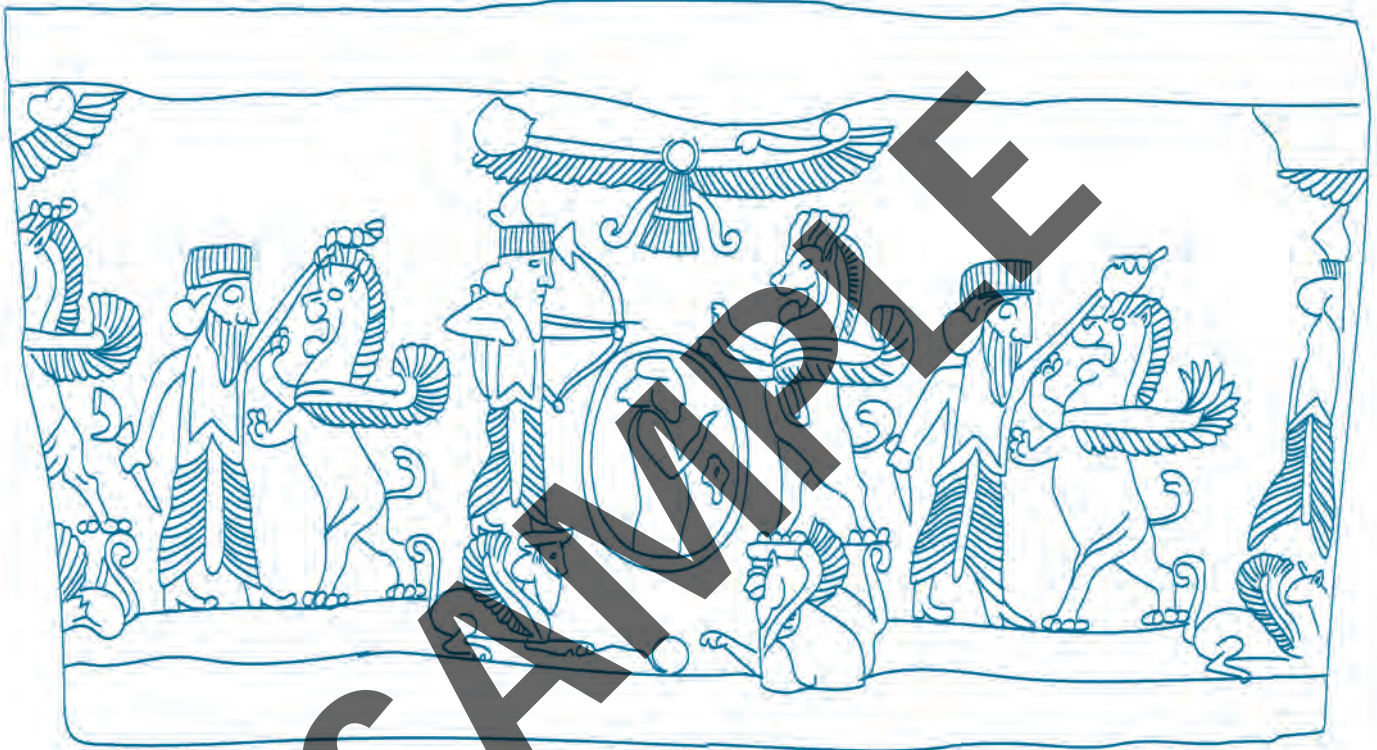
Cylinder seals were worn by their owners on strings as a necklace, or as a ring or a bracelet.



Cylinder seals were used by people who lived a long time ago, across many **ancient civilizations**.

Activity 1: Decoding the Cylinder Seal

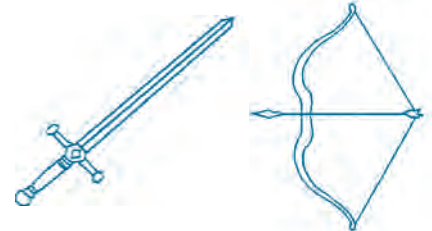
Look closely at the cylinder seal. *Can you find the symbols below within the cylinder seal?* Once you have found a symbol, color it in! Find more information about the seal on the back of page 4.



The **crown** is a symbol that tells us he was royalty.



The **lion-griffith** represents the powerful creatures that he defeated as king.



The **bow & arrow** and **sword** represent the tools that he used to fight for justice.

Activity 2: Sealing My Identity

Now that you have explored the meaning of symbols on an ancient cylinder seal, it's your turn to make your own.

1. What makes you, you ?

First, think of the different identities that make up who you are. Answer the questions below to describe parts of your identity. **Who are you to other people?** (Teacher, sister, brother?) **What activities do you like to do?** (Drawing, having fun with friends?) **What are the things that you treasure?** (Family, collections, holidays?)

2. Choose your unique symbols.

Choose symbols that are unique to you, that represent the ideas in Step 1. Use the list below to help you brainstorm. Here are some examples of symbols that represent some people's identities. You can use these symbols or choose symbols of your own.



Artist



Athlete



Reader



Loving

3. Create your own symbol seal.

Using symbols that are unique to you, combine them to draw a seal of your own!





Cylinder Seal with a Combat Scene, Iran, ca. 521–330 BCE (Achaemenid), chalcedony, acc. no. 42.775. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore.

About the *Cylinder Seal with a Combat Scene*

Based on the crowned figure's dress and his triumphant pose, it can be seen that the figures wearing the crowns are royalty. This seal depicts a king fighting a lion-griffith in two scenes. First, he engages in close combat with the lion-griffith. Second, the king aims his bow at the beast. This seal is from the reign of King Darius I (ca. 521–486 BCE) or after. During his time as king, he was involved in a great deal of change in his kingdom.

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