

Classroom Connections

SCHOOL TOUR | *Ancient Odysseys*

Grade Levels: 6th—12th

The
Nelson-Atkins
Museum
of Art



Inner Coffin of Meret-it-es, Egyptian, 380—250 B.C.E. Wood, pigment, gesso, and gilding, 6 feet 3 1/2 inches x 33 1/2 inches x 15 inches (1 m 91.77 cm x 85.09 cm x 38.1 cm) (top), 7 feet 3 inches x 32 1/2 inches x 8 1/2 inches (2 m 20.98 cm x 82.55 cm x 21.59 cm) (bottom). Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust (by exchange), 2007.12.2.A.B. | *Winged Genie Fertilizing a Date Tree*, Assyrian, 884—860 B.C.E. Limestone, 7 feet 7 1/4 inches x 5 feet 11 1/4 inches (231.78 x 180.98 cm). Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 40-17. | *Herakles*, Roman, 1st century B.C.E.—1st century C.E. Bronze, 22 3/8 inches (56.83 cm). Purchase: William Rockhill Nelson Trust, 46-37.

CURRICULUM AREAS ADDRESSED IN THIS TOUR:

Visual Arts Standards (KS)

- Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Visual Art Standards (MO)

- Investigate the nature of art and discuss responses to artworks.
- Explain the connections between Visual Art and Social Studies.
- Compare and contrast artworks from different historical time periods and/or cultures.

History, Government, and Social Studies Standards (KS)

- The student will investigate specific beliefs, contributions, ideas, and/or diverse populations and connect those beliefs, contributions, ideas and/or diversity to contemporary issues.

Social Studies Standards (MO)

- Describe how peoples' perspectives shaped the sources / artifacts they created.
- Analyze the cultural characteristics of civilizations to explain how they are similar and different.
- Explain the significance of art, mythology, literature, and philosophy to the culture and social order of classical civilizations.

TOUR DESCRIPTION:

This tour explores four ancient cultures considered foundational to modern Western thought: Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome. Students will think carefully about how ancient art objects communicate beliefs and practices and will analyze the uniqueness of objects from each civilization while also considering commonalities shared by all. Students will be encouraged to make connections between ancient times and elements of contemporary culture.

TOUR OBJECTIVES:

Learners will:

- Discover that ancient objects reveal the values and beliefs of the time in which they were made.
- Investigate objects (primary sources) through the use of secondary sources and understand the difference between the two.
- Discover that these ancient civilizations laid the foundation for contemporary Western thought.

4525 Oak Street
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To schedule a tour:
nelson-atkins.org/educators/school-tours/

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Identify Ancient Influences

The *Ancient Odysseys* tour touches on several ideas that have survived from ancient times into our own world, such as social hierarchies, written language, and democratic representation. As a class, brainstorm other elements of ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Greek, or Roman culture that exist in some form in contemporary society. You might suggest that students look to popular culture (movies, television, fashion), government, or belief systems for ideas.

Consider Sources

Throughout their tour, students will be asked to examine art objects (primary sources) alongside information drawn from secondary sources, such as museum labels. Discuss the difference between these two types of sources. Why might it be important to consult both types when studying ancient history?

Preview a Featured Work

The Assyrian relief sculpture *Winged Genie Fertilizing a Date Tree* is featured on the Mesopotamian stop of the *Ancient Odysseys* tour. Show students a digital reproduction of this work (view at bit.ly/2v6JmbI) without providing any contextual information, such as its title or country of origin. Discuss as a class: What do you think is going on in this image? What might have been the original purpose of this object? What questions do you have about this piece?



Explore Online Resources

Interactive websites allow students to view ancient structures and cultures in a different way. Have them check out the Ancient Civilizations and Ancient Egypt sites from the British Museum (ancientcivilizations.co.uk and ancientegypt.co.uk) or digital 3-D reconstructions of the Assyrian palace at Nimrud (learningsites.com/NWPalace/NWPalhome.php).

AFTER YOUR VISIT

Respond through Writing

After exploring ancient art objects made for specific locations (such as the inside of a palace or a tomb), invite students to write their own first-person account of what it might have been like to encounter one of those objects in its original context in ancient times. What sort of person would have had access to the place where that object was kept? What might it have felt like to see the object in that space?

Respond through Art

During the tour, students looked for attributes that identified various Greek and Egyptian mythological figures. In response, have students dream up and then draw their own original mythological figures. Their drawings should include attributes that convey their figure's identity and/or unique powers.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Art Connection Kit: Egypt

Hands-on materials to bring ancient Egypt to life. Available in the ERC.

Legacy: The Origins of Civilization

DVD series exploring six ancient civilizations. Available in the ERC.

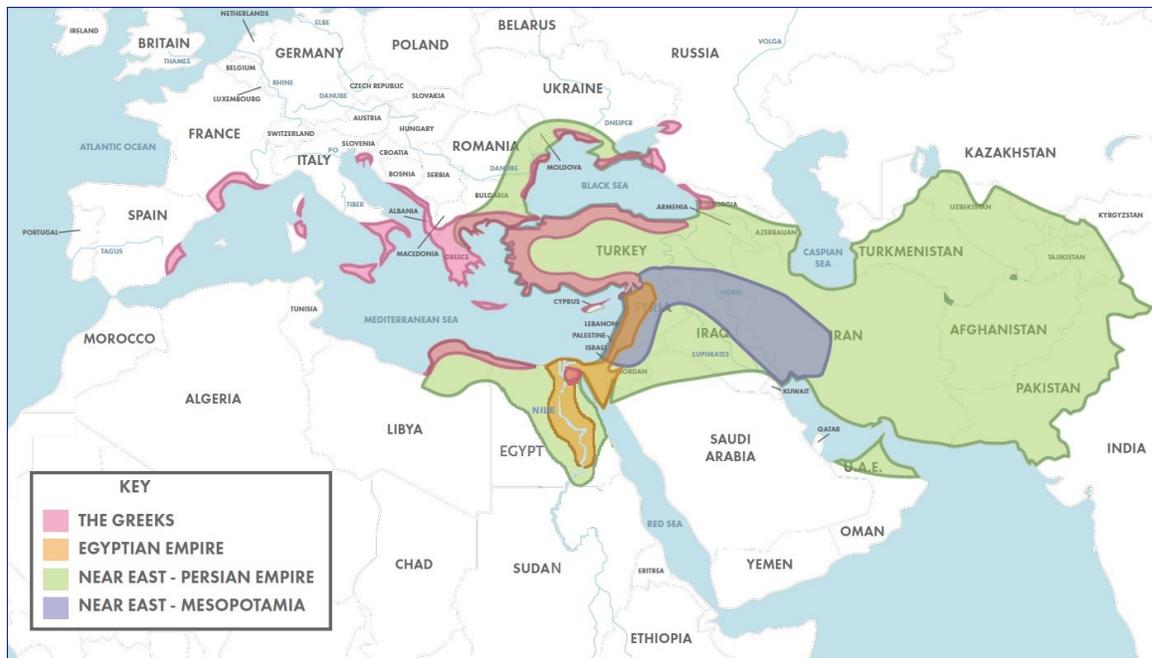
500 Things to Know About the Ancient World

Fun, kid-friendly facts from the British Museum. Available in the ERC.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS RELATED TO ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

Afterlife	Life after death
Anubis	The ancient Egyptian god of the dead; he was associated with mummification and was often represented as having the head of a jackal and the body of a man
Artifact	Any object made or modified by humans; it can be studied to learn about the past
Athena	The ancient Greek goddess of wisdom and warfare
Cuneiform	One of the world's oldest writing systems, it was created in ancient Mesopotamia and consisted of wedge-shaped marks made by pressing the end of a reed into clay
Dynasty	A line of rulers that all belong to the same family
Helios	The ancient Greek god of the sun
Herakles	Known in Latin as Hercules; a hero from ancient Greek mythology famed for his strength and bravery
Hieroglyphs	The formal writing system of the ancient Egyptians, consisting of symbolic characters representing sounds or ideas
Ka	According to the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians, the <i>ka</i> was a person's vital life force; it could survive the death of the body and needed to be provided for with food and other comforts in the afterlife
Mesopotamia	Literally translated as "between two rivers" because of its location between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, this ancient region consisted of lands that today make up Iraq and parts of Iran, Syria, and Turkey
Muses	In ancient Greek and Roman mythology, they were nine daughters of Zeus who were recognized as the goddesses of music, poetry, dance, and knowledge
Mythology	A collection of stories that are shared by a culture or group and that often involve supernatural figures
Nemes	A striped headdress worn by pharaohs of ancient Egypt
Pharaoh	A ruler of ancient Egypt
Primary source	A source (like a document, object, or recording) that provides firsthand evidence of a historical event or period and was made during the time period under study
Relief sculpture	A sculpture that projects from a surface but is still attached to that surface
Sarcophagus	A stone coffin
Secondary source	A source (like a textbook or encyclopedia) that does NOT provide a firsthand account of a historical event or period but was created later
Social pyramid	The ranking of different groups or classes of people within a society
Stele	A carved or painted stone or wooden slab that was placed upright as a monument
Ushebtis	Also called <i>shabtis</i> , these small figurines were placed in ancient Egyptian tombs to perform labors on behalf of the deceased

MAPS OF THE LANDS EXPLORED IN THIS TOUR



EDUCATOR RESOURCE CENTER

The ERC can help you expand your pre- and post-visit activities to connect students' museum experience with your classroom curriculum. The ERC offers:

- Curriculum consultations
- Circulating resources
- Professional development workshops

Visit nelson-atkins.org/educators/resources for info.