

## THE ARTS OF BUDDHISM

The artworks in this packet sample a wide geographical spread and range of time periods and practices within Buddhism. The accompanying essays collectively serve as an introduction to the diversity in Buddhism and its wide and long-lasting spiritual, artistic, and cultural impact in Asia and beyond. While this packet focuses on Buddhism, the themes, topics, and ideas explored in these materials can be applied to other religions, societies, and cultures. History/Social Science teachers can use these materials to spark discussions about worldwide religions and how the spread of Buddhism translated in different areas and cultures throughout the world. English Language Arts teachers may use the foundational texts of Buddhism to analyze complex texts and compare them to the foundational texts of other cultures and religions. Finally, Art teachers can view the way artists have drawn inspiration from religious ideas and texts and translated them into visual images in order to commemorate, celebrate, and teach.

Buddhism is a religion based on the teachings of **the Buddha**, a historical figure who lived sometime during the sixth to fifth century BCE and had a lasting global impact. The Buddha began his life as Siddhartha Gautama, an Indian prince. Gautama lived a sheltered life of luxury until he was twenty-nine years old, when he first witnessed life outside his palace walls. Once he had seen the suffering that was going on in the world, he could not return to his former life within the palace walls. He left his home and family behind and set out on a quest to understand the cause of suffering in the world. Following a decade of meditation, prayer, and fasting, he came to the realization that people suffer because they attempt to hold on to material possessions. Only by realizing that nothing is permanent can one be released from the cycle of suffering. When he came to this realization, known as **the Great Awakening**, Gautama attained **enlightenment**. From that point on he was known as the Buddha, “the enlightened one.”

The Buddha spent the remaining forty years of his life teaching in India, helping others attain enlightenment. His teachings make up **the Dharma**, which is the foundation of Buddhism. The Dharma consists of **four noble truths**: 1. Life is suffering, 2. This suffering has a cause, which is the desire for long life, power, and other worldly concerns, 3. This desire can be overcome and extinguished, and 4. The way to overcome the desire is by following **the eightfold path**. This path includes: 1. right view, 2. right intention, 3. right speech, 4. right action, 5. right livelihood, 6. right effort, 7. right mindfulness, and 8. right concentration.

The goal of Buddhism is to escape **samsara**, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, by achieving enlightenment, or **nirvana**. Enlightened beings see the ultimate nature of the world as illuminated by the Buddha—the illusory nature of perception and impermanence of everything they hold dear—and it enables them to escape the cycle of suffering. Buddhists achieve enlightenment by following the middle path, rejecting extremes of luxury or poverty and pursuing a life of good intentions and actions, and adhering to the four noble truths and the eightfold path.

After the Buddha’s death, his followers spread his teachings throughout Asia with the aid of sacred texts and religious sculptures. As Buddhism spread, multiple schools developed. The first major school of Buddhism was **Theravada Buddhism**, now predominant in Southeast Asia (Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia), in which each person is responsible for his/her own enlightenment. The second major school of Buddhism was **Mahayana Buddhism**, prevalent in East Asia (China, Korea, and Japan), in which the Buddha is godlike and other enlightened beings called bodhisattvas help others achieve enlightenment. Other major schools that developed include **Zen Buddhism**, which took hold in China, Korea, and Japan and promoted the possibility of enlightenment

in one's lifetime with the help of a teacher and meditative practices as well as **Vajrayana Buddhism**, most strongly associated with Tibet, where tantric rites and sutras are used with the aid of gurus or learned teachers. Together these schools encompass a wide range of religious beliefs, figures, legends, ritual objects, and art, all unified by the common thread of the Buddha's teachings.

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**BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI**

late 6th century

India, Uttar Pradesh

It is said that just looking at the Buddha could inspire enlightenment. Despite this assertion, the Buddha was not depicted in his human form in Buddhist art until roughly the second century. By that time, followers had elevated him to the status of a god, and the depiction of him as a man wearing a monastic robe soon dominated the art of India. By the fourth to fifth century an idealized serene image of the Buddha emerged.

In art, the Buddha Shakyamuni (the historical Buddha) can be identified by his thirty-two major characteristics (known as *lakshana*), including long, slender fingers; an upright and erect body; full, rounded shoulders; a shorn head represented by raised curls (he cut off his long hair when he renounced his princely life); and elongated earlobes (the result of years of wearing heavy earrings as a prince). The Buddha's enlightenment is symbolized by the lump on the crown of his head called an *ushnisha* (here it resembles a topknot or bun). His eyes are frequently half shut as they would be during meditation, a practice that quiets the mind and enables practitioners to focus on the present moment as well as detach themselves from the distractions of the world. Having renounced his former princely lifestyle, the Buddha wears the simple robes of a monk.

This particular depiction of Buddha Shakyamuni dates to the sixth century, a time of peace, prosperity, and artistic achievement in India. It was also during this time that the iconic Buddha image, which was later disseminated and copied throughout the Asian Buddhist world, was introduced. Here Buddha Shakyamuni is slim and narrow-waisted with wide shoulders. He stands in a graceful S-curve, resting his weight on his right leg. His monk's robes appear nearly translucent and cling to his body as

if wet, flaring slightly at the sides. The Buddha's left hand holds the end of his robe, while his right hand makes the *mudra*, a symbolic hand gesture of reassurance. This *mudra* tells his followers to have no fear; they are under his protection. His face exemplifies calm reflection, and his inner radiance is manifest in the statue's golden glow. Aside from this golden glow, the Buddha bears no adornment—he wears no jewelry, and his robes are without embellishment.

Representations of the Buddha are strictly symbolic. They serve as objects of contemplation and meditation aids for practitioners of Buddhism. Sculptures like this one were dispersed along with the teachings of the Buddha throughout Asia. Before entering LACMA's collection, this Indian sculpture was long preserved in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery.

**DISCUSSION PROMPTS**

1. How does this depiction of the Buddha reflect his characteristics and what we know about the Buddha from his teachings?
2. How does it change your perception of this sculpture to know when and where it was made, and how far it has traveled? Choose another representation of the Buddha from [lacma.org](http://lacma.org). How does it differ from the statue pictured here? What is the difference in the time and location in which they were created, and how do you think those differences are reflected in the sculpture?



*Buddha Shakyamuni*  
India, Uttar Pradesh, late 6th century  
Sculpture  
Copper alloy with traces of paint  
15 1/2 x 6 3/4 x 4 in.  
Gift of the Michael J. Connell Foundation (M.70.17)

**ALTAR CABINET**

19th–20th century

Eastern Tibet, Kham region

Buddhism became the predominant religion in Tibet beginning in the sixth century. Most Tibetan families engage in religious observance throughout the day at the family shrine, the center of which is the altar. The altar houses images of the Buddha and is the focus of religious ritual. It is a place for contemplation and prayer, where worshipers make offerings of tea, money, or other valuables as expressions of devotion.

The household altar is frequently kept inside a special cabinet, usually a wooden cabinet of simple construction that is elaborately carved and painted with Buddhist symbols and other decorative motifs. The top of this cabinet has been carved to resemble a temple roof. Just beneath this layer of carving, and a row of painted lotus petals crowns the main cabinet doors. These doors open to reveal six niches, where Buddhist sculptures would have been displayed.

Aside from the niches themselves, which are surrounded by a painted floral motif, the doors that cover these niches are the most highly decorated element of the altar cabinet. The motif on the exterior of the cabinet doors is relatively straightforward: The upper half of each door is dominated by a *zipak* (also called a *zeeba*), a mythological creature with a pig-like snout and curled horns. Each *zipak* wears a sun-and-moon crown (a protective symbol) and grasps the swirling foliage coming from its mouth with disembodied hands. In Buddhism the *zipak* symbolizes the eternal cycles of time and creation and is associated with prosperity and transformation. Around the *zipaks* swirl scrolling foliage.

The upper half of each of the doors is divided from the lower half by a band of stylized *wang zi*, a continuous band of linked swastikas (the swastika is an ancient, auspicious symbol for Hindus and Buddhists). Below this band, painted mountains rise above waves and clouds.

The inside of the altar doors are even more elaborately painted. The left door's interior is illustrated with the Eight Auspicious Buddhist Symbols:

1. A parasol, a symbol of the Buddha
2. A pair of fish, an ancient symbol of good fortune
3. A conch shell, a reminder that Buddhist teachings should be widely proclaimed
4. A lotus, a symbol of purity of mind
5. The standard of victory, a symbol of the victory of Buddhist teachings over evil
6. The vase of plenty, a symbol of good fortune and long life
7. The endless knot, a symbol of endless wisdom
8. The wheel of law, a symbol of the dharma with eight spokes representing the eightfold path.

Also painted on this door is a set of secondary symbols associated with the Buddha as universal monarch. These symbols are rarely depicted; they include a mansion (the building shown in the center) and a sword.

The right door's interior is painted with a mix of various offerings, as well as some of the Eight Auspicious Buddhist Symbols and the secondary symbols associated with the Buddha as universal monarch, including rhinoceros horns, which are associated with virility.

Unlike most of the artworks illustrated in this packet, which are centuries old, this altar cabinet was made relatively recently, in the nineteenth or twentieth century, a fact which highlights that, although the religion is very old, Buddhist practice continues to flourish today.

## DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. What are some examples of symbols that our society uses to signify good fortune, luck, guardians, and gratitude? Investigate the roots of these symbols. Where did they originate and how do they communicate their messages? Do you think someone from another culture would be able to determine the symbols' meanings simply by viewing them?
2. How does the decoration of the altar cabinet reflect its function? Compare this altar cabinet to altars from churches, arks from synagogues, and mihrabs from mosques. What similarities do you see in the way these traditions mark spaces of religious significance?



*Altar Cabinet*  
Eastern Tibet, Kham region, 19th–20th century  
Wood with mineral pigments and gilding; brass fittings  
56 1/2 x 48 x 17 1/2 in.  
Gift of the 2010 Collectors Committee (M.2010.82.2)

**MANUSCRIPT OF PHRA MALAI TALE**

c. 1860–80

Thailand

**SUTRA BOX**

c. 1920–40

Thailand

As the physical manifestation of the Buddha's teachings, Buddhist texts are some of the primary objects of Buddhist devotion. Efforts to record, transmit, and preserve the Buddha's teachings in written form began in the first century and resulted in three main kinds of Buddhist texts: the **Vinaya**, monastic disciplinary codes; the **Abhidharma**, abstract philosophical treatises; and the **Sutra**, which takes a narrative form.

The Sutras contain the extended teachings and dialogues passed on by the Buddha to his disciples. They hold the stories of Buddha's many lives before his enlightenment, as well as the life stories of other holy persons. The term "sutra" is Sanskrit for thread, and the sutras act like thread, linking the many varied and widespread adherents of Buddhism to the dharma. Monks carried these manuscripts throughout Asia, where they were copied into native languages. Manuscripts like this one from Thailand were treasured and sheltered in monasteries, and used to educate and train young monks.

This particular page of sutra combines paintings of some of the Buddha's past lives (*jatakas*) with text from the story of the monk Phra Malai. The tales of Phra Malai were among the most popular subjects of nineteenth-century illustrated Thai manuscripts. Through the powers he achieved through meditation and his great merit, Phra Malai is said to have visited hell and heaven, where he met the future buddha, Buddha Maitreya. Although the story of Phra Malai is known throughout Southeast Asia, it is especially popular in Thailand, where the text, with its vivid descriptions of heaven and hell, was widely preached from during funerals and weddings.

As was typical with Thai Buddhist manuscripts, this page tells a story from Phra Malai but is illustrated

with scenes from *jatakas*, tales concerning the previous lives of the Buddha that demonstrate his teachings. The text of the Phra Malai Tale occupies the center, with a *jataka* painting on either side of it.

The page of sutra shown here is painted with scenes from the Sama Jataka, the tale of the devoted son, on the left and the Nimi Jataka, the tale of the noble king, on the right:

In the Sama Jataka, the Buddha is born as Sama, a boy who lovingly cares for his blind, ascetic parents in their home in the woods. When Sama is mortally wounded by a misguided king, he is brought back to life and his parents' eyesight is miraculously restored as a result of their lifelong penance. In the painting, Sama is shown reunited with his parents in the king's palace.

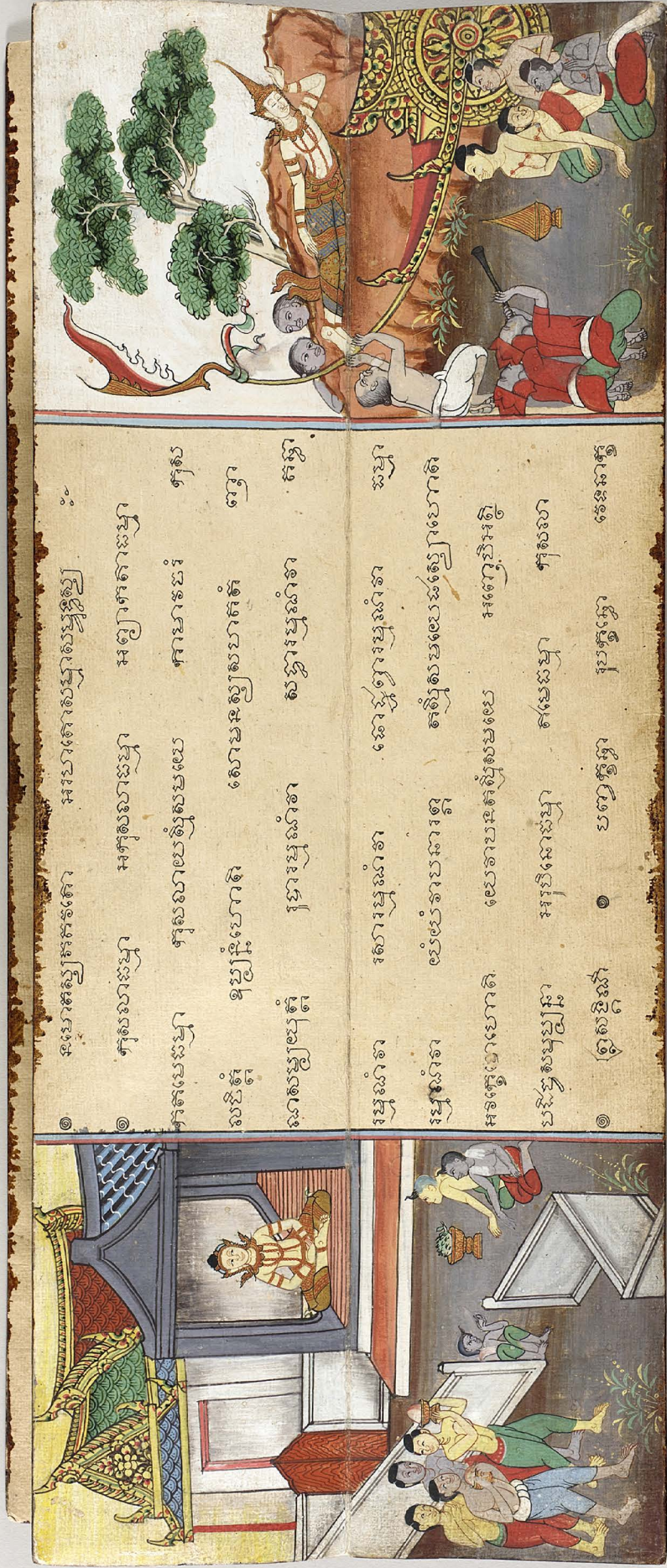
In the Nimi Jataka, the Buddha is born as the exemplary ruler Nimi, who is invited by the god Indra, the king of the heavens, to preach to his subjects. In the corresponding painting, Nimi rides in Indra's celestial chariot to his palace in heaven, while onlookers point up at him from the ground below.

As sacred objects, Buddhist manuscripts are often stored in gilded lacquer boxes such as the one represented in this packet. The sutra box pictured here is decorated with protector deities and celestial worshippers of the Buddha, all of whom are kneeling with their hands held together in a gesture of prayer. Boxes such as this one were kept in monasteries, where they were stored in elaborately decorated altar cabinets when not being read by monks or serving as objects of ritual veneration.



## DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Buddhist texts were translated into many languages and consumed by and adapted to many cultures. Name an example of a popular story that has been read and reinterpreted in books and movies over time and in different cultures. Why do you think this story has endured? What about it has remained relevant to readers/watchers? Would you consider the story universal?
2. Name an example of a character or hero who you think exemplifies virtue. How does his or her virtue manifest in stories about him or her? Do you consider this character a model for how you conduct yourself?
3. What stories are important to your culture and your family history? What lessons do they provide, and what do those lessons reveal about your values?



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Manuscript of Phra Malai Tale  
 Thailand, c. 1860-80  
 Opaque watercolor and ink on paper; covers: gilded and lacquered paper  
 5 1/2 x 26 7/8 x 2 1/2 in.

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Neustatter (M.76.93.2)



*Sutra Box*  
Thailand, c. 1920–40  
Wood, lacquer, and gold leaf  
12 x 32 1/2 x 10 in.  
Indian Art Special Purpose Fund (M.75.57)

**GIBBON REACHING FOR THE REFLECTION OF THE MOON**

Early 16th century

Yōgetsu

Japan

Unlike other schools of Buddhism, Zen Buddhists believe that through reliance on a teacher and personal effort, enlightenment can be achieved within one lifetime. Zen Buddhist practice emphasizes meditation, the use of *koans* (riddles), and the direct transmission of knowledge from teacher to pupil. The discipline and hierarchy of Zen appealed to Japan's military elite, and by the fifteenth century Zen Buddhism had become the principal religious and cultural influence in Japan.

Despite its apparent simplicity, Zen art imparts a profound message. A single brushstroke by an enlightened master can reveal a new reality to the Zen viewer. For this reason, paintings were often given to students and practitioners to inspire and help them on their quest to attain enlightenment, and to display during meditation rituals.

*Gibbon Reaching for the Reflection of the Moon* illustrates a Zen parable in which a gibbon tries to catch the moon's reflection in the water. The theme can be traced to a story in the sutras about a monkey king who pursued the reflection of the moon. Both the painting and the story serve as cautionary tales against mistaking illusion for reality and becoming attached to the temptations of this world.

This artwork is an exemplary piece of Zen painting notable for its bold lines, simplicity, asymmetry, and tranquility, as well as for the high quality of its brushwork. With his varied brushstrokes, the artist, the monk Yōgetsu, differentiates the soft fur of the gibbon from the smooth, hard weight of the rock upon which he sits. In just a few brushstrokes, he manages to make the gibbon's face quite expressive. In fact, the gibbon's concentration and frustration are almost palpable. Its body is crouched into a tight ball, clinging to the rock with its right arm extended as far as possible toward the water, its fingers nearly

brushing the top of the waves below. (In fact, the gibbon's long and elegant fingers are painted in a technique that differs from that used for the rest of the painting.) The length of this arm has been exaggerated for effect, and the tight composition, without excess space above or to either side of the gibbon, directs the viewer's eye downward to the reflection of the moon. In this way the artist focuses attention on the gibbon's futile exertions and the moral of the parable.

The finishing touch is the *fukizumi*, or spattering of paint, a difficult technique that was prevalent in this period. For *fukizumi*, ink is applied to the brush and then blown off onto the surface of the painting. Here it is used to create a foamy effect in the water. *Fukizumi* is typically applied after the rest of the painting is finished, thus, if a mistake is made using the technique, it can easily ruin the entire piece. It takes a true master to control such a difficult application and trust that it will not undermine his work.

While the gibbon is not native to Japan, Yōgetsu is thought to have studied the work of the famous Chinese painter, Muqi (1210–1269), whose renowned painting of a gibbon was housed at a Zen temple in Japan. In China, gibbons were known as the gentlemen of the forests, admired for their graceful movements swinging from branches through the treetops.

## **DISCUSSION PROMPTS**

1. Look at other visual representations of stories and analyze the techniques used to retain and communicate their respective themes. Then choose another parable or tale (for instance, Aesop's Fables). How would you illustrate that story in a way that communicates the message of the tale for those who may not be familiar with it?
2. Is this painting successful in communicating its message to the viewer?



*Gibbon Reaching for the Reflection of the Moon*  
Japan, early 16th century  
Yōgetsu  
Hanging scroll; ink on paper  
60 x 20 in.  
Far Eastern Art Council Fund (M.83.36)

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

### ILLUSTRATING FABLES

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can an illustration represent a story using line and value?

#### GRADES

K–3

#### TIME

One to two class periods

#### ART CONCEPTS

Illustration, line, texture, value

#### MATERIALS

Black tempera cakes, white tempera cakes, soft and bristle brushes, heavy paper, and newsprint

#### TALKING ABOUT ART

Take a moment to look at *Gibbon Reaching for the Reflection of the Moon* by Yōgetsu. What do you think is happening in this artwork? What does the gibbon (a type of ape) appear to be doing? How would you describe the expression on his face? Is he happy, angry, calm, agitated? What is the setting of the painting? Describe the different kinds of lines (wavy, curved, spikey, etc.) you see in the painting. What kinds of textures do you see? How does the artist distinguish between the different elements in the painting, such as the gibbon, the water, and the moon?

*Gibbon Reaching for the Reflection of the Moon* illustrates a Zen parable in which a gibbon tries to catch the moon's reflection in the water. The moral, or message, of the story is that one should not mistake appearances for reality; no matter how far the gibbon reaches, he will never be able to hold the moon's reflection because it's not real, it's just an illusion. By using only lines and values (shades from light to dark), the painter, Yōgetsu, was able to depict a story and its moral.

#### MAKING ART

Think of a fable or story with a moral that you've studied in class. Who are the main characters? What is the setting? What is the moral of the story? How can you illustrate this fable in one image?

Begin by practicing painting different line qualities using a soft brush and black paint on newsprint. Experiment with different pressures, laying the brush flat, having it be dry, wet, etc. Practice creating values by adding white paint (shades going from light to dark, and vice versa).

Next, use the painting techniques to illustrate a fable studied in class. Think about which elements of the story need to be present in the illustration in order to show the full story. Consider how simple changes of line and value can enhance your drawing.

## **PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION**

Display your painting in your classroom, and discuss how your illustration and those of your classmates represent the fables being depicted. What kinds of lines were used? How was value used? How did each artist use painting techniques to tell their story?

## **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.READING.K-3**

K.7 With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts). 1.7 Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events. 2.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot. 3.2 Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text. 3.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.K-3**

K-2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners. 3.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners.



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

### SYMBOLS IN ART

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can an image represent people, things, and ideas?

#### GRADES

3–5

#### TIME

One class period

#### ART CONCEPTS

Symbols, shapes, accordion book

#### MATERIALS

4 x 17 inch strips of cardstock, 3 ½ x 3 ½ white paper squares to fit the accordion pages, glue sticks, scissors, pencils, erasers, colored pencils, markers, ultra-fine black sharpies, and paper

#### TALKING ABOUT ART

Take a moment to look at images of the Tibetan Altar Cabinet included in this packet. On the inside of the doors, the Eight Auspicious (lucky) Buddhist Symbols appear:

1. An umbrella, a symbol of the Buddha
2. A pair of fish, an ancient symbol of good fortune
3. A conch shell, a reminder that Buddhist teachings should be widely proclaimed
4. A lotus, a symbol of purity of mind
5. The standard of victory, a symbol of the victory of Buddhist teachings over evil
6. The vase of plenty, a symbol of good fortune and long life
7. The endless knot, a symbol of endless wisdom
8. The wheel of law, a symbol of the Buddha's teachings with eight spokes representing the eightfold path to enlightenment.

A symbol is something that represents or stands for something else. How do these images represent good fortune and the teachings of Buddhism? What are some examples of symbols that our society uses to show luck, protection, or gratitude? Can you think of symbols that are used by multiple cultures? What are their meanings? (For example, eye symbols meant to protect against evil like the Eye of Horus (an ancient Egyptian symbol of protection, royal power and good health), the *Hamsa* (a Middle-Eastern hand-shaped amulet with an eye at its center), and the *Nazar* (a Turkish eye-shaped amulet).

#### MAKING ART

In this activity we will develop symbols for our families and ourselves as well as symbols that represent things we like and look to for protection and good luck. Then we will make a small, simple accordion book to hold

## **MAKING ART (cont.)**

the symbols and written descriptions. Like an altar, your books will stand, open, revealing the artwork.

Fan-fold the provided strips of cardstock to make an accordion book. The top section of your folded book will be the cover, which you can decorate as you like.

Then think of examples of symbols discussed in class, and some images and/or objects that you associate with your family and yourself. Use these examples and inspirations to design a symbol for yourself and a symbol for your family. Draw and color your symbols on the paper squares, and then add written descriptions of how your symbols represent you. Be specific. Then add drawings of things that you look to for protection and good luck around those symbols on the other squares of paper.

Finally, glue the squares onto the cardstock, in the order of your choice, to make a standing accordion book that represents you and your family.

## **PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION**

Display your books in your classroom, and discuss how your symbols and those of your classmates evolved. What kinds of images and associations were used? How are your classmates' symbols alike or different? Did any images appear in multiple students' symbols? How successful do you feel your book is in representing yourself and your family?

## **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.3-5  
3-5.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners.

CCSS.VAPA.3-5

Grade 3.1.5 Identify and describe elements of art in works of art, emphasizing line, color, shape/form, texture, space, and value. 3.1 Compare and describe various works of art that have a similar theme and were created at different time periods. Grade 4.3.1 Describe how art plays a role in reflecting life. Grade 5.2.7 Communicate values, opinions, or personal insights through an original work of art. 5.2 Identify and design icons, logos, and other graphic devices as symbols for ideas and information.

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

### READING GESTURES

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How is body language read and understood?

#### GRADES

6–9

#### TIME

One or more class periods

#### ART CONCEPTS

Emulation, gesture, posture, pose, representation, form

#### MATERIALS

An open space

#### TALKING ABOUT ART

View and discuss the image of the Buddha Shakyamuni sculpture included in the curriculum packet. What do you notice about the figure's stance, posture, mood, attire, and body language? Is there anything about those aspects of the figure that you find familiar? In what other contexts have you seen similar forms?

Within movement and meditative arts, objects and images are often used as aids to achieve a state of being or emulate an ideal or philosophy. Complex lyrical dance sequences are often built from visual references without much context; for instance, they may draw from static poses represented in cultural objects or images without accurate dates or attributions. In contrast, practitioners of contemporary yoga or dance might utilize mudras or gestures in order to reference specific philosophies in a transformative way.

#### MAKING ART

This movement exercise will allow us to focus on how observable states of being can transform the emotional, affective, or psychic state of those around us.

Drawing from the idea that observation of Buddha Shakyamuni's body language can inspire enlightenment, we will consider more broadly how our own feelings, moods, and levels of attention or distraction can be configured upon our observation of others.

Form a circle or line up in rows facing your teacher. Your teacher will guide you through a few suggested movements. These movements can be very specific—i.e. putting hands on hips or lowering eyelids until eyes are half-shut—or more general—shifting or isolating a body part of choice within a general area of the body, or making an adjustment to a breathing pattern. Notice internally what changes (physically, emotionally, and mentally) with each pose.

Find a partner, and work together as a pair. Partner A will create a gesture, pose, or movement based on the teacher's prompts. Prompts may

## **MAKING ART (cont.)**

be broad or specific (i.e. “do something with X area” or “change something about X area”), or suggestive of a certain feeling without specifying a particular kind of movement (“express confidence using only your face”). Poses or gestures should be held for a set number of seconds. Partner B should watch and record on paper any feelings that arise from observing Partner A’s poses. It should be noted that the feeling Partner B gets from Partner A’s language is not necessarily indicative of the meaning of that pose or the intentions of Partner A.

## **PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION**

How can movement practices inspired by forms or ideas from history change how we think about bodies and intentions in the present?

Discuss the difference between responding to a gesture in a static representation (i.e. statues of the Buddha) and gesture-sharing (mirroring) between people in real life. Did any misunderstandings occur between you and your partner? How frequently do you think body language is misread? How does clothing affect how body language is perceived? Is it possible to be more accurate in how we judge people based on their body language and expression?

## **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.READING. 6-9

6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue. 9.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums, determining which details are emphasized in each account. 9.9 Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.6-9

6-9.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners. 6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

### THE ESSENCE OF MY PHILOSOPHY

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can an artist condense complex ideas into a short text-based artwork?

#### GRADES

6–12

#### TIME

One or more class periods

#### ART CONCEPTS

Text-based art, sumi ink painting, 3D, design

#### MATERIALS

Pens, drawing paper, sumi ink, washi paper, gold foil/tape, construction paper or cardstock paper (in various colors), clear tape rolls, scissors, and music

#### TALKING ABOUT ART

Sutras are short texts or stories that depict lessons and serve as models for living. The Buddhist practice of sutra-copying is intended to aid in meditation. How can writing help aid meditation? Japanese Buddhist monks use sumi ink for sutra-copying, called *shakyo*. There is a certain fragility to using sumi ink on washi paper as a medium (washi paper can be extremely thin)—why do you think Japanese Buddhist monks use this medium?

Throughout Asia, sutra boxes are used to store these sacred writings. The 20th century Thai *Sutra Box* included in this packet is a gilded lacquer box which shows protector deities in a gesture of prayer. How does the look of the sutra box reflect the text inside?

#### MAKING ART

Begin by thinking of a philosophy that you live by. What values are inherent to this philosophy? Think of words, phrases, and quotations associated with this philosophy and write them all down in pen on paper. Also write down any places, objects, or other associations connected to this philosophy. Using the words you wrote for inspiration, create a short poetic text (3 to 10 words) to express this philosophy. Then, using sumi ink, write out your poetic text on washi paper. Finally, using construction or cardstock paper and tape, create a sutra box to hold your poetic artwork. As you are making your box, think about your philosophy and the artwork you just created. Try to make the outside of the box reflect what it will hold inside. Use gold foil and tape to decorate your box.

#### PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION

Arrange a display of all the sumi artworks and boxes on tables around the room. Ask students to walk around the room looking at all the artworks. Read your fellow students' philosophies carefully. Are their philosophies clear and easy to understand despite their condensed form? Look to see how each person's box design may relate in style to their sumi artwork. Does the artwork look similar in tone and style to the box? Why or why not? Why do you think the artist chose to design the box this way?

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.4-12

4-12.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.READING.6-12

6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue. 7.7 Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium. 9-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. 9-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. 9-12.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account. 9-10.9 Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work.

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

### LOOKING MEDITATION

<b>ESSENTIAL QUESTION</b>	How can we use the principles of meditation to increase our observational skills?
<b>GRADES</b>	4–12
<b>TIME</b>	One or more class periods
<b>ART CONCEPTS</b>	Point-of-view, close looking, walking meditation, reflection, collaboration
<b>MATERIALS</b>	Artworks or reproductions of artworks, pencils, and paper
<b>TALKING ABOUT ART</b>	<p>Show Yōgetsu's <i>Gibbon Reaching for the Reflection of the Moon</i> from the early 16th c. What might be happening here? Be sure to cite evidence from the image. How does the artist depict this animal's surroundings?</p> <p>The gibbon reaching for the reflection of the moon is a Zen parable that warns against mistaking illusion for reality. In the Zen tradition of Buddhism, meditation plays an important role in seeking true enlightenment. But meditation can take on many different forms: an inscription of another Zen painting in LACMA's collection, Deiryū Kutsu's <i>Mendicant Monks</i>, reads, "Walking, walking: this is also meditation." In Zen, <i>kinhin</i>, or walking meditation, is practiced between periods of sitting meditation. How does this concept differ from your associations with sitting meditation? (Consider images of Buddha Shakyamuni practicing sitting meditation.) Both of these practices share the fundamental ideas of focus or mindfulness in order to build awareness. In sitting meditation, practitioners might chose to focus on monitoring their breathing or how their bodies feel sitting on the floor. In walking meditation they pay attention to every step they take. Those same principles of mindfulness can be applied to other kinds of activities, too, like looking at art.</p>
<b>GALLERY ACTIVITY</b>	<p>Like the mendicant monks in Deiryū Kutsu's painted scrolls, begin to cultivate awareness through the practice of walking meditation. Have in mind a set time (perhaps five minutes) and destination.</p> <p>Remain silent for the duration of the walking meditation. Pay attention to each step you take, how your feet feel as they touch the ground, and how each step makes the rest of your body feel. As you are paying attention to your steps, also notice your surroundings. Your teacher may ring a bell at the beginning and end of the practice to signal its start and completion.</p> <p>Take some time to reflect on that experience in a full-class discussion. What was that like? How do you feel now? Did anything you notice surprise you? What was challenging? What was easy?</p>

## **GALLERY ACTIVITY (cont.)**

Next, select an artwork that you would like to focus on for five to ten minutes. Your teacher might offer you several choices of high-quality reproductions of artworks from this curriculum or a fellow students' artworks. During the ten minutes, remain silent and focus entirely on the image. Your teacher may again ring a bell to signal the start and end of this silent close looking experience.

After the artworks or reproductions have been collected or, if at the museum, you have moved into another gallery; you will have five to seven minutes to write a written reflection without looking at the artwork you just focused on. What did you notice or wonder about the artwork? What was this experience like? You may either write about observations you made about the artwork, or how you felt being still with one artwork for ten minutes. Again, the teacher may ring a bell to signal the start and end of this written reflection time.

Direct students to form groups of two or three. Discuss the activity in your groups for five to seven minutes. What did you learn about the artwork or yourself through this experience?

## **PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION**

As a class, would anyone like to share what you talked about with your partner(s)? What was this whole experience like? How did you best learn about the artwork you studied? How did you feel when you were looking at the artwork for ten minutes? How might you transfer the way you felt during this lesson to other parts our day?

## **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. READING.4-12**

4-12.1 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.

4-12.6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text. 4-12.7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WRITING.4-12**

4-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

4-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.4-12**

4-12.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

4-12.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.



## RESOURCES

## BOOKS FOR STUDENTS

**A HANDFUL OF QUIET: HAPPINESS IN FOUR PEBBLES**

Thich Nhat Hanh

This book introduces pebble meditation, a fun activity that introduces children to mediation.

**BUDDHA AT BEDTIME**

Nagaraja, Dharmachari

Building on the age-old art of storytelling, this book re-tells twenty ancient Buddhist tales in a way that is thoroughly fun and accessible to children.

**READING BUDDHIST ART: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO BUDDHIST SIGNS AND SYMBOLS**

McArther, Meher

A concise, accessible primer to the intricate world of Buddhist art.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

**HIGHLIGHTS OF "THE WAY OF THE ELDERS"**

<http://unframed.lacma.org/2011/07/11/highlights-of-the-way-of-the-elders/>

A LACMA blog post on an installation of SE Asian Buddhist art commissioned and donated to Buddhist temples and monasteries.

**"SACRED SPACES WITH THE TIBETAN BUDDHIST SHRINE ROOM"**

<http://rubinmuseum.org/events/exhibitions/sacred-spaces>

A description and virtual tour of a Tibetan Buddhist shrine room installed in The Rubin.

**"THE RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART LOOKING GUIDE"**

[http://rubinmuseum.org/images/content/2014\\_Looking\\_Guide4.pdf](http://rubinmuseum.org/images/content/2014_Looking_Guide4.pdf)

A guide to symbols and important figures in Himalayan Buddhist art.

## ONLINE RESOURCES (cont.)

**"LEARNING TO LOOK AT ASIAN ART"**

<https://www.nortonsimon.org/video-learning-to-look-at-asian-art-at-the-norton-simon-museum/Medium>  
A guide to the iconography of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain deities.

**KHAN ACADEMY**

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history/art-asia/beginners-guide-asian-culture/buddhist-art-culture/a/introduction-to-buddhism-2>  
A variety of resources (essays and videos) related to Buddhism and Buddhist Art throughout Asia. Much of the content is written by scholars and curators in the field and includes objects from museums.

**SMARTHISTORY**

<http://smarthistory.org/tag/world-religions/>  
A variety of resources (essays and videos) related to Buddhism and Buddhist Art throughout Asia. Much of the content is written by scholars and curators in the field and includes objects from museums.

## BOOKS FOR TEACHERS

**THE WORLD OF BUDDHISM**

Bechert, Heinz and Richard Gombrich, eds.

This text describes the teachings of the Buddha, looks at Buddhism in India, Burma, Thailand, China, Korea, and Japan, and looks at Buddhist history, sects, shrines, and temples.

**BUDDHIST ART AND ARCHITECTURE**

Fisher, Robert E.

This book describes all the Buddhist schools and cultures, and explains their imagery, from Tibetan cosmic diagrams and Korean folk art to early Sri Lankan sites and Japanese Zen gardens.

## **BOOKS FOR TEACHERS** (cont.)

### **TEACHING ASIAN ART: CONTENT, CONTEXT, AND PEDAGOGY**

Sheng Kuan Chung

Teaching Asian Art provides American art teachers with cultural insights and historical/spiritual perspectives through lessons inspired by Asian art, allowing them to make meaningful connections across the curriculum.

### **READING BUDDHIST ART: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO BUDDHIST SIGNS AND SYMBOLS**

McArther, Meher

A concise, accessible primer to the intricate world of Buddhist art.

### **THE SILK ROAD IN WORLD HISTORY**

Xinru Liu

The Silk Road was the contemporary name for a complex of ancient trade routes linking East Asia with Central Asia, South Asia, and the Mediterranean world. This book examines the spread of new ideas, religions, and values through the Silk Road.