

## SIXTH GRADE CURRICULUM MATERIALS

### *LACMA's Permanent Collection*

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THESE CURRICULUM MATERIALS ARE DESIGNED TO ENHANCE THE ACTIVITIES of sixth-grade students who participate in the Ancient World Mobile program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). This program is composed of hands-on art experiences in the Ancient World Mobile, and gallery-teacher facilitated tours of the ancient art collections at the museum. These materials will enrich the students' experience with the program and supplement your class study of ancient cultures throughout the school year.

Beliefs about living a virtuous life, the afterlife and the honoring of ancestors have played a major role in the rituals, daily life, and artistic production of ancient world cultures. Images of seven objects from LACMA's collections are included. Three works from ancient Egypt are the foundation for the study of afterlife and ancestors. Additional works of art from ancient China, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Italy, demonstrate the similarities and differences in the beliefs and art of these cultures.

The materials include suggested questions and activities to assist students in making discoveries about these works of art, as well as historical and technical information for the classroom teacher. As students make discoveries through their experiences on the Ancient World Mobile and in the museum, they are encouraged to think about and discuss the similarities and differences among beliefs about a virtuous life, ancestors, the afterlife, and the art that represents these beliefs.

The curriculum materials were developed in alignment with Grade Six California State Content Standards for History-Social Science, Visual Arts, and English Language Arts. They were designed for classroom use and intended to stimulate critical thinking and creative expression. Students will discover the art of ancient cultures and make valuable connections to their own cultures and experiences.

# Ancient World Mobile

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Living a Virtuous Life, the Afterlife, and the Honoring of Ancestors in the Art of the Ancient World



Los Angeles County Museum of Art ♦ Curriculum Materials

Ancient World Mobile—Living a Virtuous Life, the Afterlife, and the Honoring of Ancestors in the Art of the Ancient World. An Outreach Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

This program is supported by a grant from the Maxwell H. Gluck Foundation.

Education programs at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art are supported in part by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, the William Randolph Hearst Endowment Fund for Arts Education and Rx for Reading.



This curriculum was written by Jennifer Miller, Rebecca Krasner and Eduardo Sanchez, edited by Sara Cody, and designed by Jenifer Shell.

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Cover photo:

*Dancing Ganesha, Lord of Obstacles*

Bangladesh, Dinajpur District, South Asia 11th–12th century

Sculpture; Stone, Phyllite, 25¾ x 13¼ x 5 in.

The Phil Berg Collection (M.71.73.143)

Photo © 2010 Museum Associates/LACMA

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# Ancient World Mobile

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## Living a Virtuous Life, the Afterlife, and the Honoring of Ancestors in the Art of the Ancient World

BELIEFS ABOUT LIVING A VIRTUOUS LIFE, THE AFTERLIFE, AND THE HONORING OF ancestors have played a major role in the rituals, daily life, and artistic production of ancient world cultures. The seven works of art from LACMA's permanent collection reproduced and described here provide insight about the cultures from which these were produced.

These materials include suggested questions and activities to assist students in making discoveries about these works of art, as well as historical and technical information for the classroom teacher. The following questions will help your students as they explore the objects discussed in this packet.

- ◆ *What are some of the qualities we strive toward in our own lives? How might these be similar or different to the virtues people strove toward in ancient times?*
- ◆ *What do people from different religious and cultural backgrounds believe about an afterlife? How are these beliefs manifested in ritual, everyday life, and art? In what ways does your culture honor ancestors after death?*
- ◆ *What types of objects do you associate with the afterlife and the honoring of ancestors? What functions do they have? What do they reveal about your beliefs in the afterlife and the importance of your ancestors?*
- ◆ *What types of objects related to the ancestors and afterlife would you expect to find in an art museum? Why might functional objects be a part of a museum collection? Why would we consider some of the objects in this packet to be art?*

As students make discoveries through their experiences on the Ancient World Mobile and in the museum, they are encouraged to think about and discuss the similarities and differences among beliefs about a virtuous life, ancestors, the after-life, and the art that represents these beliefs.

# Round-Topped Stela of Iuf-er-bak

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THIS STELA, A FLAT SLAB OF STONE WITH A COMMEMORATIVE purpose, was created for Iuf-er-bak, who is depicted by the figure on the right and identified by the hieroglyphs at the top. The stela was carved during the reign of King Amenhotep III in the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty (1391–1353 BC). This stable and prosperous period is considered to represent the height of ancient Egyptian artistic production.

The stela was carved in sunk relief—the details are carved in recessed or sunken areas in varying levels of relief. The quality of the carving on this stela is exceptional for its attention to detail and its graceful contours. Notice the attention the artist gave to the facial features. The most important figures and details received the deepest carving. Originally, the entire surface of the stela was painted; now, only traces of pigment remain.

- ◆ *How does the artist portray Iuf-er-bak and his family? Which figures are the most important? Which features are emphasized by more detailed carving? Describe what the figures are wearing.*

Iuf-er-bak, a noble from the capital city of Thebes, is identified by the hieroglyphs as “guardian of the store-house of the Temple of Amun.” His wife, Nebet-iunet, and two sons accompany him. Iuf-er-bak and his sons carry floral funerary offerings. These four figures are examples of the standard representation of figures among ancient Egyptian artists: the eyes and shoulders are shown frontally and the head and lower body are shown in profile, which Egyptian artists believed was the best way to provide a comprehensive view of the human body. The woman stands with her feet together, and the men stand with their feet apart. All four figures have a youthful appearance. Egyptian artists indicated relative degrees of importance using scale; here, in the lower register, seven additional family members, who are noticeably smaller than the figures above, participate in a funerary banquet.

- ◆ *How would you describe the relationship between the figures in the sculpture? How has the artist shown this relationship? How is this similar or different to the family portraits and photographs of today?*

The stela was probably made for the necropolis (city of the dead) of Western Thebes, where it would have been placed in the tomb of the deceased. The ancient Egyptians believed that the afterlife was an actual physical existence that required sustenance, which the living provided through offerings. The deceased’s *ka*, the aspect of a person that could be represented in artistic form, needed life-preserving goods such as food and drink. In the afterlife, an individual’s *ka* dwelt within the mummy or the tomb statue.

Most stelae from this period were created to insure that the tomb owner would receive the offerings necessary to sustain him or her in the afterlife. This stela is unusual in that the text contains no direct request for funerary offerings, nor is there a depiction of the tomb owner and his family receiving offerings from a specific deity. The inclusion of the relatives and the biographical information on this stela may have served to ensure that family members and/or funerary priests would provide offerings forever. Representations of the deceased helped assure his or her survival. The name of the individual was also believed to be a vital aspect of the self that needed to be preserved.

- ◆ *What objects help you remember your ancestors and family? Do any of these objects serve a purpose beyond helping you to remember?*

- ◆ *Make a list of the people who are most important in your life. Create a “family” portrait in the Egyptian style, to commemorate this relationship. Include the names of each individual above his or her head.*



ROUND-TOPPED STELA OF IUF-ER-BAK  
Egypt, Thebes, mid-18th Dynasty, reign of Amenhotep III (c. 1391–1353 BC)  
Limestone, 26 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 17 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.  
Purchased with funds provided by Phil Berg AC1999.2.1  
Photo © 2010 Museum Associates/LACMA

# Sarcophagus

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THIS SARCOPHAGUS, OR COFFIN, INCLUDING A BASE, lid, and mummy board, dates to the middle of the Twenty-first Dynasty (c. 1000–968 BC). The high priests of Amun at Thebes assumed rule over Egypt in the Twenty-first Dynasty, and a number of changes took place in funerary customs. Beginning during the Old Kingdom (2687–2191 BC), tombs were built of permanent materials and the interior walls of the tombs were decorated with scenes of daily life and funerary rituals. They were also inscribed with texts to further ensure that the deceased would travel from life into the afterlife, as well as to provide sustenance for the deceased in the afterlife. During the Twenty-first Dynasty, burials were made in plain under-ground chambers or rock crevices, and the surface of the coffin served as the replacement surface for the ornate scenes and texts previously found on the walls of the tombs.

- ◆ *Describe the shape of the coffin. What purpose might this shape serve? What types of figures and activities do you see?*

This type of sarcophagus is known as an anthropoid coffin. It is made of sycamore wood and shaped in the form of a human outline. The head, hands, and feet are modeled in high relief, and the figure's wig, broad floral collar, and plaited beard identify it as a male's coffin. The space in the inscription on the lid's footboard that would have been reserved for the name of the coffin's owner has been left blank, leaving his identity a mystery.

The sarcophagus and the process of mummification were central to ancient Egyptians' beliefs about the afterlife. According to Egyptian belief, the sun god Re descends into the underworld when the sun sets. Protective deities help him overcome the dangers threatening to impede his path to rebirth at dawn. The Egyptians believed that in the afterlife, the pharaohs became one with Re and were likewise reborn with him at sunrise. While only the pharaohs journeyed with Re through the nighttime hours, all Egyptians faced the same dangers on their journey to the afterlife. Instructions for the elaborate preparations necessary to safe passage from life into the afterlife were found in the Book of the Dead.

When a ruler or a well-to-do Egyptian died, his or her body was embalmed and wrapped in linen in order to keep the deceased looking as much like the living body as possible, enabling the person's spirit (*ka*) to recognize and return to the body for the afterlife. This process, called mummification, associated the deceased with Osiris, the god of the underworld. As a precaution against the disintegration of the deceased's face, a substitute face was provided by carving the face of the deceased on the coffin and also depicting it on the inner lid (the mummy board). The other images on this sarcophagus are from the Book of the Dead. A number of deities are shown assisting the deceased on his or her voyage. By depicting images from the Book of the Dead in tombs, on papyri (paper made from the papyrus plant), and on sarcophagi, the Egyptians believed they could help produce the desired result—a successful voyage to the afterlife.



#### SARCOPHAGUS

Egypt, likely Thebes, mid-21st Dynasty (c. 1000–968 BC)

Wood, overlaid with gesso and polychrome decoration and yellow varnish, 73¼ x 21½ x 13 in.

Purchased with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. John Jewett Garland M.47.3a–c

Photo © 2010 Museum Associates/LACMA

#### Follow-up Activity for Students

In ancient Egypt, the image on a sarcophagus honored the life and protected the afterlife of the deceased. The mummy board, with a portrait of the deceased and scenes of his or her journey in the afterlife, would have been placed directly on top of the mummy in the sarcophagus included in this packet. Create a mummy board celebrating your own life or the life of a hero—a personal hero, a historical hero, or a fictional hero.

On scratch paper, make lists of the following:

- ◆ *Important events in his or her life*
- ◆ *Traits he or she possesses (or possessed when he or she was alive) or would like to attain (if you are honoring yourself)*
- ◆ *Ideas or people important to him or her*
- ◆ *Goals he or she would like to achieve (if you are honoring yourself)*

How might you depict these elements either as meaningful symbols or as a drawn representation of a scene or idea? Plan a series of drawings to include on your mummy board. Make your mummy board on heavy paper or with foam core board. Lightly draw a mummy shape and fill it in with a headdress and face. Complete the mummy board by painting or drawing symbols and representations of the listed elements.

- ◆ *You may include a cartouche (an oval loop containing Egyptian ruler's name) on your mummy board with the name of the person you are honoring written in hieroglyphs (<http://www.kidzone.ws/cultures/egypt/hieroglyph.htm>). Practice writing the name before completing the cartouche on the mummy board. The cartouche may be placed below the face and headdress of the figure.*

# Ibis Processional Standard

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BECAUSE THE WRITING OF HIEROGLYPHS WAS considered a sacred act, ancient Egyptians believed that Thoth, the Egyptian god of intelligence and writing, presided over the scribes. Thoth was represented as either an ibis or a baboon. Ibis are wading birds distinguished by their long, slender, downward-curving bills, and ibis were frequently mummified and offered to Thoth as a gift of prayer. More than four million mummified ibis have been discovered; tens of thousands were found in the ibis catacombs at Saqqara, an ancient necropolis just south of Cairo and west of the ancient city of Memphis.

This ibis image was probably attached to a staff in order to create a standard (a type of banner) that would have been carried by priests or government officials in religious processions or parades. Very few examples of processional standards survive, although their importance in public processions is demonstrated in illustrations on Egyptian monuments and sculpture. This standard dates to the Late Period (712–332 BC). Although the standard seems flat, it was designed as a three-dimensional object. The skill of the artist who created this bronze is evident in the elegance of the outline and contour and the attention to detail. Late Period bronze production reached its peak during the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (664–525 BC), a likely date for this object.

- ◆ *Look closely at the standard. Where does the artist use detail to emphasize the three-dimensionality of the object?*

In ancient Egypt, the gods had specific roles in the journey of the dead to the afterlife, just as symbols of the gods had a role in the ceremonies and rituals of the living. On the side of the sarcophagus included in this packet, Thoth is shown with Anubis at the Weighing of the Heart, a scene from the Book of the Dead. Egyptians believed that many gods bore animal traits, so gods were often represented either as animals or as part animal, part human. (Gods that were feared or held in awe, for example, could be represented by lions, crocodiles, or venomous snakes.) Anubis is the jackal-headed god who tends the mummy as an embalmer and who tests the balance of the deceased's heart; Thoth (frequently depicted as either an ibis or a human with an ibis head on funerary papyri, tomb walls, and sarcophagi) records Anubis's final judgment.

- ◆ *What types of ceremonies and rituals can you think of that celebrate a life of someone living or dead? What symbols are associated with the ceremony or ritual? What do they mean? What people are involved in the ceremony or ritual? What role does each person play?*



IBIS PROCESSIONAL STANDARD  
Egypt, Late Period (712–332 BC)  
Bronze, 15 x 11 5/16 x 11/16 in.  
Art Museum Council Fund M.91.73  
Photo © 2010 Museum Associates/LACMA

# The Dancing Ganesha

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HINDUISM IS ONE OF THE OLDEST RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS in the world and the third largest religion today after Christianity and Islam. Although Hindu practices vary throughout South Asia, they generally include the offering of rituals and prayers to various deities. One of the most popular and beloved Hindu gods is Ganesha, whose distinctive elephant head and large belly make him easily recognizable. In this mid-twelfth-century relief sculpture, which is made of a dark gray stone known as phyllite, Ganesha is portrayed dancing while two musicians below him play instruments. He balances gracefully on the back of his vehicle, a rat, which looks up at him in admiration. Two celestial garland bearers floating on clouds watch him from above.

Ganesha is the god of auspicious beginnings and the remover of obstacles. People perform rituals of worship (*puja*) to him on religious occasions, at the start of new business ventures, or to prepare for long journeys. Students often perform puja to Ganesha when faced with the challenges of exams at school. In this sculpture, Ganesha is shown with eight arms. Hindu deities are commonly represented with many arms that hold symbolic attributes, display ritual hand gestures (*mudras*), and most importantly, demonstrate their divine natures. Here, Ganesha's primary right hand performs the mudra of reassurance, which conveys protection and blessings. This mudra can also be found in Buddhist art. In his other right hands, Ganesha holds a string of prayer beads, an ax, and his broken tusk. In his left hands, he holds a bowl of sweets, a snake, and a radish. His fourth left arm extends back in a traditional dance gesture.

Ganesha sculptures like this one can be found in Hindu temples throughout India as well as in other countries of Asia. This particular sculpture is from the country of Bangladesh, which forms part of the northern coast of the Bay of Bengal.

There are many stories about Ganesha and how he got his elephant head. According to one popular version, Ganesha's mother, Parvati, once asked him to guard the door while she bathed. During the bath, Ganesha's father, Shiva, god of destruction and rejuvenation, returned home. Because he had been away for many, many years, he did not recognize his son. Ganesha, being a virtuous and loyal son, followed his mother's strict orders and refused to let Shiva inside. Shiva became angry at Ganesha's refusal and decapitated him with a single blow from his trident. When Parvati learned of this tragedy, she was overwhelmed by sadness and demanded that Shiva restore their son to life. So Shiva ventured out into the world where he came across an elephant that nobly offered his own head as a replacement for Ganesha's.

- ◆ *How does Ganesha show virtue in the story? Who else exhibits virtuous qualities in this story? Can you think of a time when you performed a virtuous act?*
- ◆ *Look carefully at the sculpture of Ganesha. Imagine how this work of art might be used in a ceremony. Would it be carried, decorated, or placed in a temple? What colors would you use to paint this sculpture?*
- ◆ *In some parts of India, sculptures of Ganesha are produced specifically to be worshipped by devotees in an annual ten-day Ganesha festival that occurs from late August to early September. They are made from unfired clay and then painted. At the end of the festival, the sculptures are taken to a nearby river or lake where they will dissolve in the water. During the ten days of the festival, devotees welcome Ganesha into their homes as if he were an honored guest coming to visit. In bidding him farewell, the whole family escorts the sculpture of Ganesha into the water. Can you think of a story about a relative or friend whom you admire and who has visited you and your family? What are the qualities that you admire about that person?*



DANCING GANESHA, LORD OF OBSTACLES  
Bangladesh, Dinajpur District, South Asia 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century  
Sculpture; Stone, Phyllite, 25 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 13 $\frac{1}{4}$  x 5 in.  
The Phil Berg Collection (M.71.73.143)  
Photo © 2010 Museum Associates/ LACMA

## Lidded Ritual Food Cauldron (*Ding*) with Interlaced Dragons

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THE EASTERN ZHOU DYNASTY OF CHINA (770–221 BC) was politically decentralized, with many powerful local rulers whose patronage encouraged the production of magnificent ritual bronze vessels. Around 500–450 BC, this lidded *ding* served as a ritual object in funerary and ancestral rites. The *ding* is a round, three-legged bronze vessel used for cooking and serving food. In ancient China, bronze vessels such as this were made in sets that were displayed at rituals and often buried with the dead.

The shape of this *ding* has its origins in Neolithic ceramic objects. *Dings* were popular during the Shang dynasty (c. 1700–1023 BC) and were modified during the Zhou (pronounced "joe") period to include the type of lid seen here, which was designed with three loops to be used either as grips or as feet when overturned.

The interlaced patterns of animal motifs in separate friezes (sculptured or ornamented bands) is one style distinct to the Eastern Zhou period. Stylized versions of animals and supernatural creatures (such as tigers, birds, deer, and dragons) decorate bronze ritual vessels of this period. The central frieze of this *ding* contains a series of alternating rams' heads. The lower frieze and those on the lid contain interlaced biomorphic shapes that suggest the ancient form of the Chinese dragon. In ancient China, animals were believed to have the power to communicate with spirits, and it is likely that people of this time believed animal images on bronze ritual vessels would help make contact with ancestors.

- ◆ *Look closely at the ding. What aspects of the vessel are practical? What aspects are artistic?*
- ◆ *Looking at the decoration, what designs do you see? Describe any patterns that you see. Do the interlaced designs remind you of any other art that you have seen?*

Zhou rituals governed burial practices. The ancient Chinese believed that the soul divided into two upon death; one soul ascended to the afterlife, while the second remained with the body and the grave goods. Funeral rites were carried out to care for the body and the second soul. Grave goods were intended for the use of the dead in the afterlife. Because the spirits that lived on helped to determine the fate of the living, the living would make elaborate offerings to the spirits in order to please them. For example, ritual vessels such as the *ding* were used to prepare food that was offered to the ancestors.

- ◆ *How would you honor your ancestors? Describe a ceremony that includes an offering to your ancestors. What would you offer? What type of container might you use? How could you redesign it so that it honors an ancestor or someone important to you?*



LIDDED RITUAL FOOD CAULDRON (DING) WITH INTERLACED DRAGONS  
China, Shanxi Province, ancient state of Jin, mid-Eastern Zhou dynasty (c. 500–450 BC)  
Cast bronze, 13¼ x 19½ in.  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eric Lidow M.74.103a–b  
Photo © 2010 Museum Associates/LACMA

# Buddha Shakyamuni

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THIS GILT BRONZE SCULPTURE WAS MADE IN THE eighteenth century in Sri Lanka and depicts Buddha Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism. Images of the Buddha are made according to a convention that requires a set number of attributes and characteristics. These symbols remind the followers of Buddhism of the distinct qualities that represent Buddha Shakyamuni and provide inspiration for meditation, prayer, and worship. This sculpture depicts Buddha as a monk, seated in a meditative position with crossed legs and hands resting gently in his lap. He wears a wavy patterned robe that hangs over his left shoulder in a style typical of Sri Lankan Buddhist images. A five-pronged flame emerges from the top of his head, symbolizing the brilliance of Buddha's teachings. The flame is also part of his *ushnisha*, a bump on top of his head that represents his transcendent wisdom. The spiral in the center of Buddha's forehead, called an *urna*, represents the power of knowledge that he possesses.

This Buddha Shakyamuni sits on top of a highly stylized lotus flower, an important symbol in Buddhist art that suggests man's potential. Just as the lotus rises above the muddy waters, people can rise above their confusion and achieve enlightenment. Lotus flowers also decorate the palms of the Buddha's hands and the soles of his feet.

Buddha Shakyamuni was born into a royal family in the sixth century BC, in what is today what southern Nepal. He was given the name Siddhartha Gautama and, soon after his birth, a soothsayer predicted he would be either a powerful king or a great religious leader. Siddhartha's father, who was a king, isolated him from the suffering in the world in an effort to ensure that his son would

not choose a religious path. The king's efforts were successful until Siddhartha saw four people: a sick man, a dead man, an old man, and a wandering ascetic. Siddhartha decided to leave his life as a prince; on the night of his twenty-ninth birthday, he secretly departed the palace to search for spiritual truth.

Siddhartha traveled throughout the country, fasting and meditating. After many years of searching for answers, he sat beneath the Bodhi tree and meditated on birth, death, and the nature of suffering. As he came closer to reaching Enlightenment, light radiated from his body, just as it does in this sculpture. After a long battle with the demon Mara, Siddhartha achieved Enlightenment. From that point on Siddhartha was known as Buddha Shakyamuni (Enlightened Sage of the Shakyas) and spent the rest of his life traveling and teaching throughout India.

◆ *Describe the expression on the Buddha's face. What mood does his expression evoke?*

While images of the Buddha can be appreciated for their beauty, it is important to remember that they initially served religious and ritual purposes for different cultures. Images such as this one may have been worshipped in a temple or may have served as the personal image of a wealthy Buddhist or royal patron. An ornamental arch would have surrounded the sculpture like a halo. In temples there are usually many images of Buddha placed together. Statues of Shakyamuni and of other Buddhist deities were also paraded through cities in processions celebrating important religious events. Buddha's image became the focal point of religious rituals such as incense offerings, candle lightings, and flower offerings.



BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI

Sri Lanka, Kandy period, 18th century

Gilt copper alloy with partial black coating, overall: 16 ½ x 14 ¼ x 9 ½ in.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art

Purchased with funds provided by Murray and Virginia Ward M.2004.1a–b

Photo © 2010 Museum Associates/LACMA

- ◆ *Buddhist sculptures include symbols that represent Buddha's greatness and his teachings. These symbols are like a language—once you can "read" them, you begin to understand their respective meaning. You already may be familiar with symbols such as the bald eagle or a Christian cross. What other symbols do we have in our own cultures or religions? What do these symbols mean to you?*
- ◆ *Buddha sculptures must adhere to specific measurements. Look closely at this sculpture. Are its proportions true to life? If not, what looks unrealistic to you? What details draw your attention?*

# Biographical Sarcophagus

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THIS SARCOPHAGUS, MADE OF WHITE MARBLE AND carved in high relief, is decorated with scenes that illustrate important events in the deceased person's life, as well as key ideas in Roman culture. The complexity of design, quality of the carving, and intricate detail indicate that the man for whom this sculpture was commissioned belonged to an elite class. The man's portrait is repeated on three sides of the sarcophagus, leading some scholars to believe that this figure represents the deceased. On the left side panel (not shown), a seated male figure dresses for battle with the assistance of an attendant at his feet. Another attendant presents him with his helmet, and a third figure stands behind. Four scenes on the front panel (shown below) include: two Roman horsemen trampling kneeling barbarians (non-Latin speaking people who lived outside the Roman Empire), a Roman officer granting mercy to a kneeling barbarian couple and child, a sacrifice, and a man and woman united in marriage. The right side of the sarcophagus represents a nurse bathing a newborn child in the presence of the seated mother.

The battle scene at the left refers to the deceased's courage and valor. The next scene, in which the hero pardons the barbarians, demonstrates his mercy. In the third scene, the deceased makes a sacrifice at an altar, showing his devotion to the gods, his family, and the state. In the scene at the right, marriage symbolizes harmony and unity. These are all ideals to which an upper-class Roman male, and particularly a high-ranking official, would aspire.

Like other sarcophagi, this object from second-century Rome is a coffin that, rather than being buried, would have been placed in either a tomb or an open space. The earliest example of a Roman biographical sarcophagus dates to late first century or early second century. This biographical sarcophagus not only presents the viewer with a carefully selected tribute to the deceased in vivid detail, but also was intended to provide moral inspiration for future generations through incorporating broad concepts that represent cardinal Roman virtues: *virtus* (virtue/valor), *clementia* (mercy), *pietas* (piety), and *concordia* (harmony).

- ◆ *Look closely at the sarcophagus. How are the scenes on its facade distinguished from one another? Are there any places where the scenes seem to overlap? Why might the artist have made these choices?*
- ◆ *Plan a biography of someone you know well, such as a relative, a mentor, a close friend, or a personal hero. You may research your biography by interviewing your subject or by searching for information in the library or online. Make a list of the most important events in your subject's life in their order of occurrence. Make a second list of the qualities you think best characterize this individual and their values. What are the events or actions from your subject's life that best illustrate these qualities? Once you have completed both lists, you have plans for two different biographies. Compare and contrast these plans—which one best represents the subject of your biography? Create a continuous narrative illustrating the plan you feel is most representative of the subject.*



BIOGRAPHICAL SARCOPHAGUS  
 Italy, Rome, 2nd century  
 Marble, 28 ½ x 89 x 32 in.  
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art  
 Purchased with funds provided by the Hearst Foundation 47.8.9a–c  
 Photo © 2010 Museum Associates/LACMA

### Further Explorations

In addition to viewing and discussing the transparencies individually, students should compare and contrast the works of art.

- ◆ How were the three Egyptian objects (the Stela of Iuḥ-er-bak, the Sarcophagus, and the Ibis Processional Standard) used? What do they tell us about the ancient Egyptian beliefs in the afterlife? What makes these objects works of art?
- ◆ How are the beliefs about afterlife and ancestors of the ancient Chinese similar to and different from the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians?
- ◆ Now that you have looked at objects from different ancient cultures, what similarities and differences can you describe among the objects—their uses, materials used, and/or artistic styles?
- ◆ After looking at works of art from different ancient cultures why do you think people give so much care and attention to objects associated with the afterlife and ancestors?
- ◆ Of the seven works of art included in this folder, which one do you find the most interesting? Why? Which object tells you the most about the culture that made it? Which one tells you the least? Which is your favorite work of art? Why?
- ◆ Both the Biographical Sarcophagus and the Buddha Shakyamuni help us to see what human characteristics the Romans and Buddhists emphasized and tried to cultivate. How are they similar and how are they different? What can these similarities and differences tell us about the civilizations from which each work of art came?