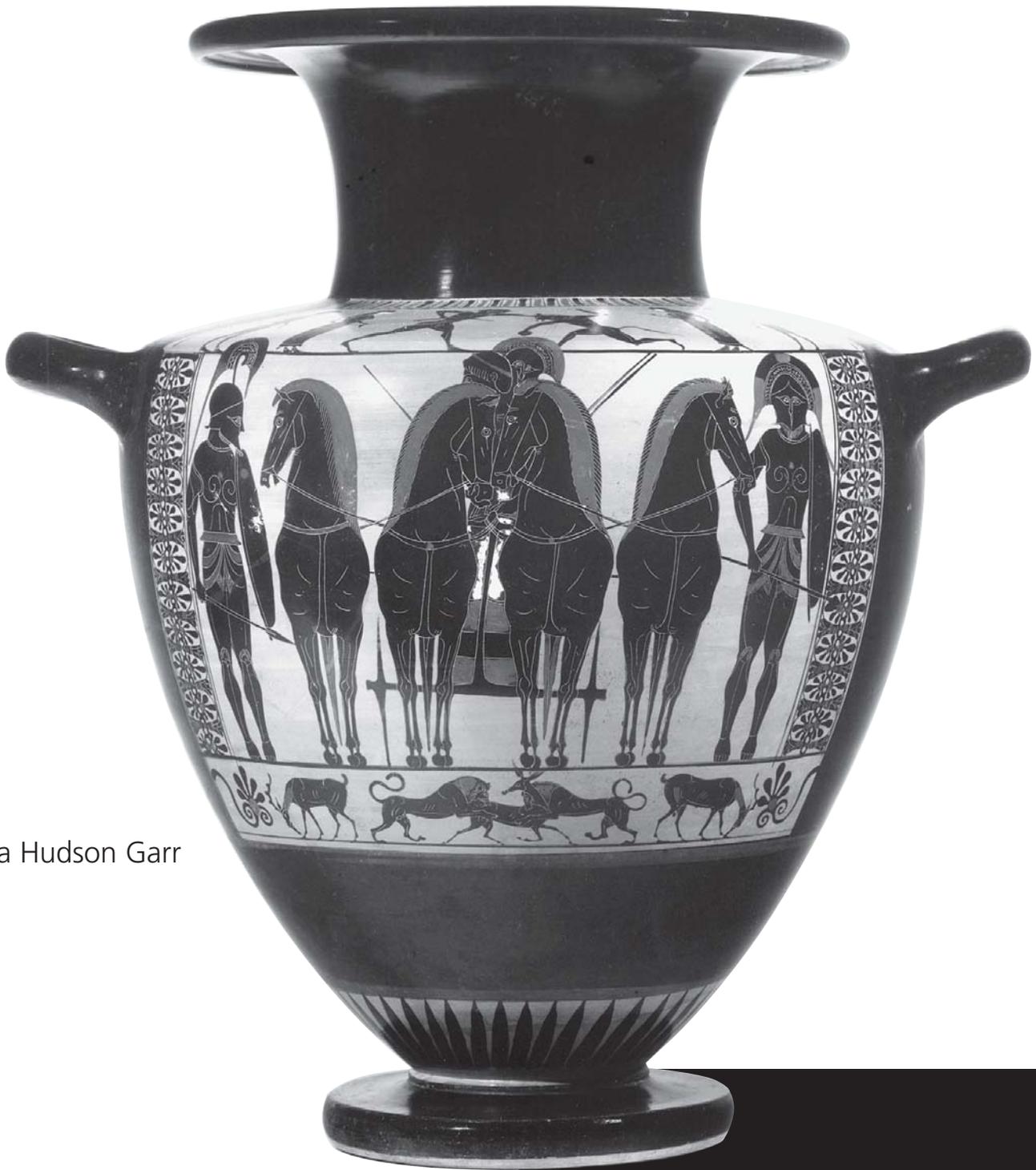


Art  
ToGo

The Cleveland  
Museum of Art

Classical Art: Ancient  
Greece and Rome



Alicia Hudson Garr

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Written by Alicia Hudson Garr, with timeline and captions by Michael Starinsky. Timeline drawing by Carolyn K. Lewis. Special thanks to the docent class of 2001–02 for their research on the objects and to Joan G. Hudson for helping the author with content and editing suggestions.

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Cover: Hydria, c. 520 BC. Attributed to Antimenes Painter (Greek, 530–510 BC). Black-figure terracotta. Purchase from J. H. Wade Fund 1975.1

[www.clevelandart.org](http://www.clevelandart.org)

We encourage teachers and students to visit the Cleveland Museum of Art in person. We also encourage teachers and students to visit the museum’s Web site, where information about the permanent collection and educational programs can be found.

While more than two thousand years have passed since the height of the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome, their achievements have had a profound impact on modern Western society. Sophisticated concepts of government, scientific inquiry, and philosophical thought—even some of our sporting events—have their roots in these societies. Greek and Roman mythology has provided subject matter for countless works of literature. Subjects and styles in the visual arts, from the naturalistic proportions of Greek statuary to the portrait-like depictions of individuals characteristic of Roman art, have clearly influenced successive cultural periods such as the Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Neoclassicism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Postmodernism in the twentieth century.

This Art To Go lesson will allow students to make a direct, tactile connection with the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome, a greater understanding of which can lead to a better understanding of modern Western culture and art.

### Ancient Greek Art

In museum galleries, the ancient Greek art is usually easy to find—the ceramics are orange and black, and the statues are usually male and nude! While it would be difficult to bring a sculpture out to a classroom, included in this suitcase are three examples of the best-known styles of vase painting from ancient Greece. Greek ceramics differ from other wares produced at about the same time in the method used to decorate them. Firing the clay in an oxygen-rich kiln



### Trefoil Oinochoe

We know where this oinochoe was made because of the decorative motif painted on its exterior. How do we know where objects are made in modern times?

created the orange color found on vases produced in Athens, as most were. The black came from a watered-down version of the same clay, painted on a leather-hard vessel, that turned black in a reduction-atmosphere kiln. These two colors are fundamental to ancient Greek ceramic decoration: when the figures on a vase are in black, the decorative process is referred to as “black-figure ware”; when the background is black, with the figures in red, the decorative process is called “red-figure ware.” Although both styles were used simultaneously in the sixth century BC, by the fifth and fourth centuries BC, red-figure was a more popular choice for vase painters.

This lesson contains examples of both styles of vase painting. The Trefoil Oinochoe (a wine jug) from the Greek-speaking colonies of South Italy is decorated in the red-figure style. The Stemless Kylix (a wine cup) was completely covered in black slip (sometimes called “black ware”), perhaps to imitate the effect of unpolished, blackened silver, a fashion of the time. The third vase in the lesson, Lekythos with the Ninth Labor of Herakles (a perfume jug), exemplifies the last major category of ancient Greek vase decoration: white-ground ware, which takes its name from the layer of kaolin painted as the background for the figures. The kaolin, applied before the vessel was fired and the figures painted, created an unstable, flaky base that made these wares unsuitable for everyday use; soon it was used only on vases that would be placed in tombs as grave gifts. Once these wares were relegated to the tomb, artists were able to experiment and use nontraditional colors such as yellow and blue in white-ground wares.



### Stemless Kylix

This kylix was found in northern Africa; describe how it may have gotten there from Greece.

What beverage do you think was sipped from this kylix in ancient times? What would you like to drink from it today?



### Lekythos with the Ninth Labor of Herakles

If we were making a lekythos in honor of you and one of your life's labors, what would we see?

The subject matter of ancient Greek vases ranges from scenes of everyday life, such as an athlete cleaning up after a workout, to complex multi-figured scenes of mythology, such as one of the twelve labors of Herakles—as found on the lekythos.

Greek sculpture ranged in size from the monumental to the intimate, from statues meant to be seen in public places to smaller household-sized statues of the gods. Greek sculpture always had a function, whether to honor an Olympic victor along the procession way leading to a temple or to represent a god as a dedication in a temple. Once the Romans began to import Greek sculpture to their homeland (as early as the second century BC), they removed its context, took away its function, and used it for decoration. After the famous original sculptures were no longer available, Greek artists were brought to Rome, and copies of the originals were made by the hundreds. In fact, such Roman copies often provide all the information we have about ancient Greek sculpture. Wealthy Romans built lavish villas outside Rome that were decorated with wall paintings, floor mosaics, and, frequently, mythological groupings of sculpture done in the ancient Greek style. The two pieces of sculpture included in this lesson (the marble Head of a Goddess and the terracotta Head of Medusa) look as though they could be from Greece but probably are of Roman origin. Without knowing exactly where they were found, it is difficult to know their function, but each probably fit somehow into the decorative scheme of a Roman villa.



**Head of a Goddess**

Let's assume this sculpture is indeed Venus, the Roman goddess of beauty and love. Can you name someone who might serve as a model for the goddess of beauty and love today? What are the differences between ancient and modern goddesses?



**Head of Medusa**

Why would one display the face of a monster as a decorative object? Can you name any modern-day female monsters?

## Ancient Roman Art

Because many Greek and Roman writers did not believe that the details of everyday life were fitting subject matter for literature, an analysis of the objects these cultures left behind provides our only insight into the daily lives of the people. While the next four objects in the lesson may not be examples of the finest art made by the Romans, they do offer insight into the various aspects of Roman art and culture regarding the army, commerce, entertainment, and educational practices.

The Romans created the largest empire in the ancient world through the superior organization and technical abilities of an army; once the empire had been created, the army defended its boundaries from the many envious peoples who wanted to enjoy the benefits of Roman civilization. Swords, spears, and bows and arrows made up the traditional weaponry of the Roman army. The use of a sling was part of the basic training of all Roman soldiers; slings were lightweight, portable, and could be used at a distance too great for swords and spears. Lead bullets were launched from these slings; while these objects may seem small and harmless, the bullet in the lesson could inflict a lot of damage when hurled by a trained “slinger.” The Sling Bullet has a stamped inscription, “LEG XX,” a reference to the Roman legion that used it—Legion 20. Legion 20 was nicknamed “Valeria Victrix” (valiant and victorious), probably because of its military



### **Sling Bullet**

What message(s) would you imprint on a bullet if you were a slinger?

Did soldiers in World War II write messages on bullets and bombs aimed at the enemy?

successes in Britain in the first century AD. Lead sling bullets were likely made right on the battlefield and often inscribed with the user's name. Some have been found with insults inscribed on them, giving new meaning to the phrase "adding insult to injury."

Because the Roman Empire extended across modern-day Europe and the Middle East, commerce was conducted across great distances. The Romans created products that were in demand throughout the empire, from their own particular type of ceramics (which differed from the Greek) to perfumes and spices housed in novel glass containers, some of which contained *garum*, a fermented fish sauce that was used frequently as a condiment (supposedly much like ketchup). In turn, the empire provided Rome with foreign luxury items such as ivory tusks and animal pelts, and more practical items such as grain to feed its city "welfare" population. While barter was always an element of ancient commerce, money could travel greater distances and create more efficient transactions. The value of a Roman coin was based on the precious metal contained therein, so weight was checked from time to time on balance scales. Objects to be weighed were hung from a hook or placed in a pan hanging beneath a short arm; a counterweight (of known amount) hung from the long arm. The weight was moved closer to the fulcrum when weighing lighter objects and farther away when weighing heavier ones. The Steelyard Weight in the form of an amphora (storage jar) was used on a balance scale. Ancient ships have



#### **Steelyard Weight**

Along with important government officials, animals were sometimes depicted on weights and coins in ancient times. What animals would you assign to our penny (behind Abraham Lincoln), nickel (behind Thomas Jefferson), dime (behind Franklin D. Roosevelt), and quarter (behind George Washington)?

Classical Art:  
Ancient Greece  
and Rome

Art To Go Suitcase

Lekythos  
500 BC



Trefoil Oinochoe  
300 BC



Stemless Kylix  
400 BC



Head of a  
Goddess  
100 BC



Let's Discover Egypt



The Art of Writing



Ancient Americas

3000 BC

2000 BC

1000 BC

1400–700 BC  
Mycenaean and  
Geometric eras

600–330 BC  
Archaic  
and  
Classical  
Greece

330–163 BC  
Hellenistic  
Era

510–31 BC  
Roman Republic

1250 BC  
Lion's Gate at  
Mycenae

1750 BC  
Code of Hammurabi,  
first known legal docu-  
ment, carved in stone  
for a Babylonian king

432 BC  
Parthenon  
finished  
at Acropolis  
in Athens

163 BC  
Romans conquer  
Greece

2600 BC  
Egyptians build pyra-  
mids at Giza

Highlights in  
Art and World  
History

Gladiator Oil Lamp  
100 AD



Head of Medusa  
400 AD



Sling Bullet  
300 AD



Steelyard Weight  
400 AD



Cool Knights



Native American Art

1000 AD

1500 AD

2002 AD

31 BC– AD 395  
Roman Empire

410 AD  
Goths sack Rome,  
end of Roman  
Imperial era

324 AD  
Constantine moves capital of  
Roman Empire from Rome to  
Constantinople, beginning of  
Byzantine era

79 AD  
Mt. Vesuvius erupts, Pompeii  
buried

80 AD  
Colosseum finished at Rome

1503  
Da Vinci  
paints the  
Mona  
Lisa

1776  
Founders of the United  
States sign Declaration of  
Independence

1492  
Columbus sails  
the ocean blue

1450  
Gutenberg invents  
the printing press

1879  
Edison invents the  
light bulb

You  
are  
here

Birth of  
Christ

been found loaded with amphorae, which would have been quite heavy when full of wine, thus making this choice of image appropriate for a weight.

One of the benefits of Roman citizenship was the right to “bread and circuses”—basically, free bread for citizens who needed the subsidy and state-sponsored entertainment. Chariot races were among the more popular forms of entertainment enjoyed by Roman citizens. However, based on the amount of art devoted to the subject, it seems that contests between gladiators were even more popular with the masses. During the Roman Republic, such battles probably were only celebrated in honor of a deceased noble, but by the time of the early Empire they had developed into a form of popular entertainment. Gladiators could be condemned prisoners-of-war or even women, but those who freely entered the profession and survived their three-year commitment seem to have enjoyed the popularity and monetary success of today’s sports stars. The figure on the Oil Lamp with Image of a Gladiator is dressed as a Samnite, one the historical enemies of ancient Rome.



**Oil Lamp with the Image of a Gladiator**

Throughout history sport and combat have been viewed as one. Can you name other examples in history where hurting or even killing your opponent was the name of the game?

While many of the subjects taught in ancient Roman schools are similar to those studied today (reading, writing, arithmetic), some elements were different. One ancient author, Martial, commented that teachers relied on the scourge and cane not so much for discipline but to awaken slow wits. School days, which began with candlelight before dawn, were very long for Roman children. Because writing materials such as papyrus and parchment were rela-

tively expensive, students learned to write in wooden books called *codices* that were filled with wax, which could be inscribed with a sharp instrument, smoothed over to erase, and used again. Wood was a highly perishable material and very few original codices have been preserved; the Reproduction Codicilla is a model of a Roman wax tablet. Writing and penmanship were certainly stressed in the curriculum, as today; yet, more so than today, the art of oratory (public speaking) was considered the most important skill a young Roman could master to insure a promising career.

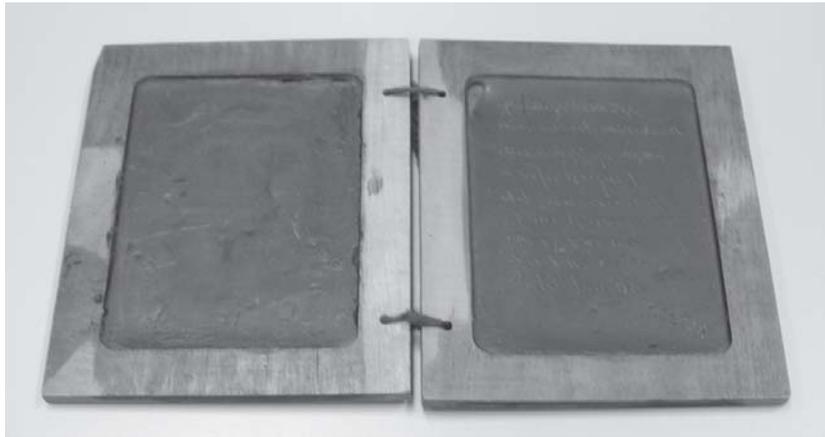
The nine objects contained in this lesson are examples of the artistic styles of both Greece and

**Reproduction  
Codicilla**

Has the emphasis on public speaking changed in schools since Roman times?

If schools today focused more on music and physical education, as was the philosophy of ancient Greek schools, how would modern students be different?

Where do you think visual arts were taught in ancient times?



Rome and also represent interesting aspects of each ancient culture. In elucidating aspects of these two Classical cultures, we will make connections with all educational disciplines through scientific inquiry, discussion of mythology, and pointed questioning. In the end, through this interactive process we hope to instill the excitement we have about learning in general and about the magnificent art of ancient Greece and Rome.

## List of Objects

- **Lekythos with the Ninth Labor of Herakles**

Greek, c. 500 BC  
White-ground, black-figure ceramic  
Bequest of Samuel L. Mather, 1932.194

- **Stemless Kylix**

Greek, found in North Africa, fifth century BC  
Black-ware ceramic  
Gift of Mrs. Eugene Geismer, TR12303/3

- **Trefoil Oinochoe**

South Italian, Paestum, c. 350–300 BC  
Red-figure ceramic  
Gift of Mrs. Eugene Geismer, TR12303/5

- **Head of a Goddess (probably Venus)**

Roman, first century BC–first century AD  
Marble  
Educational Purchase Fund, 1922.1

- **Head of Medusa**

Roman, found near Frascati, first–fourth century AD  
Molded terracotta  
Educational Purchase Fund, 1918.52

- **Sling Bullet**

Roman, first–third century AD  
Lead  
Gift of Robert Hecht, 1985.1061

- **Steelyard Weight**

Roman, found near Lake Nemi, first–fourth century AD  
Lead  
Educational Purchase Fund, 1918.64

- **Oil Lamp with Image of a Gladiator**

Roman, first century AD  
Molded terracotta  
The Harold T. Clark Educational Extension Fund, 1989.1003

- **Reproduction Codicilla**

Twentieth century, after an ancient Roman original  
Wood, black wax  
Anonymous Gift, S45/71



## Lesson Plan

### ● Focus

Students will be introduced to the arts of the ancient Greeks and Romans through works of art from the Art To Go collection. The lesson will be suited to grades three through eight but can be presented to older audiences as well.

### ● Purpose

The goal is to bring greater understanding of past cultures, in particular those that had a direct impact on later Western art.

### ● Motivation

Students will be motivated through a direct, hands-on experience. Students may be further inspired through classroom discussion during the presentation, or through follow-up questions or art projects provided by the classroom teacher.

### ● Objectives

Students will learn about the fine art of ancient Greek ceramic production and Greek and Roman sculptural traditions; students will also experience elements of the material culture of the ancient Romans, which reflect more on daily life than on artistic practices.

- The lesson will prepare students to identify characteristics of Greek art, characteristics of Roman art, and ways in which the two types of art are similar.

- Students will be able to connect stories from Greek and Roman myths with their counterparts in the visual arts.

- Students will be attuned to how the choice of material affects the final appearance of a work of art.

- Students will derive a sense of the timeline of ancient art through the specific cultures of the Greeks and the Romans.

### ● Participation

Students will be asked questions from simple to complex; students will be asked to problem solve through pointed questions designed to help them identify what they see; students will use critical thinking skills while handling artifacts from ancient Greek and Rome.

### ● Comprehension Check

The Art To Go presenter will ask the students questions as the lesson is taught to see if they understand the material; to help them identify what they see, students will be engaged with questions as the objects are passed. The classroom teacher will be able to reinforce what they have learned in the lesson with curriculum ideas from this packet; teachers may also incorporate ideas from the lesson in an art project.

### ● Closure

Students will be able to reinforce what they have learned in the Art To Go presentation by visiting the Greek and Roman galleries in the Cleveland Museum of Art, where they will be able to make connections between what they saw in the lesson and what is on view in the museum.

## Art To Go Suitcase Presentations

Ancient Americas:  
Art from Mesoamerica

The Art of Writing:  
The Origin of the Alphabet

Classical Art:  
Ancient Greece and Rome

Cool Knights: Armor from the European Middle Ages and Renaissance

Diego Rivera:  
A Mexican Hero and His Culture

Journey to Africa:  
Art from Central and West Africa

Journey to Asia

Journey to Japan:  
A Passport to Japanese Art

Let's Discover Egypt  
Masks: Let's Face It

Materials and Techniques of the Artist

Native American Art:  
Clues From the Past

Problem Solving:  
What in the World?

Museum Zoo:  
Animals in Art

COMING IN 2003  
Early America:  
Artistry of a Young Nation

### “Webbing” Ancient Greece

#### Math

The Greek quest for knowledge about the natural world produced mathematicians whose theorems are still used in geometry today. For example, Pythagoras’s theorems on triangles and the use of pi to calculate the circumference of a circle. Discuss how knowledge of geometry would have been essential for construction of Greek buildings such as theaters and temples.

Discuss how Greek interest in mathematical proportion lead to ideas about beauty in architecture, sculpture, and painting.

#### Drama and Music

Identify the relationship between mathematics and musical chords, ideas that were formulated in ancient Greek times.

Greek vase painting often depicts scenes from the theater. Identify the costumes of actors in tragedies and comedies, and how the masks they wore have become symbols for the acting profession today.

Discuss how theater and music often had a religious connection, as for instance, new plays were introduced at the festival in honor of Dionysos. Examples can be found in gallery 208.

### “Webbing” Ancient Rome

#### Science

Discuss the chemical compounds silica, lime, and soda—the ingredients used to make glass. Identify where the Romans could have found these naturally occurring materials. Review how glass-making techniques used today are essentially the same as those invented by the ancient Romans.

#### Social Studies

Identify the differences between the earlier republican system of government versus that established by Rome’s emperors. Review the roles of senators and emperors within these systems; locate examples of art in the galleries that depict people from these political classes; discuss why they become subjects for art.

Identify the extent of the Roman Empire at its height in the second century AD. Examine

#### Science

Identify the elements in ancient Greek sculpture that suggest Greeks were familiar with scientific anatomy.

The first Greek scientists, such as Archimedes and Alexander of Aphrodisias, were also philosophers. Define the term “philosopher”; define “stoic philosophy” as practiced by the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius.

#### Language Arts

Ancient Greek art often takes its subject matter from mythology. Examples that can be found in gallery 209 include representations of the story of Herakles and the Nemean Lion; Atalanta; Theseus and the Seven Youths and Maidens; Dionysos and Satyrs. Read one of the myths.

Identify the ancient Greek alphabet. Discuss why our written language takes its name from the Greek *alpha* and *beta*; find examples in the galleries where Greek characters appear in or on art.

#### Visual Arts

Identify some of the many known forms of ancient Greek pottery. Find examples of vessels used for food consumption in gallery 209. Discern if any connections can be made between ancient Greek and modern tableware.

the role that Egypt played within that empire, and how some of the portraits of Egyptians in gallery 205 could also belong in a collection of ancient Roman art.

#### Math

Identify the Roman numeral system. Discuss why Roman numerals are still in use today as movie credits, or for inscriptions on buildings.

#### Visual Arts

The wealthier people of Rome’s populace enjoyed greater luxury than did even the aristocrats of ancient Greece. Examples of luxury items include jewelry with carved gemstones and cameos and silver banqueting vessels; locate examples within gallery 209.

## Suggestions for Further Reading

### Cleveland Museum of Art Publications

Kozloff, Arielle P. *Classical Art: A Brief Guide to the Collection*. Cleveland Museum of Art, 1989.

Turner, Evan H. *Masterpieces from East and West*. New York: Rizzoli International, 1992.

*Slide Packet: Classical Art*. Cleveland Museum of Art, Department of Education and Public Programs.

### General Guides to Greek and Roman Art for Teachers

Williams, Dyfri, and the British Museum. *Greek Vases*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985. A succinct guide to all periods of Greek vase painting, with many color photographs and diagrams.

Woodford, Susan. *The Art of Greece and Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. A well-written and highly readable guide for an introduction to the subject, with many photographs and illustrations.

Ramage, Nancy H., and Andrew Ramage. *Roman Art: Romulus to Constantine*. New York: Abrams, 1991. One of the best texts to cover all periods of ancient Roman art history; many photographs.

### Greek and Roman Art for Students

Please check with your school librarian for a more complete list.

James, Simon. *Ancient Rome* (a DK Eyewitness book). New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2000 edition. Another excellent work from the Eyewitness series. DK books are full of color photographs to illustrate each relevant topic, as well as photographs of original works of art from the period discussed.

Peach, Susan, and Anne Millard. *The Greeks*. London: Usborne Publishing, 1990. An illustrated guide to many aspects of ancient Greek society, including clothing and jewelry, childhood and education, and temples, worship and festivals; a timeline in the back.

## Vocabulary List

A list of terms that might be used during the lesson.

**Amazons.** mythical race of female warriors, said to have lived in northern Turkey.

**amphora** (pl. **amphorae**). storage vessel with two handles connecting the neck and shoulder of the pot.

**black-figure ware.** technique for decorating pottery by painting figures with a slip that fires black.

**codicilla** (pl. **codices**). plank of wood that has been hollowed in the middle and filled with wax, which could be inscribed with a stylus (pointed instrument) and erased; typically used by ancient Roman schoolchildren.

**hydria.** water jar.

**legion.** the most commonly referenced unit of the Roman military comprising about 5,000 soldiers. There were about 30 legions in service during the Imperial era of Rome.

**krater.** vessel for mixing wine.

**kiln.** place where ceramics are fired.

**kylix.** wine cup with a stem and wide bowl.

**lekythos** (pl. **lekythoi**). tall round jug for perfume.

**oinochoe.** wine jug in the shape of a pitcher with one handle.

**Paestum.** ancient city near the modern Italian city of Naples, founded as Poseidonia by Greeks in the seventh century BC and renamed by the Romans in the third century BC. Like many South Italian Greek-speaking colonies, Paestum was a center for ceramic production in the fourth and third centuries BC.

**proportion.** the ancient Greek artist's concern with creating an almost mathematical balance between parts of the human form in sculpture and painting (and architectural elements).

**red-figure ware.** technique for decorating pottery where figures are outlined in slip.

**Samnite gladiator.** gladiator dressed to represent one of Rome's ancient enemies, carrying an oblong shield and a sword, and wearing a leather grieve on the left leg and a helmet with a visor and a plume.

**slip.** liquid clay.

**steelyard weight.** weight of a known fixed amount used on a balance scale.

**stephane.** tiara-like crown worn by some Greek and Roman goddesses, particularly Aphrodite/Venus.

**white-ground ware.** technique for decorating pottery where figures are painted on a white, chalky, unfired surface.

# Classical Art: Ancient Greece and Rome

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