



Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

Empires To Nation States in the Ancient Middle East Before Islam

Geoff Emberling, Chief Curator, Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago

Lesson Plan 2: Art—as an Expression of Empire

General Description of Lesson Plan: As an extension of their study of the empires of the ancient Middle East, students will examine some images from the Module to determine what they convey about the nature of empire and the capacity to express important cultural values.

Created By: Howard Wright, Hinsdale South High School, Hinsdale, IL

Subject Area(s): World History, World Geography, Art Appreciation

For Grade Level(s): 9-12

Time Needed: Two class periods

Outcomes/Objectives:

Students will extend their textbook unit on the ancient Middle East by examining images from the Module, with an eye towards understanding how art is reflective of the values and goals of an empire.

Materials:

Images: 3. Bowl; 4. Clay Tablet; 5. Cylinder Seal; 6. Pyramid; 15. Persepolis Bull;
For additional images see Webliography #3. British Museum and #10. The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Suggested Procedure(s):

Following their textbook readings, students will read the Module for Homework, considering what values are important to an empire.

In a 10-minute whole class discussion, students will share their ideas about what might be important values to the ancient empires, based upon their reading for homework.
(Answers may include: Aesthetic expression, support for the economy, recognition of an afterlife, grandeur and power of the empire, communication of values, etc.)

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Then, students will move into small cooperative groups to examine the images. As if they were archaeologists of the ancient Middle East, students will determine what each image suggests about empire, while they discuss the images.

One student should be the lead archaeologist, keeping the group on task. One should assume the role of scribe, recording the observations each ‘archaeologist’ makes. One should attend to the time (20 – 25 minutes). One should be the ‘art’ analyst, keeping the group focused on the guiding question—how do these artifacts reflect the values of empire? They should also be helping the group focus on the elements of each image:

- Describe the piece.
- Of what materials is it made?
- What use might the piece have had in the empire?
- What aesthetic value does it have?
- Other observations?

One student should be the spokesperson in the oral presentation.

Following the small group artifact examination, the spokesperson for each student group will share the group’s observations with the whole class.

Evaluation/Assessment Strategies:

Assessment of the class discussion

Assessment of the cooperation and work ethic of the small groups

Evaluation of the oral presentations—see rubric

Use these guiding questions to spur discussion in your classroom:

1. What is the role of art in the ancient empires of the Middle East?
2. How do the ancient empires of the Middle East convey the themes of empire through art works and artifacts?

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Evaluation Rubric:

Ancient Empires of the Middle East: Analysis of Art

Teacher Name: _____

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Description	Makes a complete and detailed description of the subject matter and/or elements seen in a work.	Makes a detailed description of most of the subject matter and/or elements seen in a work.	Makes a detailed description of some of the subject matter and/or elements seen in a work.	Descriptions are not detailed or complete.
Analysis	Accurately describes several dominant elements or principles used by the artist and accurately relates how they are used by the artist to reinforce the theme, meaning, mood, or feeling of the artwork.	Accurately describes a couple of dominant elements and principles used by the artist and accurately relates how these are used by the artist to reinforce the theme, meaning, mood, or feeling of the artwork.	Describes some dominant elements and principles used by the artist, but has difficulty describing how these relate to the meaning or feeling of the artwork.	Has trouble picking out the dominant elements.
Interpretation	Forms a somewhat reasonable hypothesis about the symbolic or metaphorical meaning and is able to support this with evidence from the work.	Student identifies the literal meaning of the work.	Student can relate how the work makes him/her feel personally.	Student finds it difficult to interpret the meaning of the work.
Comprehension	Student is able to accurately answer almost all questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is able to accurately answer most questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is able to accurately answer a few questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Student is unable to accurately answer questions posed by classmates about the topic.
Preparedness	Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.	Student seems pretty prepared but might have needed a couple more rehearsals.	The student is somewhat prepared, but it is clear that rehearsal was lacking.	Student does not seem at all prepared to present.