



Teaching the Middle East: A Resource for High School Educators

The Question of Identity: Ethnicity, Language, Religion, and Gender Before Islam: Overview

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

Lesson Plan 1: Using Artifacts for Clues About Identity

General Description of Lesson Plan: Critical examination of image resource bank for this module. Students will closely analyze artifacts, and extrapolate based on the module readings and the artifact descriptions to develop historic understanding of identity in the ancient Near East.

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Subject Area(s): History, Social Studies, Art History, Anthropology

For Grade Level(s): 6-10

Time Needed: One class period (45-60 minutes) and one night's homework (30-45 min); or Two class periods.

Outcomes/Objectives:

Historic understanding: Students will understand how artifacts can be used as sources for delving into the past.

Research: Students will develop primary source analysis skills.

Writing: Students will produce a three-paragraph essay with topic sentences, transitions and supporting evidence.

Materials:

Computer access to module and images, paper, pen or pencil.

Suggested Procedure(s):

Students should understand what a primary source is.

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Select an artifact from the Image Resource Bank of the module to discuss as a class. Have the class begin with an objective observation – what do you see? On the board, list the various elements of the artifact (for example, “Tribute from Mushki” has three men and two horses), then examine each of these elements for details. List the features of each. What do you notice about each one? Hairstyle? Clothes? Ornaments? Or jewelry? Then discuss the written caption accompanying the piece. What does this information tell us about bias and point of view of the creators? Knowing who is represented in the work, and who created it, look carefully again at the features of any people represented. What are the features that the creators of this work focused on to distinguish particular types or groups of people? What does that tell us as historians about their ideas of identity?

Next, have the students (individually or in pairs), conduct the same sort of close evaluation of the other artifacts in the Image Resource Bank, and begin to keep a list of distinguishing features that they see or read about in the captions that the creators used to establish an identity of the people portrayed. Discuss as a class what kinds of things the students came up with, and look at specific artifacts as needed during the discussion.

Students should select ONE artifact (but NOT the one discussed in class at the beginning) about which to write a brief essay. The first paragraph should be a close, objective description of the artifact (where it came from, what it portrays, and the composition of the piece – if someone had never seen it before and there were no photos, would they be able to envision it?). The second paragraph will discuss the various identifying elements of the people portrayed, and what is significant or unique about them. The third paragraph will explain what kinds of inferences can be made about how the society that produced this work thought about identity, based on this artifact. **TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE:** This can be adapted for different grade levels and abilities. For Grade 6, it might be more appropriate to have them write the first one or two paragraphs, and do the more complex analysis as a discussion-based exercise in class.

Evaluation/Assessment Strategies: Depending on whether you do this exercise more heavily oriented toward discussion or independent analysis, evaluation can be weighted accordingly. The first three elements of the rubric (description, analysis, interpretation) can all be used to evaluate discussion/participation, or incorporated into the writing grade.

Use these guiding questions to spur discussion in your classroom:

1. How can artifacts function as primary sources?
2. What types of clues can artifacts give us about how the people who created them thought about identity – both with regards to themselves and others?

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Evaluation Rubric:

Analysis of A Work of Art: Using Artifacts for Clues About Identity

Teacher Name:

Student Name:

	4	3	2	1
Description	Makes a complete a 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 used by the artist and accurately relates how they are used by the artist to reinforce the idea of identity.	Accurately describes a couple of dominant elements used by the artist and accurately relates how these are used by the artist to reinforce the idea of identity.	Describes some dominant elements used by the artist, but has difficulty describing how these relate to the idea of identity.	Has trouble picking out the dominant elements.
Interpretation	Forms a reasonable hypothesis about how and why identity is represented and is able to support this with evidence from the work.	Forms a somewhat reasonable hypothesis about how and why identity is represented and is able to support this with evidence from the work.	Student describes how and why identity is represented without forming a hypothesis or using supporting evidence.	Student finds it difficult to interpret the meaning of the work.
Writing	Communicates idea very well; essay paragraphs have clear topic sentences and transitions between ideas; examples are used to support ideas.	Communicates ideas reasonably well; examples are used to support ideas, but writing may not include clear topic sentences or transitions	Student's writing has ideas presented, but lacks organization and clarity. Student has difficulty using examples to support ideas.	Student finds it difficult to communicate his/her ideas in writing.