

Art of Ancient Greece: Daily Life

Teaching Resources



Overview: During the *Art of Ancient Greece: Daily Life* Outreach Program, students will examine works of art from the MFA's Classical collection to see what these objects reveal about the daily life of men, women, and children who lived in ancient Greece. With these resources, students use additional works of art from the MFA's collection to compose a Random Autobiography poem.

Curriculum: Social Studies – World History, Cultural Studies; The Arts – Visual

Grade Range: 4-9

Classroom Activity

- **Random Autobiography**

During the program, students were introduced to the Random Autobiography activity and created a response to a single prompt. Now, students will create a full Random Autobiography poem written from the perspective of a person depicted in another artwork from the MFA's Classical collection. This activity could be completed in small groups or independently.

1. Provide each student or small group with the handout and review instructions and sample prompt responses (see page 2).
2. Assign each student or small group one MFA artwork (see printable images on pages 3-10):
 - a. [Oil flask \(lekythos\) with woman working wool](#), 13.189
 - b. [Two-handled jar \(amphora\) Side B: Blacksmith's shop](#), 01.8035
 - c. [Wine cup \(kylix\) with a boy fishing](#), 01.8024
 - d. [Barber cutting a man's hair](#), 01.7784
 - e. [Figurine of a man cooking](#), 97.349
3. After students have written their Random Autobiography, ask for volunteers to take on their character and act out in the first person a few daily life details from their autobiography.

Further Resources on Art of Ancient Greece

- [Smarthistory: Ancient Greek vase production and the black-figure technique](#)

This 4-minute video, produced by the Art Institute of Chicago, illustrates the techniques used in the making and decorating of a black-figure amphora (storage jar) from their collection.

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Random Autobiography

Select one of the figures depicted in your artwork. You will be writing a random autobiography from the perspective of this character. Writing in the first person, use both your *imagination* and *visual evidence* from the artwork to respond to a series of writing prompts. Choose five of the following writing prompts:

Prompts

I love...

I lost...

I have seen...

I used to...

I hear...

I held...

I've learned...

I am told...

Example Response

I love rolling tumbleweeds

I lost the pebbles from my pocket

I have seen the early morning mist

I used to meditate

I hear more than you think

I held a bird in my hand

I've learned to linger in twilight

I am told I walked early as a child

Prompts can be adjusted from present to past tense and vice versa; for example, you could change "I hear" to "I've heard" or "I have seen" to "I see." After you have responded to all five prompts, arrange them into a poem of five lines. Finally, give your poem and character a name.

Title: _____

Prompt 1: _____

Prompt 2: _____

Prompt 3: _____

Prompt 4: _____

Prompt 5: _____

Character Name: _____

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Oil flask (lekythos) with a woman working wool
Greek, Early Classical Period, about 480–470 B.C.
13.189

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An elegant woman is seated pulling out a skein of wool from her wool basket (kalathos). She wears earrings, bracelets on both arms, a diadem, and an Ionic chiton and himation. She has an elaborate hairstyle, with part of her hair tied up in a bun, and long strands pulled down in the front. She pulls a long strip of wool out of a basket on ground before her. A hair-bag (sakkos) and mirror are hung up in field. The mirror is decorated with a head in profile drawn in outline, which probably represents a relief on the back of the mirror. The object hanging off her chair may be a wool-carder. Above her in the field is the Greek inscription: "the girl [is pretty]" (HE PAIS KALE).

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Two-handled jar (amphora)

Greek, Late Archaic Period, about 500–490 B.C.

01.8035

A brawny blacksmith hammers a piece of metal on an anvil. A young assistant holds the metal with a pair of tongs as he crouches beside the furnace at left. The two seated spectators may be owners, customers, or simply idle townsmen come to watch an interesting spectacle.

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Image Credits: Tweezers, 01.7511a-b; Girls playing knucklebones, 03.897; Two-handed jar (amphora) - Front: Shoemaker's shop, 01.8035; Woman grating cheese, 01.7783.

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Drinking cup (kylix)

Greek, Late Archaic Period, about 510–500 B.C.

01.8024

A boy squats on a ledge, angling with hook and line. His rod would have been made from reed or cane; the line, woven from flax or horsehair, would feature a cork float, lead sinker, and hook. His creel, or wicker basket, held his catch in place by means of a series of sharp sticks. Below the surface rests a basket trap—like a lobster pot—to catch the octopus hidden under the ledge. Above are the Greek letters: "P" "A" "S".

Image Credits: *Tweezers*, 01.7511a-b; *Girls playing knucklebones*, 03.897; *Two-handed jar (amphora) - Front: Shoemaker's shop*, 01.8035; *Woman grating cheese*, 01.7783.

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Barber cutting a man's hair

Greek, Late Archaic or Early Classical Period, about 500–475 BC

Height: 11.6 cm (4 9/16 in.)

01.7784

Two bearded men wearing chitons. One, a barber, cuts the hair of the seated man. The flesh of both men is dark red. The chitons appear to have been white and the stool, yellow. The base of the group was once white with red paint along the edge.

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Figurine of a man cooking

Greek, Late Archaic Period, early 5th century B.C.

Height: 10.5 cm (4 1/8 in.)

97.349

Statuette of man seated, cooking. A jug rests on a pile of fagots in front of him; jug black, fagots red brown. Face and flesh of man ruddy, chlamys indicated by yellow color; yellow shoes; holds a yellow stick.