

Art Adventure

How People Lived



Greek (Attic),
attributed to the
Antimenes Painter,
Black Figure Hydria,
about 530 B.C.

● **Become a member of the museum today!**

Thank you for participating in the Minneapolis Institute of Art's popular Art Adventure Program! By volunteering as a Picture Person, you build an important link between the museum and our region's schoolchildren.

By becoming a member of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, you can reach even further, bringing the experience of world-class art to thousands of museum visitors a year – some visiting for the first time ever, and many of them schoolchildren. Members help support the museum's free general admission every day. Members also help support the exhibitions, lectures, events, and classes offered for children, families, students, and adults.

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● **What are you doing next Family Day?**

Family Days at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts are free monthly events that highlight the museum's collection and special exhibitions for art lovers of all ages. The second Sunday each month, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., the museum is filled with hands-on art activities, live music, dance performances, artist demonstrations, family tours, and more. All activities are free and appropriate for children of all ages. Visit our website, www.artsmia.org, for specific Family Day dates, themes, and descriptions.

About the Art Adventure Program

What's the Art Adventure Program?

The Art Adventure Program at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts is a way of bringing works of art that can't leave the museum into elementary school classrooms. Each of the ten Art Adventure reproduction sets features eight works of art chosen around a theme of particular interest to children. Students and teachers are encouraged to follow up classroom presentations with a class visit to the museum to see the actual artworks. They can take a tour with an Art Adventure Guide or with their teacher using a self-guide brochure available from the museum.

What's a Picture Person?

Picture People are the volunteers from the school community who present the reproductions in the classrooms. They are the vital link between the original work of art in the museum and children in the schools. Before they visit any classrooms, Picture People come to the museum for a training session on the reproduction set their school will be using that year. At training they receive printed background material, learn presentation techniques, and—most importantly—experience the enjoyment of interacting with the original objects they will soon be introducing to students.

What does a Picture Person Presentation consist of?

Each participating school structures its Picture Person presentations differently. A Picture Person may present pairs of images in a series of short visits; all the images at once in a single, longer visit; or some other schedule arranged by the school's Art Adventure Coordinator. The presentation may consist only of a discussion or it may involve hands-on activities. In addition, Picture People bring their own individual creativity to their presentations.

Whatever the format, however, one essential characteristic is constant: the Picture Person encourages the children first and foremost to **look** at the reproduction and **talk** about what they see. Although the Picture Person is knowledgeable about the works of art, she or he facilitates the discussion with thoughtful open-ended questions and related props rather than delivering "lecture"-style information.

What does the Art Adventure Program do for kids?

Picture Person presentations provide students with a rare opportunity to spend time looking at art and express what they see in words. Students gain confidence in their ability to find meaning in artifacts from a wide range of world cultures. They practice seeing things from another person's point of view, whether it's their classmate's or the artist's. They feel the thrill of meeting an old friend when they later come upon familiar objects at the museum. And, not least, they enjoy meaningful contact with a visiting member of the school community.

Preparing for a Picture Person Presentation

Relax!

The information provided in this manual is intended as background material to help you feel comfortable when you present the images to children. You are not expected to convey all the details. On the contrary; choose two or three key ideas you think will be compelling for the age group to which you are presenting. Kids love stories—what might you “spin” into a tale? What parallels can you draw with their lives?

Be sure everyone is able to see the reproduction.

Talk with the classroom teacher to find out what routines the class follows when gathering for a visitor. Young groups will often sit on the floor; older students may remain at their desks. Try for a setup that will get the students as close to the reproduction as possible. Keep the students’ eyes on you, too, by making regular eye contact throughout the group.

Establish a climate where students can listen to what each child has to say.

It is very difficult to listen to more than one person at the same time. Let the kids know at the outset that you expect them to take turns speaking. (If you don’t know the children’s names already, arrange with the teacher to have them wear nametags so you can call on them by name.) Paraphrasing what is said emphasizes that you are really listening and encourages them to listen to one another. Your rephrasing may also help expand their vocabulary. Take care to remember, however, that aesthetic judgments are personal and inexact—set your own preferences aside to allow students to form their own opinions.

Begin your presentation of each image with a long moment of silent looking.

Introduce the lesson by explaining who you are and that you have brought reproductions of real works of art from The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Review with the class what a museum is and what you’ll be doing with them. Then make a show out of getting the class to understand that their first job is to look quietly. You might build the suspense by keeping each image hidden while you explain that you do not want them even to raise their hands until you ask them to. Model your expectations by spending the time looking too.

Give children time to talk about what they have discovered by looking.

Good questions to use are "What's going on here?" and "What do you see that makes you say that?" Be sure to use your finger to point to the part of the picture the child is talking about. Paraphrase his or her words to clarify the observation for others. You'll be surprised how quickly students learn to justify their comments with evidence they can see in the picture, with a little prompting. "What else can you find?" can help generate further comments. See the "Tips for Talking about Art" following this section for more ideas.

Connect your key ideas to the students' observations.

When the student's observations begin to slow down, use what you have learned about their interests to steer the discussion towards the key ideas you have chosen to focus on. Try to ask questions that will draw connections between what they have said and what you would like them to consider. If they pose questions you can't answer, admit it! Brainstorm together ways to find an explanation.

Keep the age of your audience in mind.

A child's interests and understandings evolve through generally predictable stages of development. Plan your presentations accordingly. Don't expect young children to be able to focus for more than twenty minutes. Consider your class's ability to understand time—will students understand a date or phrase such as "colonial times" (fifth graders might) or should you stick with "a long time ago" or "about 100 years ago"? At the same time, try not to talk down to older students.

You can expect developmental differences in children's aesthetic approaches to art, as well. Younger children will accept abstraction, while older children tend to demand a high degree of realism. Remember, too, that it's hard for young viewers to look "through" subject matter to notice compositional devices until preadolescence. And it's surprising to us as adults that children generally do not notice the emotional overtones of a work until the middle years of childhood. (Find out more about the stages of aesthetic development in *Invented Worlds*, by Ellen Winner, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.)

Talk to other Picture People and use your own imagination!

Veteran Picture People have great ideas about how to capture the imagination of a class. Don't hesitate to borrow and adapt their suggestions. In addition, several Art Adventure sets come with "prop kits," an assortment of supplementary materials for you to use in your presentation. Talk to your school's Art Adventure Coordinator to see if the set you are using comes with props.

Tips for Talking about Art

Remember, a key goal of the Art Adventure program is to help beginning viewers create personal meaning in a work of art. While your impulse may be immediately to begin "teaching," more is gained in the long run if you take the time to help the children establish an emotional connection with the art. The questions below help kids find their own relevance in works of art, and thereby learn to value art as having something to do with their own lives.

**What's going on in this picture?
What do you see that makes you say that?**

These simple questions work particularly well with artworks that have a narrative thread. You'll notice this question is different than, "What do you see?" Instead of eliciting a list of things in the picture, "What's going on?" invites a consideration of relationships and interactions and taps into children's natural interest in stories. The question, "What do you see that makes you say that?" focuses comments on the evidence at hand and helps kids explain their assumptions.

How would you feel if you were "in" this work of art?

What would you hear? How would something feel to touch? What path would you take through the picture? What do you see that makes you say that? Imagining the picture as an environment engages all the senses. The expressive qualities of a work become more concrete, easier to relate to.

How is this object like something you encounter in *your* life?

What would you use this for? What do you see that makes you say that? Do you have anything like it? Why do you like to have pictures of yourself? Why do you buy postcards on vacation? Drawing parallels with children's experiences gives them a hook on which to hang new information. Identifying similarities helps illuminate differences as well.

What person or object in this picture do you think was most important to the artist?

What are people in the picture looking at? What has a lot of details? Where are there bright colors? What is biggest? Talking about what makes things seem important in a work of art can allow even a novice to address basic compositional principles.

How would the artwork seem different if you could make a change?

What would happen if you changed a color? Made something bigger or smaller? Moved an object or person? Left something out? Added more details? Changed the quality of a line? Imagining changes helps identify visual elements and their contribution to the overall effect of the image.

How is this work of art like or different from another one you've seen in this set?

"Compare and contrast" is a staple of art historical thinking, but it can be done by anybody, at any level of thinking. Get together with your fellow volunteers to coordinate some provocative pairs.

How does this work of art relate to the theme of the set?

Let the students pull it all together! What connections do they see between the theme and what they've noticed and learned about the work of art?

Want to take it further?

Have a look at *The Intelligent Eye: Learning to Think by Looking at Art*, by David N. Perkins (Santa Monica, Calif.: The J. Paul Getty Trust, 1994), a very readable guide on how and why to look carefully at art.

Another good book is *Take a Look: An Introduction to the Experience of Art*, by Rosemary Davidson (New York: Viking, 1994). Written for young readers, it provides a nice example of how to talk with children about art.

Tips for Using Props

Why props?

Students normally first encounter the Art Adventure works of art in their classrooms as 20 x 22-inch reproductions. In the reproductions, all the works of art appear to be two-dimensional and similar in size. Props accompany many of the reproductions to help overcome this limitation. Touching a material similar to the work of art, seeing the technique used to create it, or looking at a photograph in which the object is being used adds another dimension to the reproduction of the work of art. The use of props also helps engage learners who prefer hands-on learning styles, and reinforces the understandings of all learners.

What are the challenges of props?

Be aware that props will do little but distract your group without careful planning. Consideration of the following points can prevent group management challenges from undermining the benefits of props:

- What understanding about the work of art does the prop best illustrate? Present the prop in conjunction with information about a work of art or to help answer a question about the work of art.
- How will you structure the group's interaction with the prop?
There are a number of ways to use the prop. Among the variations:
 - Pass the prop around to each student. If you do it this way, give the students a question to consider while they are waiting for the prop and one to consider after they have held the prop. Encourage the students to be ready for discussion when the prop finishes circulating.
 - Ask a single student to come forward and describe how it feels to the whole group.
 - Hold the prop yourself and walk it around the group for the students to touch or look at closely. What should the students be doing while you're doing that?
 - Hold the prop yourself to illustrate relevant parts of the discussion. Then give everyone a chance to examine it more closely at the end of your presentation.
- How will you explain to the group what you expect them to do with the prop? Clear communication of your expectations is essential to getting the students to stay focused on the activity. Will they all get to touch the prop? How should they take turns? What should they do when it's not their turn? How should they treat the prop?
- How will you link the experience with the prop to the rest of the discussion? After the students have explored the prop in some fashion, refer to the experience as you continue the discussion.
- How will you get the prop back? Don't forget to plan how you'll get the props back! Schools are charged significant fees for missing or badly damaged props.

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**Art Adventure Program
An Educational Program of the
Minneapolis Institute of Arts
Revised 2014**

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Prop Kit Contents

Work of Art	Prop	Replacement Cost
Antimenes Painter Hydria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sheet describing the firing process 	\$10
China, <i>Group of Court Musicians</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of Chinese calligraphy from Tao Te Ching 	\$10
France, <i>The Falconers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples of cotton, hemp, linen, and wool yarn • Life-sized facsimile of a cartoon diagram 	\$10 \$40
Lucas Cranach the Elder, <i>Portraits of Moritz and Anna Buchner</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample oil painting on panel 	\$30
Robert Koehler, <i>Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photograph of Koehler's wife and son, and (flip side) a view of contemporary Hennepin Avenue 	\$10
Nicolas de Largillière, <i>Portrait of Catherine Coustard with Her Son Léonor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample swatch of velvet and lamé • Sheet with detail of painting and questions 	\$10 \$10
Japan, Helmet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo prop of a dragonfly and (flip side) an image of an MIA full samurai armor 	\$10
Sierra Leone, Sande Society Mask	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bundle of raffia • Photograph of dancer wearing mask 	\$15 \$10

Please make sure that you have enclosed all of the items on this list when you return the prop kit. You will be responsible for the cost of replacing any missing items. Thank you!

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Introduction

Works of art are enjoyed for their beauty, but they are also sources of historical information. In fact, the earliest records made by human beings were not written but instead painted or carved on the walls of ancient caves thousands of years ago. The eight works reproduced in this set give a vivid picture of how people lived at different times in various parts of the world.

Our survey begins with a vase from ancient Greece, because much of the Western world has been shaped by Greek culture. We need only observe our architecture and democratic form of government to realize how much we owe the Greeks. What does this ancient vase reveal of how the Greeks lived nearly 2500 years ago? What did they value? Why did generations of later civilizations imitate them? The answers to these questions and many more may be found in the art objects themselves.

Art spans not only time but distance: it takes us to the faraway lands of Africa to discover how young girls in Sierra Leone were initiated into adulthood. The portrait of a French woman and her young son may tell us some surprising things about relationships between parents and children in France about 300 years ago. A samurai helmet in the shape of dragonfly reflects the ideal virtues of a capable warrior from 17th century Japan.

These silent objects from the past reach to us across the centuries, using visual language to tell us of how people lived in other times and places. Our challenge is to learn to “read” these stories. Once we have learned to do that with the eight objects in this set, we will be prepared to try our skills of discovery with other works of art.

Questions: Suggested Approaches

Suggested Questions

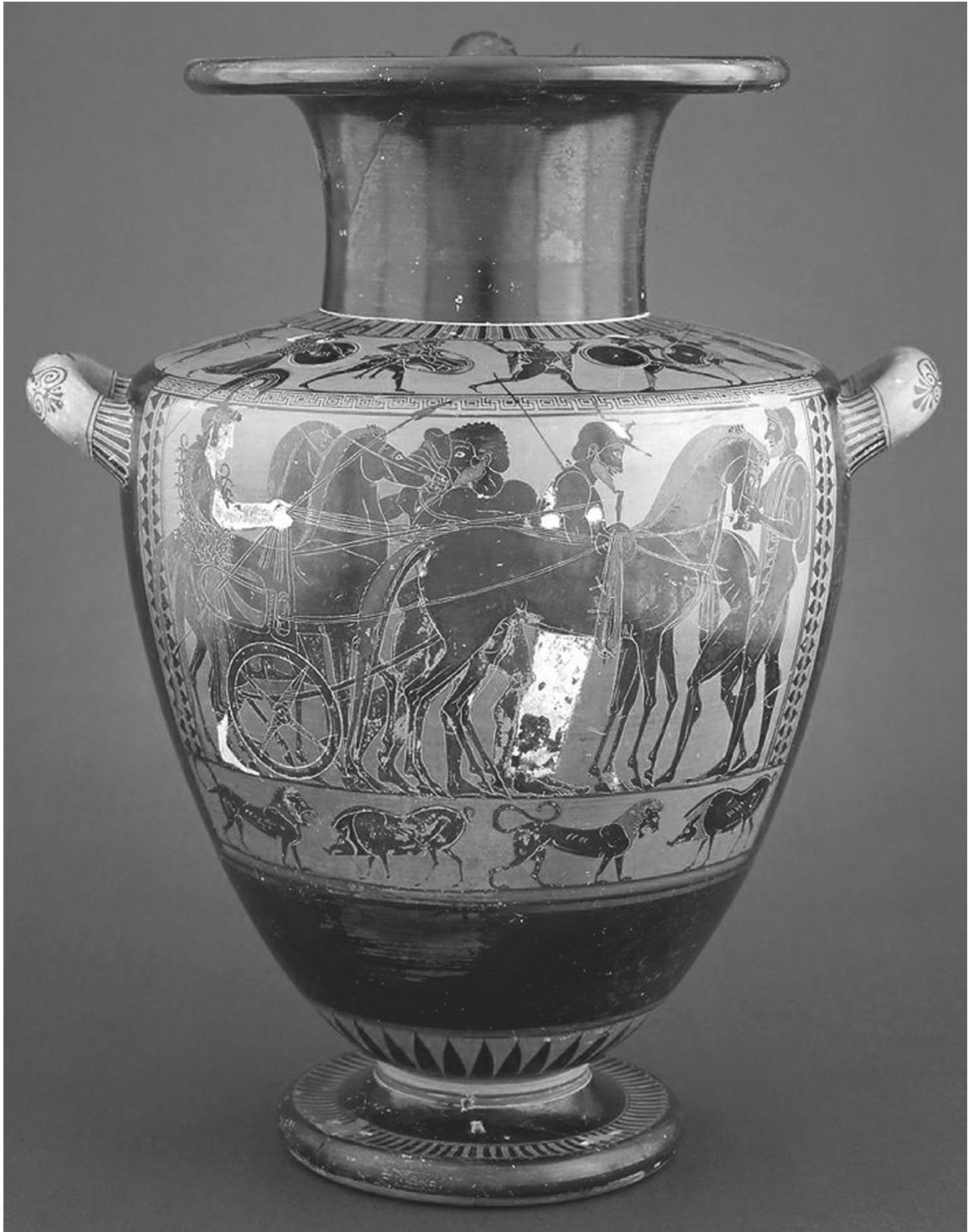
The suggested questions following each object entry are offered as guidelines and starting points only, and you may prefer to disregard them altogether. Use your own creativity and expertise to devise additional or alternative questions.

General Thematic Questions and Discussion Points

1. **Discuss ways in which works of art reveal how people lived**—for example, by showing us their fashions, economic status, values, likes and dislikes, interest in technology, religious beliefs, and social customs.
2. **For each reproduction you might ask:** What, if anything, can we figure out about where and when this scene is taking place? What clues in the work tell us this? What do you think was important to these people? What do you see that makes you think so? What is similar or different about the way these people lived and the way you live today?

General Brainteasers

1. If you were going to make an object of art that tells something about your culture, what would you make? A painting? A sculpture? A photograph? Something else? Why would you pick this medium?
2. What objects or subjects would you include in your work of art? What would your choices tell someone a hundred years from now about how you lived?
3. What is the one thing you would want others to know about what you value the most in your culture? How would you show that?



Attributed to the Antimenes Painter, Greek

Hydria, c. 530 B.C.

Slip-glazed earthenware

H.20¾ x 17 x 15 inches

The John R. Van Derlip Fund, 61.59

Theme

The shape and decoration of this *hydria* give us insight into the lives and thoughts of Greek people who lived over 2000 years ago. Although the function of this vase was to carry water, its elaborate decoration and proportions speak of the qualities the Greeks most admired—harmony, order, balance, and beauty. The painted images of the goddess Athena and the hero Herakles¹ reveal the Greeks' enthusiasm for athletic competition and their love of stories about the wonders of humans and about the host of gods and goddesses whom they envisioned in idealized human form.

Background

The ancient Greeks developed one of the most remarkable civilizations in the history of the world. It reached its height during the 5th century B.C., a time historians call the Classical period. The Greeks bequeathed to the world a great body of works of art, literature, law, science, and philosophy, notable above all for the spirit they evoke about human beings. Their sense of individual human worth was so great that they depicted their gods in human form. That spirit is captured in the words of the ancient Greek dramatist Sophocles: "The world is full of wonders, but nothing is more wonderful than man."²

This *hydria* exemplifies that spirit. It was created just before the Classical period in the Archaic period, which lasted roughly from 800 to 500 B.C. During that time, Hellas (as Greece was then called) evolved from a primitive agricultural society to one organized into many small city-states scattered throughout a large area. The soil was poor for most crops, but olive trees and grapevines flourished, and olive oil and wine, along with fine pottery, became major trade items.

The common bond of the city-states was language, but they were also united by the legacy of Homer, the 8th-century poet who wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These long epic poems, and other works which followed them, recounted the legends of the Greeks' gods, goddesses, and heroes, stories that the Greeks loved and taught to their youth. Treated by the Greeks as if they were actual history, the legends often dealt with questions of good and evil and served as models for human behavior.

¹ Hercules is the Latinized form of this name.

² *A Soaring Spirit*, p. 52. Males were greatly revered in the Greek world. Although deities were both male and female, in actual society, women were totally subject to men. Only men received formal educations, competed in athletics, or participated in government.

Closely attuned to nature, the Greeks envisioned their gods in all things. Zeus, the ruler of the gods, reigned from Mount Olympus, and Apollo spoke from the clefts at Delphi. The gods differed little from humans except that they were immortal.

In addition to the Olympian gods and goddesses, each city-state had its own patron god and goddess. Festivals were held to honor these divinities, and people attended from all over Greece. The festivals evolved into competitions—the most famous of which were the Olympic games, founded in 776 B.C. The games were held every four years in the ancient world, as they are today.

Athletics developed in accord with the Greeks' aspiration to excellence in all things and their belief in the wonder of man.³ Athletes in the Olympic games participated not in teams but as individuals. So important were the games that a victory would bring an athlete higher acclaim than winning in battle. A victorious athlete could expect to be immortalized as a hero in public sculpture in his home city.

Hero worship was in fact closely related to worship of the gods. Thousands of heroes, who were believed to have descended from the gods, were revered throughout Greece. Greek poets celebrated their deeds in verse, and vase painters drew on the heroic legends for the subjects of their decorations. Foremost of the Greek heroes was Herakles, who was considered to be the first athlete and, according to some versions, the founder of the Olympic games. He was celebrated by poets and was one of the most popular subjects of Archaic period vase painters, often accompanied by his patroness, Athena—as we see on this *hydria*.

Hydria

Several types of utilitarian vases (vessels used for eating, cooking, and storage) were made in ancient Greece. The *hydria* was used to carry water from a communal fountain. The side handles were used to lift it onto a woman's head for carrying, and the vertical handle at the back was used for pouring or for carrying the jar when empty. Even though this vase was made to be functional, great attention was given to its design and decoration. The balanced and harmonious proportions are emphasized by the painted decoration. For example, the largest image appears on the main body of the vase, in keeping with its size and importance, and decorative patterns draw our attention to the handles and the foot. The elegant shape and elaborate decoration tell us that the Greeks placed a high value on beauty; even utilitarian vessels had to be beautiful.

The decoration of the *hydria* reflects the Greek preoccupation with heroes, athletics, and the interaction of human beings and gods. On the lip of the vase, the artist depicted a chariot race, one of the most exciting forms of competition to the ancient Greeks. It was, in fact, the nine-mile, four-horse chariot race, which opened the Olympic games. The image on the main body of the vessel is the harnessing of the four-horse chariot of Athena, who prepares to step into the chariot on the far left. Athena was venerated as a warrior-goddess as well as the

³ The word *athletics* derives from the Greek word *athlos*, meaning contest, and signifying the ideal of perfecting the body in unity with the mind. Greek contests go far back in ancient history, as described, for example, by Homer in the *Iliad*.

goddess of wisdom and the arts of peace and as patroness of household crafts. She was especially honored in the city of Athens, named in her honor.

Here, she is represented as the warrior-goddess, wearing full armor: plumed helmet, spear, and a breastplate called an *aegis*.⁴ The *aegis*, which is a goatskin fringed with snakes, is an attribute of the goddess; it helps to identify her as Athena. The image of Athena in this garment also appears on the shoulder of the vase.

Athena holds the reins of the two pole horses (horses already attached to the chariot). Two men (one's head is hidden behind the horses) stand at the heads of the pole horses, while two men lead the two trace horses forward. (The trace horses, which are muzzled and appear along the side of the chariot, will lead the chariot.)

One of the two men (center) leading the trace horses is bareheaded with a red beard and a short, curly haircut befitting an athlete. These characteristics suggest that he is Herakles, although Herakles usually wears a lion skin (as in the image on the shoulder). The son of Zeus and a mortal mother, Herakles was considered by the Greeks to be a mortal. An ideal athlete (credited with originating the Olympic games) and a hero, Herakles served as a model of human perseverance against seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Harnessing scenes are found on many ancient Greek vases. The subject of this one could be the journey of Athena and Herakles to the battle between the gods and the giants (gigantomachy). The gods needed a mortal to assist them, so Athena carried Herakles to battle in her chariot. This scene could also refer to another of the many tales about Herakles: upon his death, Athena transported him to Mount Olympus (home of the gods), where he became immortal.

The male figure behind the pole horses wears the long white robes of a charioteer and a *petasos* (traveler's hat) and carries a staff. He may represent Hermes, the patron of athletes and the god of travelers. Immediately below the scene is a row of boars and lions, a motif commonly found on 6th-century B.C. vases. In this case, the animals are associated with two of the twelve labors of Herakles. For the first labor, he strangled the Nemean lion with his bare hands, skinned it, and made a garment from the skin (his attribute), which made him invulnerable. For the fourth labor, he captured a wild boar that had terrorized the inhabitants of the land.

Above the harnessing scene, on the shoulder of the vase, is another episode from the life of Herakles, described in an epic poem from this era.⁵ This is Herakles' combat with Kyknos, son of the god of war, Ares. Kyknos was a bandit who robbed travelers on their way to visit the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. When he attempted to intercept Herakles on his visit and then refused to step aside, Athena urged Herakles to kill him. Ares attacked Herakles but was wounded in the thigh and had to retreat.

⁴ The *aegis*, according to Greek mythology, was worn by Zeus and then by Athena. It is bordered with snakes because the serpent-haired Medusa was given to Athena by Perseus after Athena helped him slay her. The skin was thought to have originated from the giant Pallas or the goat Amaltheia.

⁵ Though not one of the most significant episodes in Herakles' career, it is one of the best known to us from a 480-line epic poem, *The Shield of Herakles*.

Herakles is easily identified by his attribute, the lion skin, which symbolizes his strength. He is backed by Athena and Hermes on the left. To the right, behind the shield, is Kyknos, supported by Ares and two unidentified figures. Between Herakles and Kyknos is Zeus (Herakles' father), who stands with outstretched arms and appears to intercede.

To the Greeks, this image represented not just a story but also the two sides of human nature. Herakles the hero and Athena as his patroness represent the forces of good. Ares and Kyknos display the darker side: those who wage war for the sake of destruction or greed. The story may remind us of heroes—real or imaginary—of our own time. For the ancient Greeks and for us today, stories of good and evil can be lessons in proper human behavior.

Stylistically, the *hydria* demonstrates the typical characteristics of black-figure ware produced during the late 6th century B.C. The human body is shown in profile or in combinations of frontal and profile views. For example, we see Athena and the horses strictly from the side, but Herakles' torso is shown from the front and his head in profile. A sense of depth is achieved by the overlapping of figures. Notice how the horses overlap each other and, in turn, overlap some of the male figures, including Herakles and Hermes. The clothing is indicated by stylized patterns of line and shape. The skin of the woman is white, while that of the males is reddish brown. Gods and humans are differentiated not by their color, but by attributes—Athena by the shield and Herakles by the lion skin. Red-purple is used for beards, horses' manes, and some garments. The emphasis on vigorous movement and action rather than accuracy of depiction is a hallmark of the Antimenes (an **tih** meh nees) Painter.

Technique

Pottery making was the first major industry to develop in Athens during the Archaic period. Workshops manufactured utilitarian and luxury wares in a variety of shapes and sizes for both the local market and export. In most cases, the potter (who formed the pot) and the painter (who decorated it) were two different artists.

Generally, pots were formed (thrown) on the potter's wheel. A potter's wheel consists of a turntable, on which the clay is placed, and a disk or crank that the potter operates with his foot to keep the turntable moving. Both hands are free to form the pot from the clay as the turntable turns. Large pots such as the *hydria* were made in sections, which were joined together with slip (a mixture of clay and water). Sections were joined at the structural points between neck and body or body and foot. Thin coils of clay added on the outside conceal the joins. Handles were made by hand and attached with slip.

The images on the vases were created by means of a technique developed about 625 B.C. The figures were applied to the vase when the clay was leather-hard. The painter did not use the pigments that we associate with painting today but rather a substance called *engobe* (a thickened mixture of clay and water). Once the *engobe* was applied and dried, the pot was placed in a kiln, an oven-like structure that can be fired to high temperatures.

The firing (heating in the kiln) of the pots lasted for many hours. In the first stage, the entire vase turned red because the clay contained iron. In the second stage, the oxygen supply was cut off, causing the entire vase to turn black. In the third and final stage, oxygen was reintroduced, causing the vase to turn red again. The decorated portions, however, did not

reabsorb the oxygen, because of the different consistency of the *engobe*. Therefore those areas remained black. The result was black figures silhouetted against the light red background of the pot. The resulting pottery is known as black-figure ware.

Details were incised in the black areas by scraping through to the red clay with a sharp tool. Finally, accents of white and purple were applied after firing. Traces of white remain on Athena's face and Hermes' robe. Purple appears on the horses' manes. More colors were probably once present, but they have disappeared over time.

Artist

We know the artist only as the Antimenes Painter. The Antimenes Painter was the head of a large workshop and probably painted hundreds of vases. He had many colleagues who painted in a similar manner, but our vase is considered to be by his own hand. His workshop was known for images of harnessing scenes such as the one on this vase. It was unusual in ancient Greece for the painter and potter to be the same artist, so it is likely that another member of the Antimenes workshop was responsible for forming the vase.

Suggested Questions

1. How many colors do you see on this vase? This is called a black-figure vase. The black was put on over the orange. How do you think the artist has shown the eyes? (*He used a sharp tool to scratch through the black.*) Look at the vase closely. What else has he shown with scratched lines?
2. How many horses can you see on the left half of the vase? How many can you see on the right half? Now count the horses' legs on the right half of the vase. How many horses do you think there are now? Why can't we see the missing one?
3. Do you see the horses from the front or the side? This kind of flat, side view is called a silhouette. Think about your shadow. Does it look something like this?
4. How many people are on the front of this vase? Which one is wearing a hat? Which one is a woman? How can you tell? (*Her skin is lighter; other figures have beards.* **Accept any probable answer.**) The woman on the vase is the Greek goddess Athena. Does anyone know what a goddess is? **Explain.**
5. Athena is preparing for a journey. What will she be riding in? What is the name ancient people gave to this kind of a vehicle? Athena is shown twice on the vase. Where else do you see her? The Greeks named their capital city after her. Why do you think they did that? **Explain that she was a "protector"**.
6. What animals do you see along the bottom of the vase?
7. How has the artist separated the scenes from one another? Find at least five different patterns on this vase.
8. Around the shoulder of the *hydria* is a scene of Herakles fighting with Kyknos. Athena is

there to help Herakles. Find these three figures. Who is the only one without weapons? Why would the Greeks have their head god, Zeus, fight with his bare hands? Does he look strong? Why? Is a hero the same as a god? Who is a male hero in your eyes? Why? Can women be heroes also? Who is a female hero in your eyes? Why? Do you think a person can be a hero and not be physically strong? In what other ways can people be strong?

9. The different parts of Greek vases have names. Can you find the body of this vase? The shoulders? The neck? Where do you think these names come from?
10. Do you think this vase has two handles or three? Look closely. (Only the top of the third handle can be seen, at the center back of the lip.) Like all Greek pots, this one had a specific use and a specific name. It is called a *hydria*. What other words can you think of that contain "hydro" or "hydra"? (*Fire hydrant, hydroelectric plants, hydrogen, etc.*) **Have students look in the dictionary if they don't know.** What do you think the Greeks kept in this *hydria*? The *hydria* was used to carry water. Two handles on the sides were for lifting it onto a person's head to carry; the third handle was used to pour. How heavy do you think it would be when it's full?
11. What do we use vases for today? What are your vases at home made of? What material do you think this is made of?
12. **Describe the size of this piece.** Do you think this *hydria* was a useful object? Why would the Greeks have bothered to decorate it so lavishly? Does decoration tell us anything about what was important to them? Do you have anything in your home that is beautifully decorated and also useful? Describe it.
13. A chariot race opened some very important games begun by the Greeks in 776 B.C. We still have these games every four years. What are they called? Does anyone know where the name comes from? (*Mount Olympus.*) Who did the Greeks think lived on the top of Mount Olympus?

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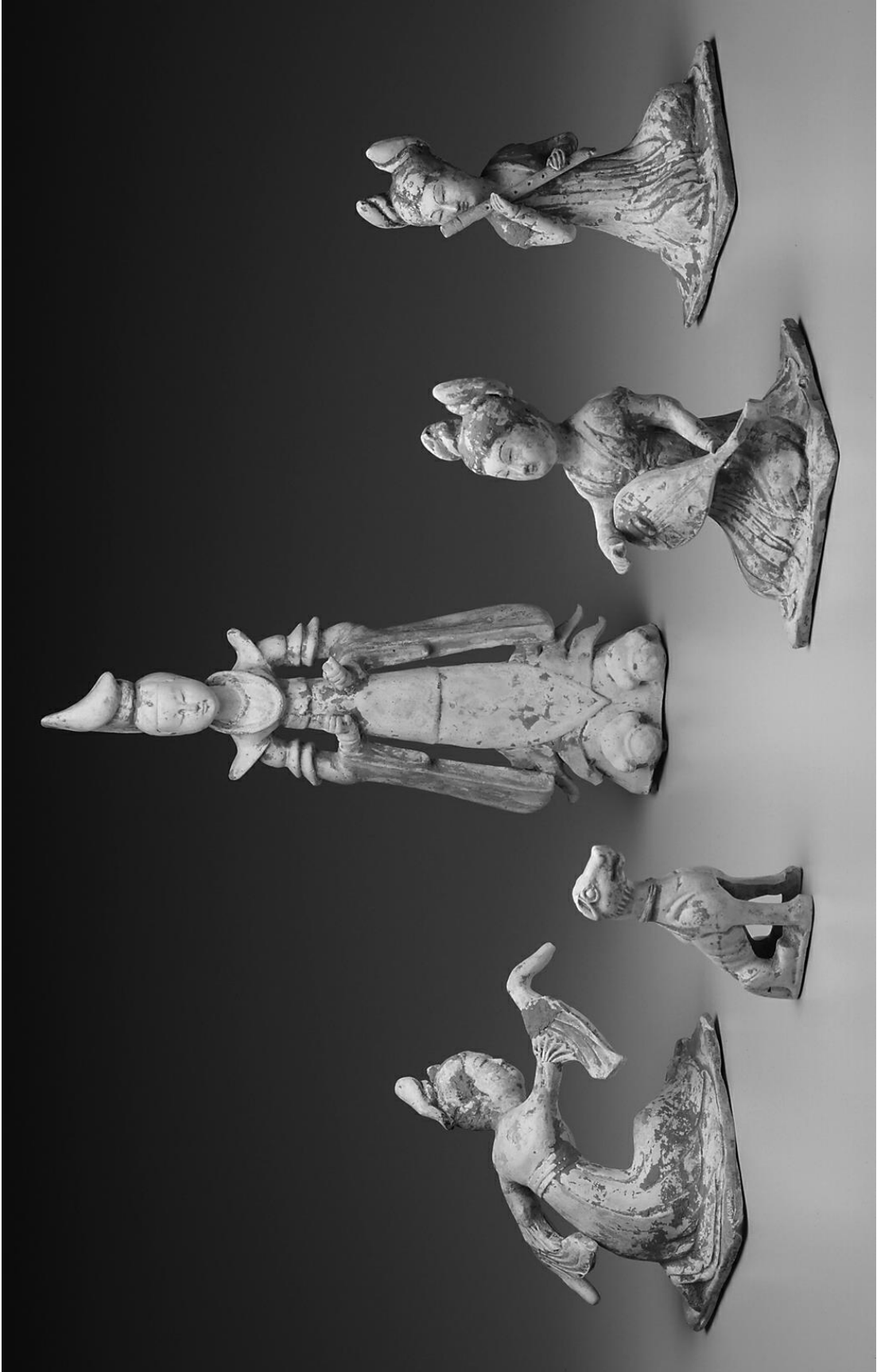
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Many of the opinions contained in the text regarding this vase are attributed to Dr. Brunilde Ridgway, Professor, Department of Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology, Bryn Mawr College. Dr. Ridgway lectured at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts in February, 1988.



China (Asia)

Group of Court Musicians, early 8th century

Painted earthenware with white slip

H. 12 inches (tallest figure)

Bequest of Alfred F. Pillsbury, 50.46.180-82,191-93,218

Theme

These graceful figures, which once served as companions to the dead, speak not only of a belief in the afterlife but also of delight in the pleasures of earthly life—music, dancing, and fancy costumes.

Background

Following three hundred years of civil wars, China, under the leadership of the Sui (pron. sway) (A.D. 581-618) and T'ang (pron. tahng) (A.D. 618-906) dynasties, enjoyed peace and prosperity. During this golden age, the capital city of Chang'an was populated by approximately two million residents and visited by travelers from as far away as Arabia and Japan. Trade goods from every region of China and the Western world were marketed in Chang'an. In this cosmopolitan atmosphere, a highly artistic culture emerged, rich in painting, calligraphy, poetry, music, and sculpture.

The T'ang emperors lived in splendor in a great palace the size of a city. The royal court, often numbering 400 to 500, found many ways to occupy their leisure time: music making, poetry writing, sports, parlor games, and entertainment by musicians, dancers, and acrobats. Music and dance were so valued by the emperors that an academy was established in the royal palace to train youth to become court entertainers. Foreigners—especially Indo-Chinese, Koreans, and Indians—came to Chang'an to pursue such careers. Guests of the court were often entertained by musicians and dancers, many of whom were women from Cambodia, Burma, or central Asia. Their costumes and instruments delighted the T'ang court circle.

All was not frivolous in the emperor's court, however, for each day was filled with rigorous and elaborate ceremony and ritual. The entire royal household rose with the emperor at dawn to witness his daily celebration of the rising of the sun. Women led an especially formal, structured existence in the emperor's court. They were expected to be models of propriety, virtue, and subservient devotion. For a court lady, every action was dictated by a code of etiquette that she had learned in childhood.

Royalty and wealthy nobles built large, cavernous tombs and furnished them with burial articles in hopes of extending their good life beyond death into the afterlife. During T'ang funeral processions, mourners carried the grave furnishings to the tomb in full view of the public as a gesture of their respect for the deceased. This practice became so extravagant that a government office had to be created to supervise it and regulate the number and type of grave objects used. Some families were faced with financial disaster in their attempts to keep up with their neighbors. An imperial decree in A.D. 742 established limits on the size and number of

tomb pieces allowed, according to the rank of the deceased.

Burial articles often included vessels containing food and drink for the afterlife and some of the favorite possessions of the deceased such as silk garments, gold and jade jewelry, and bronze mirrors. Chief among the burial articles were *ming ch'i*, or spirit articles. These wood or clay miniatures, representing all aspects of T'ang society and court life, were commissioned by family members of the deceased and placed in the tomb. *Ming ch'i*, which have survived in great numbers, were intended to serve as companions for the deceased.⁶ For the Chinese, they were reminders of a pleasure-filled earthly existence; for us, they provide a vivid picture of the courtly life of the T'ang period in China.

Group of Court Musicians

This grouping of *ming ch'i* includes a court lady (the largest figure), two musicians, a dancer, and a dog. The sweet, smiling faces of the women tell us of their pleasure in making music while the dancer executes graceful arm movements to the accompaniment of musical instruments—here, a Chinese lute and a flute. The court lady “sets the beat” with the wooden blocks.

In addition to reflecting the T'ang love of music and dance, the grouping also documents the style of clothing of early 8th-century China. Although traditional clothing styles had changed little for centuries, during this period hundreds of foreign women were brought into the court to serve as dancers, musicians, and entertainers. The foreign costumes and hairstyles stimulated great interest in changing fashion. The gowns of the figurines show the influence of these foreign styles. For example, the low necklines, the long, looped sleeves, the tight bodice, and the exaggerated shoulder pieces of the court lady's dress are all derived from contemporary central Asian costume. Although the seated attendants wear the more conventional type of colored silk robe with flowing scarves, the standing attendants wear a new tight-fitting long sleeve adopted from the dress of the people of Kucha in eastern Turkestan (now Xinjiang). In fact, the recorder player and harpist probably represent Kuchan women, who were admired for their musical talent and often became residents at the emperor's court.

The hairstyles of the Chinese women also imitated the styles of the foreigners. Their hair was heavily oiled and perfumed and arranged in the elaborate twists and buns seen on these figurines. Great quantities of hair were desirable, so false hair was sometimes added. Lacquer was used to hold the upswept hair in place, and gold jewelry was often placed in the hairdos. T'ang women were equally devoted to the application of their cosmetics. Traces of paint can still be seen on the faces of the figures. These miniature figures with their fashionable garments and hairstyles represent an ideal of beauty. The larger size and more ornate costume of the court lady indicate that she was more important in T'ang society than her attendants. All of these women exhibit the proper etiquette and refinement required of a “lady” in a male-dominated culture. Further, their full, round proportions were considered to be the standard of beauty in the later T'ang dynasty.

The dog may have been placed in the tomb to ward off evil spirits. Centuries ago, the Chinese used dogs as sacrificial offerings to ensure health and safety. Later, straw dogs were carried in

⁶ This custom dates back to the Shang dynasty (1523-1028 B.C.), when whole households were killed and buried with high-ranking officials of the court.

funeral processions to “snap up” bad influences and then ceremonially burned to become “spirit dogs.” These straw dogs were most likely the forerunner of the ceramic dog tomb figure.⁷

It is obvious from these charming figures that the colorful environment of Chang’an provided stimulating subject matter for sculptors. The artists observed life in minute detail and captured with their clay and tools the physical appearance of these women and the dog. But they did not just concentrate on the external description of their subject. They also stressed the inner spirit, which gave to the works a vitality that is best seen here in the flowing, graceful movements of the dancer.

Technique

These *ming ch’i* figurines were made from molds and mass-produced to meet the heavy demands of the period. White earthenware, a type of clay, was placed in the mold. It was removed, finishing touches were done by hand, and then it was allowed to dry. A glaze was applied before firing (heating to high temperatures) in a kiln (oven). Painted details were applied after the initial firing, particularly the details of the face.

Artists

We do not know the names of the artists responsible for these sculptures. It is probable that artists who were so closely connected to these funerary rites held a place of considerable importance in society.

Suggested Questions

1. These figures were not found in the United States. Can anyone guess where they are from?
2. How many different dress styles can you find? How many different hairstyles? Which dress or hairstyle do you like best?
3. What do their hairstyles, fashions, makeup, and posture tell us about Chinese women of that time? Do their clothes and hairstyles look comfortable? Are they formal or informal?
4. Pretend that you’re one of these figures. Play or dance as you think the figure would. How do you feel as you move? Is your body stiff or relaxed? Are your movements quick or slow? If you are one of the musicians, show me how you would play and tell me what kind of sound your instrument would make. If you are the dancer, move your arms and head to the music and explain what kind of music you hear: is it loud, soft, slow, fast, high, low?
5. These figures are called tomb figures. What do you think a tomb figure is? Did the people of any other country (civilization) have objects buried with them? Why

⁷ Hentze, *Chinese Tomb Figures*, p. 61.

- would they want objects buried with them? Why would they pick certain objects and not others? What do these figures tell us about the person from whose tomb they came? Why would someone want to bring musicians into the afterlife? Why bring a dog?
6. Who do you think these figures might be entertaining? Where do you think they are performing?
 7. These figures are made of clay. What is the basic ingredient in clay? Is it readily available? How do we sculpt with clay—do we cut away from a block of it (subtractive), or do we build it up by molding and adding things on (additive)? Is clay soft or hard when the artist works with it? How does it get hard? **Bring in a ceramic piece and discuss kilns, etc.**
 8. Do you think these figures were painted once? How do you know? What colors might they have been painted? Why did so much of the color disappear? **Discuss their age and their location underground.**
 9. **Compare these figures with those in the falconer's tapestry.** Do these 8th-century Chinese women seem close in spirit to the 15th-century French women? In what ways are they similar? How are they different?
 10. Do you think most Chinese people dress this way today? Why or why not? **Students (depending on their age) might enjoy:** (a) finding China on the map; (b) discussing China's former and current forms of government; (c) talking about foods, clothing styles, etc. we have borrowed from the Chinese; (d) discussing differences in our two cultures.
 11. The Chinese always included artists as an important part of their court life. Why do you think this was so? (*Appreciation for art, to record historical events, to show status, to provide artistic propaganda for rules, love of beauty, etc.*)

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Arras, France (Europe)

The Falconers, 1435-1445

Tapestry, wool

135 x 128 ¼ inches (irregular)

Gift of Mrs. C. J. Martin for the Charles Jarius Martin Memorial Collection, 15.34

Theme

This tapestry describes in great detail the art of falconry, a sport enjoyed by the nobility during the Middle Ages. At the same time, it records the extravagant 15th-century court fashions considered appropriate for this activity.

Background

Although tapestries had been produced since ancient times, they were especially popular in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries in northern Europe. As wall coverings for medieval castles and churches, these elaborate woven textiles provided warmth and beauty in somber, chilly interiors. They were expensive to produce and came to symbolize the rank of the wealthy lords and ladies who could afford to own them.

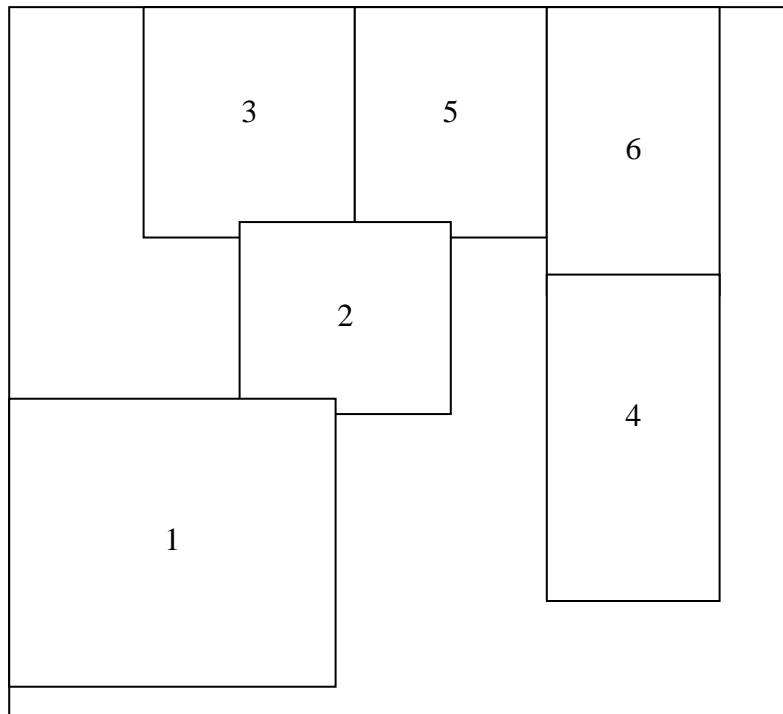
Throughout the Middle Ages, the Church had been the principal patron of the arts. In the 15th century, however, the nobility and the growing merchant class began to commission numerous works of art. Chief among the patrons were the dukes of Burgundy, who ruled not only Burgundy (a large area including modern France) but most of the Netherlands as well. Under their rule, Flanders (modern-day Belgium) became the artistic center of the north. Artists in all media—painters, sculptors, metalsmiths and weavers—were attracted to Flanders because of its reputation as an artistic center and by the prospect of wealthy patrons. The cities of Arras and Tournai, in particular, became synonymous with tapestry production.

Although the subjects depicted in tapestries before about 1400 were largely religious, secular scenes such as this hunting party became common toward the middle of the 15th century. These subjects reflect the changing role of the nobility. In earlier times, a knight would have devoted himself to a life of heroism—defending his faith or his estate. Now, nobles led a life of formality, opulence, and idleness. In their pursuit of ceremonial sporting activities, they attempted to recapture the thrill and glory of past warfare. In this tapestry, we see the details of one of their passions—hunting with falcons.

Falconry is an ancient sport, known in China 4000 years ago. In medieval Europe, falcons were allotted to men according to their rank. So valued were falcons that they were given as prized gifts. The theft of falcon eggs could result in imprisonment, and the outright theft of a bird could bring excommunication. It was not uncommon for falcons to be seen perched on the hands of their owners at court, on the streets, and even in church.

The Falconers

Like many tapestries woven during the Middle Ages, this tapestry was probably made as one of a set of panels that together told a story or illustrated a theme. *The Falconers* is a fragment of what was originally a larger piece depicting a group of elegantly dressed lords and ladies hunting in a meadow. The event is presented in the style of continuous narrative typical of the Middle Ages: several events that happened at different times are treated as if they occurred simultaneously. The subject is the sport of falconry, and the tapestry clearly illustrates the series of actions involved in hunting game with trained birds of prey. The diagram below will help you identify the various activities.



- Key:
1. Lady attaches (tethers) a leash to the leather strap (jess) on the leg of a returned falcon.
 2. Hood is either placed over the falcon's head or being removed.
 3. Falcon perches on man's right gloved hand. (Note jesses, leash, and bells on legs of bird.)
 4. Falcon returns to man's extended gloved right hand. (Leash is seen in left hand.)
 5. Two falcons attack a heron.
 6. Man swings lure (a stick with meat bait) to recall the falcon.

Falcons are hawk-like birds of prey that were captured in the wild or hatched in captivity. Training them was a long, arduous process. They were kept in total darkness at first and taught to take food in captivity. Gradually, they were introduced to light and to the presence of people. While being taught to hunt, the falcons were attached by leashes to the gloved hands of the trainers and lured back from the hunt by the promise of food.

During a hunt, as seen in the tapestry, the falcons were hooded (2) to calm them until their release. The leashes held by the hunters were attached to leather straps called jesses (1), which remained at all times on the bird's legs. The falcon also wore a silver bell (3) which produced a melodious whistling sound that helped the hunter locate the bird in flight during the hunt. The lure—a hoop or a stick with bird wings and food attached—was waved to signal the falcon to return for its reward (4). The highpoint of the hunt is depicted at the top center (5). Two falcons stooped (descended vertically) upon a heron. After sinking their talons into their prey, the falcons brought it back. To the right (6), a man swings a lure to recall the falcon from its hunt, a measure of how well the falcon was trained.

The tapestry follows the conventions of the 15th-century northern European late Gothic style. The subjects are presented as if they were actors on a stage rather than hunters in a meadow. Each activity of the art of falconry, which probably occurred over several hours and occupied considerable space, appears to be happening simultaneously in this shallow space. The tiny castle, in the upper right-hand corner, indicates distance by its smallness in relation to the figures, but there is no attempt to show receding space by the use of linear perspective. Depth is indicated by overlapping of the figures. For example, we know that the figures in section 1 are closer because they overlap the figures in sections 2 and 3.

The elongated figures are flat and two-dimensional because their shapes are created by lines. Notice the sharp contours of each face and head-covering and the sharp, precise lines of the clothing. The faces are uniformly bathed in light rather than shaded with light and shadow and therefore appear very flat. It was detail, not anatomy, that interested these weavers, detail as seen here in the intricately patterned and draped fabrics, the individual leaves and flowers of the foliage, and the accurate illustration of each aspect of the art of falconry. With this rich surface detail, weavers of the 15th century created not only decorative tapestry but also a woven record of how people lived a long time ago.

Technique

Tapestries are woven, that is, they are made by interlacing two sets of threads, called the warp and the weft. The warp threads stretch the length of the loom, and the weft threads are worked over and under them. Strong fibers such as wool, linen, or hemp must be used for the warp, while the weft may vary from wool to silk or even metallic threads.

In tapestry weaving, as the weft thread is woven in, it is packed down so that in the resulting fabric the warp is completely covered. It is the weft thread that creates the image in the tapestry. Each differently colored weft thread is held on a separate bobbin. Weft of one color is woven through the warp to the point where the pattern requires another color, and then is turned back on itself. At the point where different colors meet, small slits sometimes occur, which can later be sewn together by hand. Intersecting threads can also be intertwined so a slit does not occur.

The original designs for a tapestry generally were rather small. Enlargements to the full size of the tapestry, called cartoons, were placed behind the warp threads on the loom to serve as a diagram for the weaving.

Artists

Tapestries were produced in workshops by highly skilled specialists—designers, cartoon makers, dyers, artisans who warped the loom, and weavers. The weavers themselves often specialized in certain areas or images of the tapestry, such as borders or faces. Three to six weavers worked side by side to produce a large tapestry, but each one averaging perhaps one square yard of tapestry per month, depending on the number and type of threads used. The weavers in the Middle Ages were usually men. Women assisted in the workshop, often preparing the fibers for weaving and doing the dyeing.

Suggested Questions

1. **Explain that this is a tapestry. Bring in an example if possible.** Does anyone know what a tapestry is? How does a tapestry differ from a painting? How are they alike?
2. Where do you think people in the Middle Ages hung tapestries? (*Castles, churches, outdoor ceremonies.*) Why would they want to hang them on their castle walls? Would tapestries be warmer than stone walls? Do we have something similar to cover our walls today? **Explain that tapestries were changed or moved from room to room or castle to castle.**
3. How many different hats can you find? What name might you give the kinds of hats the men are wearing? In what part of the world do some men still wear turbans?
4. Do these clothes look warm or cool? Do some costumes have more than one layer? Show me which ones. Do some look like they are lined with fur? Show me.
5. Look closely at the clothes these people are wearing. What was fashionable in those days for women? What do their fashions tell you about their life-style? Their financial status? Their ability to move about freely? Do their clothes look comfortable? Do you think any of the clothes are woven too? Do they look heavy? Who do you suppose made their clothes? Did they do it themselves? Do the clothes look “drip-dry” and easy to care for?

6. What do you think the man on the right (section 4) might have in his red bag? Money? Birdseed? Hunting gear? A handkerchief?
7. The people in this tapestry are hunting. Can you discover what they are hunting with? These people are hunting small animals and birds with a trained bird called a falcon. How would a falcon catch its prey? Would it be hard to train a falcon? Aside from their method, what else is different about the way these medieval people hunted and the way we might hunt small game? (*Clothes, formality, large groups, etc.*)
8. **Talk about pattern.** Are you wearing a pattern? Find one pattern in this tapestry. **Ask several students.** Where do you think cloth makers get the ideas for some of their patterns? (*From nature, flowers, leaves.*)
9. Do you think this artist likes nature? What parts of nature are shown?
10. Tapestry makers worked from a cartoon. What do people think of when they hear that word today? Do you think a tapestry cartoon was something different? **Explain.**
11. Do you think this tapestry was made by one person or several people working together? **Discuss technique.** Who would you rather be—the artist who designed the tapestry and provided the cartoon or one of the weavers who made it? *Why?*
12. If you were to pull one of these figures out of the tapestry would it resemble a paper doll or a real person? *Why do you think so? How has the artist enlivened the figures even though they appear flat and stiff? (By gestures, turning of heads, variety of position.)*
Have the children mimic some of their positions.

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Lucas Cranach the Elder, German, 1472-1553
Portraits of Moritz and Anna Buchner, c. 1520
 Oil on panel
 H.16 x W. 10¾ inches x ¾/16
 The William Hood Dunwoody Fund, 57.10, 57.11

Theme

Changes in society and the consequent development of the middle class in the 16th century led to new styles of living for many people. The companion portraits of the Buchners show a prosperous middle-class couple's pride and sense of accomplishment in their social status and their material goods.

Background

Throughout the Middle Ages, wealth in the form of land was acquired through inheritance by a privileged few. By the 16th century, in Germany and much of the rest of Europe, this feudal society had given way to a capitalist one with a growing and prosperous middle class. During the 14th and 15th centuries, Germany had built fleets and established trade routes in the Baltic Sea. This gave rise to a merchant class who made large profits through trade. Men like Moritz Buchner and Lucas Cranach could now, through their own intelligence and ingenuity, acquire wealth. Middle-class status brought with it great pride, because now merchants rivaled the aristocracy not only in material goods but also in civic authority and as patrons of the arts.

Cities and towns grew rapidly with the influx of people seeking jobs in industry and commerce. Cities also became centers of intellectual and artistic activity. With the continued support of the nobility and the new patronage of the middle class, artistic production flourished in the period between 1500 and 1530. This era, referred to as the German Renaissance, gave rise to numerous schools of art⁸ and produced some of Germany's greatest artists. During this time, Germany was regarded as the artistic center of northern Europe.

Portraits of Moritz and Anna Buchner

In 1518,⁹ Moritz Buchner commissioned Lucas Cranach the Elder to paint portraits of himself and his wife, Anna. A Leipzig merchant and alderman whose family had grown wealthy from the mining industry, Buchner could afford this luxury formerly enjoyed only by the aristocracy. The elegant clothing and jewels in which the couple chose to be portrayed testify to their pride in their wealth.

⁸ A school of art in the 16th century was not a formal academy, but rather a group of artists who learned from a master who had his own workshop. The term "school" also refers loosely to a group of artists in a certain location who shared artistic techniques.

⁹ On the left side of the portrait of Moritz Buchner is the date 1518 and the artist's monogram (which he used in lieu of a signature), which appears as a winged serpent.

Two very different personalities emerge from these portraits. Morris Buchner looks straight at us. Although he is extravagantly clothed, it is his bold, direct gaze rather than his attire that captures our attention. This gives the impression of a shrewd and confident man. His left hand, resting across his luxurious fur-collared cape, prominently displays the ring bearing his initials and family crest. Everything in his portrait speaks of the prestige and importance of Moritz Buchner.

In contrast to her husband, Anna solemnly looks away. As a result, it is not her face (or her personality) that engages us. Our attention is drawn to her ostentatious array of jewels. The quantity of jewelry with which she is laden suggests that this painting is as much an inventory of material goods as a portrait of a woman. Anna is treated as little more than a symbol of her husband's wealth and status.

Despite the absence of any details of the Buchners' surroundings, the portraits provide clues to this couple's values and life-style. Hung in their home, the portraits would have served as symbols of their social status and material success. The Buchners chose not to be idealized. Unlike the nobility, middle-class German people of this era wanted their portraits to be mirror images of their physical appearance. It is clear that Moritz wanted his portrait to convey both his pride of accomplishment and his personal character.

When Cranach painted these portraits, the High Renaissance was under way in Italy. Artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci were influencing artistic style throughout Europe, particularly through their emphasis on anatomical accuracy and the use of perspective to create the illusion of space. Their influence on Cranach is apparent if the figures of Anna and Moritz are compared to the figures of the French falconer's tapestry. The Buchners appear vastly more realistic and three-dimensional than the flat lords and ladies in the tapestry. Yet even so, Cranach was more attuned to the style of northern Europe, particularly that of Flanders (present-day Belgium).

In the previous century, northern artists had developed a remarkable technique for producing jewel-like surfaces with oil paint. They could depict fabric and fur with a precision that made the textures almost palpable. Cranach's mastery of this technique can be seen in the fine detail and realism of the fur, fabric, and jewels worn by the Buchners. In fact, Cranach gives greater attention to these details than to structural form. Anna's hands, for example, are rather awkwardly rendered.

Technique

Today, oil paintings are usually executed on canvas that has been stretched over a wooden frame. During the Renaissance, however, the most common painting surface was the wooden panel, used by Cranach for these portraits. Wood provided a very smooth surface, which complemented Cranach's smooth, detailed painting style.

Before painting began, the surface of the wood was coated with a ground. The usual ground for wood panels was gesso, a mixture of chalk and a glue solution. Sometimes several layers were applied. When dry, the gesso ground could be sanded to a fine, smooth finish to form the surface for painting with oils.

Oil paints were known to painters as early as the 14th century but were perfected by artists in Flanders in the 15th century. Oil paint consists of finely divided pigment particles dispersed in an oil medium; when painted on a surface and allowed to dry, it forms a hard film that is extremely durable.

Oil paints offered greater versatility than previous types of paint. They dry slowly, allowing the artist to combine transparent and opaque layers to achieve a wide range of effects and color variations. The oil paint can be applied with a variety of brushes. The smooth-textured surface of these portraits indicates that Cranach probably used small, fine brushes.

Artist

Lucas Cranach the Elder went to Vienna about 1502 and there painted a series of landscapes and religious scenes. He was called to Wittenberg in 1505 to become court painter to Frederick III. Cranach served as court portraitist, interior decorator, costume designer, and curator. Through Cranach's purchases of art, Frederick was able to amass a huge collection. Taking advantage of the opportunities available to an ambitious entrepreneur, Cranach became the owner of an apothecary, a bookshop, a printing firm, and a paper mill. He also played an active role in the civic affairs of Wittenberg, being elected to the city council eight times and serving as mayor for three years.

During his fifty-year residency in Wittenberg, Cranach developed into a highly versatile and popular artist. His work was so much in demand that he employed a workshop of assistants, which at one time numbered sixteen. Cranach was not simply a court painter, however. Many of his best portraits were of members of the middle class. While in Wittenberg, he became a close friend of Martin Luther, whose portrait he painted many times. Cranach was also an accomplished printmaker. He created one of the finest illustrated books of the time, the *Wittenberg Book of Reliquaries* as well as many engravings and woodcuts of Luther.

Suggested Questions

1. What is a portrait? People can still have their portraits painted today, but they can also have their portraits made another way. Can you think what it is? (*Photographs*.) Think of some reasons why people want portraits of themselves. Why would it have been so expensive to have a portrait made in the 16th century? Why was it important for the Buchners to have portraits?
2. When you look at Moritz what is the first thing you notice? Why is that? What did you first notice in Anna's portrait? Look at their eyes. Why do you think the artist has Moritz staring right at us? Why do you think Anna is looking away? If you could ask each person one question, what would it be?
3. Do you think these portraits were painted in the summer or the winter? How can you tell?
4. What kind of personality do you think Moritz has? How does Anna feel? Do you think they liked their portraits when they were finished? Why or why not?

5. What belongings have the Buchners included in their portraits? Do you think they would have worn this much jewelry every day?
6. **Have a scavenger hunt.** Find the date when the portraits were painted, the letters *N* and *H*, a gold ring, a ring with two stones, etc. **Add anything else you wish.**
7. **Play a texture game. Bring examples of several materials in the painting (velvet, lace, hair, fur, etc.). Have the children feel the texture and find it in the reproduction.**
8. Moritz Buchner was a merchant. He was involved in trade. How would people have transported trade items in the 16th century? Why do people trade? Is there anything in the painting that the Buchners might have acquired from another country? (*Pearls*.) Do you think Moritz Buchner was a successful merchant? How do you know?
9. What do you think the artist was most interested in telling us about the Buchners? (Physical appearance, social status, personality?) Why do you think so?
10. What belongings of yours would you include in your portrait? Would you wear things for a portrait that you might not wear every day? Would you want to include your whole body in your portrait or just your head?

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Robert Koehler, American, 1850-1917
Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue, c. 1902
 Oil on canvas
 H.25 x W. 24¾ inches (canvas)
 Gift by subscription in honor of the Artist, 25.403

Theme

In *Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue*, Robert Koehler creates a picturesque view of everyday life around 1902 along a busy street in Minneapolis. Among the many people depicted are his wife and son walking with the family dog. Also portrayed are the environs of his daily life—the place where he worked and the community in which he was involved.

Background

The city of Minneapolis was undergoing tremendous growth and change when Robert Koehler painted *Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue* in the first decade of the 20th century. Culminating an era of urbanization, Minneapolis, like other burgeoning cities throughout the nation, mirrored the vastly altered conditions of American life that resulted from increased population, advancing technology and industry, and the shift from a rural to an urban society.

Many of the buildings portrayed in this painting arose during the 1880s when a building boom took place. This was a golden era for Minneapolis reflecting the new prosperity brought by lumbering, flour milling, and trade. The building on the left is the Minneapolis Public Library, built in 1889 of reddish brown Lake Superior sandstone, an imposing presence on the southeast corner of Tenth Street and Hennepin Avenue. A newspaper account noted its “dreamy seclusion” away from the central business district.¹⁰

The library housed the Academy of Natural Sciences and the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts (the forerunner of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts), which included the Minneapolis School of Art (later called the Minneapolis College of Art and Design) and a gallery. Both the school and gallery were situated on the top floor.

What was it like to live in Minneapolis at the time of this painting? Passage into the 20th century brought an ever-quicken pace. Electric streetcars replaced horse-drawn streetcars in the early 1890s; electricity was competing with gas in the lighting of the city’s streets and buildings; and automobiles made a rare appearance on the roads, driven by prosperous individuals with a taste for adventure. Nonetheless, horse-drawn carriages were the prevalent means of transportation. The bicycle was all the rage with nearly ten million Americans riding them in 1890.

Nicollet and Washington Avenues were bustling with retail activity, and shoppers could enjoy the new meccas of merchandising—fashionable department stores such as Donaldson’s Glass

¹⁰ The library building stood on this site until 1961; today this site is a parking lot.

Block, Powers Dry Goods, and the recently opened Dayton's. Those were the days when a man's suit sold for \$10, a sirloin steak cost 12 cents and a new stove \$22.50.

As the city grew, so did an appetite for entertainment and culture. The theater enriched urban life with a variety of plays, opera, and vaudeville, a favorite form of family entertainment. In professional sports, baseball was the most popular game. Twin Citians trooped to Nicollet Park, home of the Minneapolis Millers, and to Lexington Park, home of the St. Paul Saints.

Home and family, central institutions in American society, were symbols of calm and stability in the midst of a changing world. Traditional family roles were clearly defined: men took charge of the business world and cast the votes in the political realm, while women were responsible for taking care of the home and children. Urban families tended to have fewer children than those in rural areas. As families grew smaller, children became even more important, and the concerned mother was very involved in her child's upbringing and education. The growth of publishing produced a profusion of books and magazines that advised women on home-management, and reinforced their traditional roles.¹¹

At the same time, urban growth was creating changes that eroded tradition. Technological advances and labor-saving services allowed women more free time; many became involved in charity work and the burgeoning women's clubs and organizations. New career opportunities caused a growing number of women to enter the workforce.

There were adverse effects to the extraordinary changes taking place in society. Problems relating to labor strife, child labor, swelling immigration, the rights of women, and corruption in city government were major concerns at this time, and movement for reform was underway.

Nonetheless, it was the Age of Confidence, and the country entered the 20th century with a sense of optimism. On New Years Day, 1900, the *Tribune* assured the city's 200,000 residents that their future was "onward and upward." The new century would bring untold "expansion of all desirable blessings, of prosperity, of educational and moral growth, of beneficent political policies."

Description

This picturesque cityscape offers a glimpse of life in Minneapolis at the turn of the century. Looking south from Ninth Street, we see the buildings located around Tenth Street and Hennepin Avenue. The prominent building in the left middle distance with the lighted first floor window is the Minneapolis Public Library. Across the street to the right is the Hennepin Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, which stood on that site from 1881-1911.¹² Known as the Red Brick Church, its steeple was a prominent landmark in downtown Minneapolis. When Koehler painted this scene around 1902, the southern area of Hennepin Avenue he portrayed was more

¹¹ Lois W. Banner. *Women in Modern America: A Brief History*. 2nd Edition (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1984) pp. 54-55.

¹² This was the forerunner of today's Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church, presently located near the area where Lyndale Avenue converges with Hennepin Avenue.

residential than the commercial end to the north. Many private homes were in the area as well as numerous rooming houses and hotels.¹³

Koehler depicts the bustling activity of the city as it looked on a rainy evening, perhaps in early spring or late fall, suggested by the leafless trees and the warmly dressed figures. It is twilight and the rain has stopped, as evidenced by the glistening puddles in the street, the cloud-filled sky, the furled umbrellas and the sense of moisture in the air. While the streetcar's headlights are on and light glows from the library and church windows, sunlight penetrates through the clouds in the western sky.

Painted just prior to the automobile age, the streets were paved with cedar blocks and the sidewalks were a relatively modern improvement. We see electric streetcars, a horse-drawn carriage with two horses, and a bicyclist peddling through the puddles.

Among the people portrayed strolling and scurrying down the avenue is the artist's family. The woman and child in the foreground are Koehler's wife, Marie, and their son, Edwin, who are walking with the family dog. A photograph discovered in the 1970s was clearly the basis for the figures in the painting.

Fashionably dressed, Mrs. Koehler lifts her long skirt, preventing her hem from sweeping the wet ground. Typical of the early 20th century, her dress emphasizes her silhouette, enhanced by a waist-pinching corset commonly worn underneath. Her hairstyle is the pompadour, drawn up high with a large hat perched on top. Her son wears a jacket with knee pants and cap typical of the time.

Walking hand in hand, they appear to be enjoying a leisurely stroll together. Koehler portrays a happy family relationship reflecting similar family values of the time. They seem to be in harmony with their surroundings, comfortable in the city despite the dampness and onslaught of evening.

Style

During the 19th century, many European artists became fascinated by the subject of the city. Growing industrialization and a changing way of life provoked new responses from artists. They often discarded the traditional formulas taught by the academies, training schools for artists which followed official standards involving principles of accurate observation and representation.

The subject of the city was explored by the Impressionists, a loose association of artists working in France in the latter part of the 19th century, who were revolutionary in their approach to ordinary, everyday life around them. Capturing the lively street life of Paris with its wide boulevards, cafés, train stations and churches, they were interested in recording contemporary life, capturing what the eye sees at a given moment. Influenced by scientific research, they tried to convey the changing conditions of light and atmosphere by using bright colors and quick, sketchy brushstrokes, which often created an unfinished look. The Impressionists paved the way for artists like Koehler by addressing the subject of modern urban life and by their

¹³ In the early 1900s many working women, a great number working in factories, lived in rented rooms.

sense of technical experimentation and innovation.

Koehler, however, did not adhere to one particular school or style of art, but rather, drew upon a number of crosscurrents permeating artistic thought during his career. Reaching artistic maturity in the 1880s, Koehler was recognized for his skillfully painted portraits and genre street scenes. His work reflects the teachings of the Munich Academy, a popular center of artistic training in Germany where he studied during the 1870s and 80s. The Academy emphasized vigorous brushwork, skillful manipulation of paint with flashing light tones painted into warm, dark backgrounds, and picturesque subjects drawn from everyday life. The Munich artists were influenced by French Impressionism, but typically painted with a darker palette. While Koehler's paintings of the 1880s often addressed social issues of modern industrial life, his works from his Minneapolis years tend to be pleasant landscapes and cityscapes as well as portraits of family, friends, and community leaders.

In *Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue*, Koehler creates a setting filled with soft mist and atmosphere using subtle color harmonies in a variety of violet, brown, black and gray tones. Contrasting with this rather dark, murky palette are small patches of warm yellows and oranges, which represent various sources of light glowing from the library and church windows, shining from the streetcars, and illuminating the face of a man who stops to light his pipe. Highlighted areas break up the grays of the sky and create a shimmering quality on the wet ground. With loose, sketchy brushstrokes, Koehler evokes the soft, luminous quality of the rain-soaked street and sidewalk.

While Koehler's interest in light and atmosphere has much in common with the Impressionists, his forms maintain a solid, three-dimensional quality, which differs from the sketchy, unfinished appearance of many Impressionist paintings. Koehler's well-defined forms are particularly seen in the figures in the foreground of the painting, whose contours are distinctly delineated. They are depicted naturalistically, with considerable attention to details of gesture and clothing. These details, however, are softened by the hazy atmosphere of twilight. Koehler indicates depth by the use of linear perspective, where objects become progressively smaller and closer together as they become more distant, as can be seen in the figures and the buildings. He also uses aerial perspective, where the buildings depicted in the distance fade to a bluish gray color. Details blur, suggesting the effects of light, air, and distance.

Artist

Born in Hamburg, Germany in 1850, Robert Koehler emigrated with his family to Milwaukee, Wisconsin when he was four years old. His father was a skilled mechanic; his mother taught needlework and dabbled in painting. Robert excelled in drawing at a young age, and aspired to be a lithographer. Following an apprenticeship with a lithography firm in New York, he attended classes at the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League. From 1873 to 1875 he studied at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, a popular center of artistic training, but in 1875 a lack of funds prompted his return to New York where he resumed study at the Art Students League. In 1879 he returned to Munich, where he remained for thirteen years, first as a student and later as a teacher. His work was widely recognized and exhibited in Munich and other cities, and he was involved in various art organizations. In 1889 he received the Cross of the Order of St. Michael from the Prince Regent of Bavaria for distinguished services in the cause of art.

In 1893 Koehler was appointed Director of the Minneapolis School of Art, a position he held until 1914. Koehler and his wife, Marie built a new house at 4816 Portland in 1897. In 1898, their only child, Edwin, was born. He eventually attended the University of Minnesota and studied mechanical engineering.

Though mainly occupied with teaching and administrative duties, Koehler found time to paint, lecture, and write articles. He also had a strong interest in music and with his wife often attended concerts and events at local music clubs. Koehler was actively involved in many local art associations. Soon after he arrived in Minneapolis he founded and was president of the Minneapolis Art League, located at 719 Hennepin Avenue, which held annual exhibitions.

Koehler was popular among his Minneapolis students and often participated in their social gatherings. He was a strict teacher and insisted that his students master the fundamentals of drawing. Under his leadership the Minneapolis School of Art expanded its curriculum and achieved national recognition. A strong advocate of American art, Koehler also organized annual exhibitions of American art at the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts.

During his tenure at the school, Koehler was involved in planning for a new art school and museum, which were outgrowing their space in the library. His dreams for these facilities were realized in 1915 with the opening of the spacious building of The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (then the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts) at Third Avenue and 24th street—the building that today houses Koehler's painting *Rainy Evening on Hennepin Avenue*. This painting was acquired by the museum in 1925.

Koehler retired from the art school in 1914 and became Director Emeritus. From that time he served as a docent at The Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Koehler died on April 23, 1917 from a heart attack he suffered while riding on a Nicollet Avenue streetcar.

Suggested Questions

1. What is this a picture of?
2. What time of day is depicted in this painting? What season of the year is depicted? What clues helped you to decide this?
3. Give a weather report for the painting. Is it sunny or rainy? Is the rain over or will it continue? Is it warm or cool? What makes you think so?
4. What are the people doing in this painting? Where do you think the people are going? Are they active or still?
5. If you were standing on that street corner, what sounds might you hear? Is this a noisy or a quiet scene? What smells would you smell?
6. Do you think the people in this painting know one another? Why or why not? Is the city a friendly place? An unfriendly place? What makes you think so?

7. Can you find the following:
 - an electric streetcar; how many can you find?
 - a horse-drawn carriage; with how many horses?
 - a bicyclist
 - a church
8. What sources of light do you see? Do you see artificial light? (*gas light, electricity*) Do you see natural light?
9. Do you think this is how Hennepin Avenue actually looked around 1902?
10. Look at the photograph of this location today. How has the city changed? How has it remained the same? Which way do you prefer the city? Why? What problems does the city have today that it did not have around 1902? **Discuss pollution, traffic, crime.**
11. How was life at that time similar to life today? How was it different?
12. Do you think the artist likes the city? Why or why not?
13. Look at the people in Koehler's painting. Which are the biggest? Which are the smallest? Which are middle sized? How big is the dog? Why do you think Koehler painted them this way? **Discuss linear perspective.** Under the rules of linear perspective, people and objects in the distance appear smaller than people and objects in the foreground.
14. Where do the buildings in Koehler's painting look dark and solid? Where do the buildings look lighter/bluer and fuzzier? **Discuss aerial perspective.** With aerial perspective, things that are far away appear lighter in color and details are impossible to see.

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Nicolas de Largillière, French, 1656-1746

Portrait of Catherine Coustard (1673-1728), Marquise of Castelnau, Wife of Charles-Léonor Aubry (1667-1735) with her Son Léonor (1695-1770), c. 1699

Oil on canvas

H.53¼ x W.40¾ inches (sight)

The John R. Van Derlip Trust Fund, 77.26

Theme

This portrait of a French mother and her son was made to celebrate the family's newly attained nobility and the birth of an heir to their estate. From studying it, we can learn about the family relationships and life-style of upper-class society in a time of transition at the beginning of the 18th century.

Background

Louis XIV of France was an absolute monarch whose brilliant reign of fifty-four years¹⁴ earned him the title of Sun King. Under his leadership, France achieved political dominance in Europe, and Paris replaced Rome as the artistic center of the time. The king's insatiable need for absolute control was the source of his triumph and also of his demise. He surrounded himself with advisors from the middle class, who had little power except what he granted them. The courtiers, who eventually numbered 10,000, were maintained in the king's opulent palace at Versailles. Even nature gave way to the king's will as he transformed a forest into a park. Art as well as architecture was at the service of Louis XIV. He established a powerful academy, which for over forty years dictated standards of art in accord with his own taste and ambition.

During the last thirty years of his rule, however, Louis XIV's power gradually declined. By the turn of the century, disastrous military campaigns and the king's extravagance at Versailles had brought the French economy to the verge of collapse. By 1700, the courtiers-in-residence could no longer be maintained, and the nobility began moving to Paris, where their lifestyle became less luxurious and more informal.

The Aubry family, two of whom are depicted in the portrait, lived in this world of excess and transition at the turn of the century. Léonor Aubry, the head of a wealthy middle-class family, was awarded noble status in return for twenty years of government service under Louis XIV.¹⁵ Shortly afterward, his eldest son, Charles, also a bureaucrat, purchased an estate in central France that afforded him the title of Marquis de Castelnau. Their rise to social prominence prompted the Aubrys to commission Nicolas de Largillière (lar zhil YAIR) to paint a series of family portraits, including this one of Catherine Aubry, Charles's wife, and her young son, Léonor, named for his grandfather.

¹⁴ Louis XIV was king from 1643 to 1715. He did not assume power, however, until the death of his powerful prime minister, Cardinal Mazarin, in 1661.

¹⁵ Such posts were referred to at the time as *savonnette à vilain* (sweet-smelling soap, with which to wash away one's base origins).

Portrait of Catherine Coustard, Marquise de Castelnau, Wife of Charles-Léonor Aubry, with Her Son Léonor

What appears to be a charming portrait of a mother and son posing with the family pet might seem (except for the clothing) like any number of modern day pictures extolling the virtues of family and motherhood. But looks can be deceiving. Closer examination reveals how stiffly the subjects are posed and how little they actually relate to each other. The concept of motherhood as we understand it today did not exist in France at the beginning of the 18th century. Family traditionally meant lineage, the means of inheriting wealth, and marriages were legal contracts rather than bonds of love. The birth of a child conferred status on the mother for having produced an heir to the fortune, but the care of the child was entrusted to servants. Parents and children remained virtual strangers to one another. Respect and obedience were expected from children, not love and affection.

It is unusual for a young child the age of Léonor to be included in a portrait of this time. The reason for his presence is to proclaim him heir to the family estate and to honor his mother for having produced an heir. Léonor is the new nobility's hope for the future.¹⁶

Madame Aubry, who was the daughter of a prosperous cloth merchant, would certainly have been asked to select her own costume for her portrait. Women of the French court often chose to be immortalized in mythological guise. Madame Aubry, however, preferred an elegant, contemporary dress. Her fashionable blue velvet gown is lined with embroidered silk and embellished with a bodice of silver lamé. Her costume is significant, for it reflects the less rigid dress code of the new Parisian society. The stylish fashion she wears, called a *robe de chambre*, is a softer, more comfortable gown than the gowns worn at Versailles. Madame Aubry would have worn it to receive guests at home. Her hair is fashioned in a *fontange*, a popular style of the time. The two curls framing her forehead were a constant feature of French hairstyle for thirty years, appearing in many portraits of the period.

Léonor's attire looks odd to us, but at that time it was customary to dress boys and girls alike until they were five or six years old. In France, this practice continued into the 20th century. Late 19th-century American photographs also show young boys wearing dresses. Léonor's garment is called a *jacquette*. The plumes in his matching velvet headdress indicate that he is a boy.

Madame Aubry, seated on a high-backed chair, rather stiffly rests her right hand upon the shoulder of Léonor, who holds a bunch of grapes in his hand as he gazes upward. With her other hand, Madame Aubry pats a small dog. The elaborate chair and the dog belonged to the artist and were included to add charm to this portrait (and many others).

To emphasize the portrait's purpose, Largillière placed Madame Aubry and Léonor before an open gallery with grand fluted columns through which we see a landscape, an allusion to the family estate. All these elements, together with the rich color and dramatic light, speak of the Aubry family's prosperity and their new status as members of the nobility.

¹⁶ Léonor did follow in his father's footsteps, becoming a councilor in the parliament of Paris in 1720.

Largillière came to maturity as an artist in a period of artistic transition. With the waning of Louis XIV's power, artists were moving away from the formality and grandeur of the official Baroque style to the more intimate Rococo style, which accorded with the newer, less formal lifestyle. This portrait has both Baroque and Rococo characteristics.

The dramatic, stage-like lighting that focuses attention on the figures is a Baroque convention. Notice also how the light reflects off the luxurious velvets and silks of the garments, especially the inner lining of Madame Aubry's dress, and off the grapes in Léonor's hand. Baroque formality is seen in the stately columns in the background and the lavish draperies.

Despite the Baroque formality, Largillière has created intimacy by posing Madame Aubry in an informal gown. The flowing, curved lines of the outer garment and the casual fall of the lace at her bodice, together with her rather soft hairstyle, all anticipate the Rococo style. Likewise, the intimacy of the small space that the figures occupy is in keeping with the newer style.

Largillière's portraits were not intended to reveal the personalities of his sitters. The Aubrys, like most of Largillière's patrons, wanted their status emphasized, not their inner beings. Therefore, rich clothes, richly painted, became the essence of his new style of aristocratic portraiture. Yet through the lively play of light upon the fabrics, he gave the portrait a vitality that exceeds the requirements of his patron.

Technique

The use of oil paint, as previously explained in the discussion of the Cranach portraits, offered artists great versatility in representing brilliant color and convincing textures. Largillière used those advantages to the utmost in this painting. By applying layers of transparent paints over opaque ones, he created the illusion of actual skin and cloth and achieved a subtle play of light off the rich blues and reds.

In contrast to the Cranach painting, which was executed on wooden and metal supports, this portrait is on canvas, stretched over a wooden frame. The surface of the canvas was prepared by priming it with a white ground. Canvas has several advantages over other supports: it is lightweight, it is inexpensive, and it expands and contracts little with temperature changes, so the paint surface does not crack.

Of the three oil paintings in this set, that by Largillière has the most vivid and broadest range of colors. This is partly due to the better quality of pigment available to artists of his time as well as to an advanced knowledge of the technique.

Artist

Largillière was born in Paris. He received his early training in the workshop of a Flemish painter in Antwerp who specialized in landscape and genre painting. In 1674, at the age of eighteen, he became a studio assistant to the leading court portraitist in England, Sir Peter Lely. In 1680, Largillière returned to France, where he established his reputation as a portrait painter. He was admitted to the Royal Academy in 1686. In 1705, he became a member of its teaching faculty and in 1720 was appointed director.

Most of Largillière's patrons were successful members of the *bourgeoisie*¹⁷ who, like the Aubry family, had gained status and wealth through government service. They appreciated Largillière's ability to flatter them in portraits; he preferred them to the impoverished court nobility because they were more apt to pay their bills. Blending elements from traditional Baroque portraiture and the new Parisian taste, he forged a portrait style that helped free French painting from the restraints of the academic style.

Suggested Questions

1. What is a portrait? Do you have a portrait of yourself? How was it made? How was this portrait made?
2. This is a mother and her son. Does the way they are dressed tell you that? **Explain that boys and girls were dressed alike to age five.**
3. Would you trade places with Léonor? Why or why not? Do you think Léonor had the same kind of life you do? What kind of games would he have played? **Explain that in French his red frock is called a *jacquette*.** When you go out in cool weather, do you ever wear something with a name that sounds like that? (*Jacket.*)
4. How do you think she feels about her son? Does she seem friendly or aloof? Do you think Madame Aubry was more interested in having the portrait show her affection for her child or her own importance? Why? Do you think she might have asked the artist to paint her exactly as she looked or would she have wanted to be flattered? Why do you think so?
5. Do you think this portrait was painted: (a) before you were born, (b) before your mother was born, (c) before your grandmother was born? Why do you think so?
6. What do their hands tell you about the lifestyle of Madame Aubry and her son? Do you think they have servants? Are they active in sports? Do they like to go out in the sun? Do they work hard? Might they play a musical instrument? What do you see that makes you think so?
7. Sit like Madame Aubry. Are you sitting up straight? Is this a comfortable way to sit? Is it good posture? How does the chair feel? Would you pose like Léonor for a portrait? Why or why not?
8. How would you want to look in your portrait? What would you include in the picture? How do you think Madame Aubry and her son wanted us to see them?

¹⁷ At the turn of the eighteenth century in France, the bourgeoisie were not a homogenous group but rather a diverse grouping of people of variable status who fit into a category above the level of manual laborers but below the status of the nobility.

9. Madame Aubry has an elaborate hairstyle. Do you think it is all her own hair? Would it take a long time to fix? Do you think she styled it herself? Does it suit the way she is dressed? Why or why not? Do you think it might come back into fashion someday soon? What activities do women do today that would be hard with this hairstyle? If women were to wear their hair this way, for what special occasion might they choose this style?
10. Do you think these people are proud? What clues do you get from the painting that tell you that? **Explain the reason why the portrait was made.**
11. **Compare the portrait of Madame Aubry to the portrait of Anna Buchner.** How are the paintings alike? Different? Do you think Anna had children? Which woman is the happier? If you could meet either, who would it be? Why?
12. If you were having your portrait painted, how would you pose? What would you wear? What would you wear or include that would tell people who you really are or what you are proud of?

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Japan

Helmet, 17th century

Iron, lacquer, wood, leather, gilt, pigments, silk, papier-mâché

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Key Idea

In Japan, dragonflies symbolize focus, determination, and vigilance. Able to change directions nimbly, dragonflies reflect the ideal virtues of a capable warrior. This helmet is called an “exotic helmet” (*kawari kabuto*, [kah-war-ee kah-boo-toe]) because of its imaginative design. It likely belonged to a high-ranking warrior who wanted to stand out from his peers. Exotic helmets were a sort of military haute couture in 16th- and 17th-century Japan, and they were important expressions of personality, status, and wealth.

Who Were the Samurai?

In Japan, samurai were a class of elite warriors renowned for their loyalty and military skill. Land-owning aristocratic families employed samurai as early as the 10th century. Frequently at war over land and vying for political influence, these families relied on samurai to protect their lives and interests. The samurai formed close bonds with the families they served, gaining a reputation for their devotion (the term samurai comes from a Japanese word meaning “to serve”). The ideal samurai was expected to be selfless, brave, and fiercely loyal. Because of their elevated connections, social status, and military skills, samurai developed influence in politics, eventually becoming Japan’s ruling class.

By the 12th century, powerful military families established a feudal government. At its head was a military leader, the *shogun* [show-gun], who replaced the emperor as Japan’s ruler. But the government was very unstable. Ruling families faced competition from other families, and sometimes even from within their own. Samurai and their lords were caught amid complicated relationships. Between the 15th and 16th centuries, feuds between aristocratic families spread over most of Japan. This period is known as the *Sengoku Jidai*, [sehn-go-coo gee-die] or Warring States Period. Low-ranking foot soldiers, peasants, and even some Buddhist clergy joined samurai armies in battles.

From Practical Headgear to Sumptuous Style

Frequent wars and large armies created high demand for effective yet inexpensive armor. To keep up with demand, armor makers developed practical, simply designed helmets that appealed to lower-ranking warriors. In contrast, leaders and officers sought elaborate helmets. By the late 16th century, they began commissioning armorers to create extravagant helmets that reflected their wealth, rank, and personality. The base was the same plain helmet made for common warriors, on top of which artisans constructed a skeletal form out of wood, covered with papier-mâché and lacquer for a seamless design. On the MIA’s helmet, the dragonfly also features removable golden wings, golden eyes, and a silk cord to tie at the chin. Whether the MIA’s helmet was worn in battle is unknown. One thing is clear: In spite of its exotic

appearance, this helmet was designed to offer superior head protection during combat. And like most others, this dragonfly helmet features a sweeping apron at the rear to protect the back of the neck.

The Importance of Getting Noticed

For better or for worse, it was important for samurai to be recognizable in battle—especially to distinguish friend from foe. Leaders in particular needed to be easily visible by their armies in the chaos of battle. During the 14th century, armies began adorning their armor with symbols that represented their allegiance, while others adopted shared color schemes for the same purpose. Soldiers showed their support by decorating their armor with their lord's crest, or **mon** [*moan*]. Still others showed their intent to fight by attaching fans or small branches from fruit trees to their helmets.

While this ornate helmet is a far cry from a plum branch, it shows the continued importance of individual expression, identity, and the evolving artistry of armor making. By the late 16th century, flamboyant helmets were all the rage among top samurai. They distinguished officers from the ranks, and exhibited their personality, wealth, and status. Officers often chose symbols that held special meanings, or reflected an aspect of their personality. Sometimes, the design on a leader's helmet even reflected the collective spirit of his army.

A Time of Peace

In 1603, a new *shogun* named **Tokugawa Ieyasu** [*Toe-coo-gah-wah ee-yay-yah-sue*] took control of Japan. He established a strong central government controlled by his family until 1868. This period is called the **Edo** [*Eh-doh*], or Tokugawa, period, a relatively peaceful time in Japan. During the Edo period, Japan's population grew, and cities became important cultural centers. Urban residents enjoyed plenty of outlets for entertainment at restaurants, shops, and spectacular street shows. Arts like painting, calligraphy, woodblock printing, kabuki theater, and the tea ceremony flourished, all with major support from the samurai class.

Lacking wars to fight, samurai invested their time—and justified their status—by patronizing the arts. Still, they maintained a connection to their military heritage. They continued practicing martial arts and remained ready for battle. As a result, even during peacetime, artisans continued making samurai armor and helmets with flair. Armor and helmets were worn during ceremonies or in public processions that showed off the ruling class's grandeur. Ultimately, samurai applied their military discipline to their intellectual and artistic interests. Prominent samurai thinkers declared samurai to be Japan's cultural role models, setting the standard for good taste and class. The dragonfly helmet at the MIA shows the continuing interest among the samurai of combining both visual and military arts. This helmet illustrates their taste for beauty and humor, even when the subject was war.

The End of an Era

Despite its high social status, the samurai class faced many uncertainties in the late Tokugawa period. Between their expensive lifestyle and few outlets for gainful employment (samurai were not typically allowed to farm or own shops), samurai families increasingly fell into poverty. Some even grew skeptical about the feudal system. In 1867, a civil war broke out between those wishing to destroy the feudal government (and restore the emperor's power) and those who

supported it. A year later, in 1868, forces backing the emperor won, and the feudal system collapsed. In 1873, the new government created a national army, thereby eliminating the need for the samurai class. Three years later, the government dissolved it altogether. Many former samurai were given money to open their own businesses, while others joined the army or engaged in politics. Though their status dissolved, former samurai played important roles in shaping Japanese history and society in the early 20th century.

Suggested questions:

1. How would you describe the decoration on this samurai helmet? What does it look like to you? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. Some leaders chose symbols for their helmets that had important personal meanings or designs that reflected the spirit of their troops. Think about the dragonfly design on this helmet. Do you think it was chosen to reflect the owner's personal goals, or that of his troops? Both? What reasons can you come up with to explain your answer?
3. What kind of warrior do you think would have worn a helmet like this? What do you think it says about the person wearing it?
4. In Japan, dragonflies symbolize focus, determination, and the ability to change directions without losing course. Why might a warrior choose to put a dragonfly decoration on his helmet? In what ways might these qualities appeal to a warrior?
5. What qualities do you associate with dragonflies? If you were to design your own samurai helmet, what creatures or symbols would you add? Why? What meaning does this creature or symbol have to you? Would you choose a personal meaning, or one to rally the spirit of your troops?
6. How does this helmet compare to the other samurai helmet in the MIA's collection? How does it compare to helmets from other parts of the world?
7. This helmet belonged to a high-ranking warrior. How might this helmet show off his status? How might it distinguish him from his army? How do high-ranking people in society today show off their status?



Mende (Africa, Sierra Leone, West Africa region)

Sande Society Mask, 19th century

Wood, raffia

13 x 8 x 8 inches

The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund, 72.69.1

Theme

This mask from the Sande Society in Sierra Leone was worn by a mature woman as part of an initiation ceremony for young girls entering adulthood. The mask represents the ideal of womanhood and feminine beauty among Mende women.

Background

The country of Sierra Leone is situated on the west coast of Africa, just north of Liberia. The population of over five and a half million people comprises many different cultures, about thirty percent of which (about 1.5 million) is the Mende (men-day) people. The Mende live in a hilly, fertile area, and most are rice farmers.

The Mende people believe in one supreme god, Ngewo, and a number of lesser spirits responsible for the general well-being of the people. It is the lesser spirits who are evoked by masks in special ceremonies.

Politically, the Mende people are organized into small chiefdoms. Socially, they revolve around so-called secret societies, which are separated by sex. At puberty, boys are initiated into the Poro Society, and girls are initiated into the Sande (sahn-day) Society. Initiation into the societies involves a period of isolation from the village (which varies among villages, but generally lasts several weeks) during which time the young initiates are trained in all aspects of life to prepare them for adulthood. Girls learn about feminine values, marriage, childcare, family life, economics, and singing and dancing. Although the Poro Society often has greater political control among most Mende peoples, the Sande Society plays a significant leadership role in many aspects of the community. Sande provides women with the opportunity to acquire political expertise and a strong support base for those who pursue political careers. Owing to their strong Sande Society, Mende women have held a significant percentage of paramount chieftaincies in Sierra Leone.

The masking tradition of the Sande Society is also nearly unique in West Africa. While it is common practice in Africa for masked dancers to participate in initiation and other ceremonies, it is only among the Mende, Temne, and a few other groups in Sierra Leone and Liberia, that women own and wear masks for this purpose. A woman must be of a certain rank to commission a mask from a carver. The carver is a man in the community possessing special knowledge of spiritual and social concerns.

Women who hold the *sowo* rank (therefore called *soweí*) constitute the uppermost level of the Sande Society, and, therefore commission the most special masks. Their masks embody the most powerful Sande spirit, referred to as *Bondo*, *Bundo*, *Nówo*, or even *Soweí*. These masks are usually distinguished by a soft hairdo with little ornamentation (an indication of an older woman) and a white cloth tied at the top.

Women in the middle (*ligba*) level of the Sande Society commission and wear masks made much more to the individual dancer's fancy. These masks have much more elaborate hairdos, like those of young Mende women. Each woman tells the carver the name of the spirit that her mask will represent, and he "dreams" the appropriate form. The resulting mask can be worn only by this woman, and only she can evoke the spirit. The mask itself is an embodiment of the spirit, not simply a decorative object that conceals the dancer. In evoking the spirit, the masked woman gives up her own identity to allow the spirit to take over.

Sande Society Mask

This mask belonged to a woman in the middle (*ligba*) level of the Sande Society. To fully appreciate the mask, we would have to see it in the context of the ceremony for which it was intended. Now still and silent, this wooden helmet mask once embodied a spirit during an initiation ceremony for young girls. Imagine for a moment the awesome appearance of this mysterious and beautiful black mask worn by a woman with raffia swirling about her as she moved.

Before the spirit can enter a mask in a ceremony, the masker must be completely covered to protect her body from the spirit. The masked dancer makes no sound, but the spirit speaks through gesture and movement, referring to the ideal qualities of womanhood in Mende women, such as wisdom, discretion, order, patience, and beauty.

The mask was not intended to be a specific portrait; rather, it conveys an ideal. The ideals of womanhood and feminine beauty of the Mende people are exemplified in the delicate features and demurely downcast eyes of the mask. The smooth high forehead indicates wisdom and success. In Mende thought, a woman's future may be told by her forehead. The vertical incised lines on each cheek and near the eyes seem to be scarification marks. In reality, most Mende do not have scars; some carvers may continue to include them in mask designs because of traditional conventions. The hair is carefully arranged in orderly patterns, reflecting the balance and harmony of an ideal household. Mende women who do not care for their hair are considered immoral or mentally unbalanced.

The blackness of the mask symbolizes femininity in Mende culture. The glistening black surface may also refer to wetness, an allusion to water, the domain of Sande spirits. The Sande Society initiates often rub their skin with palm oil to enhance their own blackness before dancing in front of their community and prospective husbands. Nonetheless, white—signifying absolute cleanliness, physically, morally, and spiritually—is the color of Sande. It is bright, pure and beautiful.

The rings of flesh on the neck are greatly exaggerated depictions of natural lines or creases on some individuals' necks. The Mende consider a lined neck desirable because it signifies wealth, high status, and health—characteristics of someone who is blessed by god and,

therefore, special. Neck rings are extremely attractive to the opposite sex, so adult Mende who don't have them naturally try to cultivate them.

The bird on the crown of the mask is a hen and refers to maternity and the responsibility of motherhood. Just as a hen watches over her eggs, the Sande Society leader watches over her initiates. Further, the Mende consider the chicken the supreme bird—it is busy, domestic, sleeps at home, and it is entertaining! They also believe that chickens can see peoples' hearts, which means they can see the truth.

The *sowe*i and other masked women escort the girls into initiation, provide guidance while they are in training, and emerge with them in festive celebration of their readiness for adulthood and marriage. By the time they complete training the girls have learned the secret that a human being, a woman known to them, impersonates and becomes the spirit.

The Sande Society remains a vital part of Mende life today. A mask such as this one loses its value when its owner no longer participates in initiation or moves upward in society. While initiation and masking continue today, Sande members do not discuss their beliefs and practices with outsiders. For the most part, knowledge of their traditions remains, as it should, secret.

Technique

According to one description, Sande masks are roughed out with a machete from the trunk of a tree. To hold the log firm while carving, the artist digs a hole and places one end of the log in it. He begins by digging out the head cavity with a chisel and then scoops out the interior wood with a curved blade.

After the log has been hollowed out, the center of the face is marked with a machete. From the center line, the artist marks a diamond shape and proceeds to carve the face, hair, and neck, always referring to the center to maintain symmetry. No preliminary drawing is done. Eyes are made parallel to the mouth. Viewing slits for the wearer may correspond to the eyes of the mask or be concealed in the ridges of the neck.

A small knife is used for finishing, and sandpaper is employed to achieve a smooth surface. When carving and sanding are complete, holes are burned in the bottom, and raffia is attached. Juice of the leaves of the *kojo* vine is used to dye the raffia, which at first is bright green but oxidizes to a deep, rich brown.

Before completion of the mask, the carver performs a ceremony to determine if the mask is satisfactory for spiritual use. The woman who commissioned the mask will then compare it to other masks that have been proven satisfactory. If she approves the mask, she will perform a ceremony that invites the spirit to enter it.

Artist

Although we do not know the name of the artist who carved the Sande mask, he would have been respected in his culture not only for his carving skill but also for his knowledge of the spiritual and social needs of the Sande Society. The following is a quotation from an

anonymous Mende artist upon seeing the mask he made used in a dance:

All the people wonder about this beautiful and terrible thing. To me it is like what I see when I am dreaming. I say, I have made this. How can a man make such a thing? No one can do it unless he has the knowledge. I feel that I have borne children.

Suggested Questions

1. Do you think this mask shows the face of a woman or a man? What do you see that makes you think so?
2. Do you ever wear masks? Why do you wear them? **Explain the use of the Sande Society mask.**
3. What do you think the mask is made of? What do you see that makes you think so? **Explain what raffia is.** How would it look when the wearer moves?
4. Looking at this mask, identify at least two ways in which Mende women beautify themselves. (*Hairstyle and scarification marks.*) How do the women you see every day beautify themselves?
5. Describe the hairstyle on this mask. Based on this hairstyle, what can we deduce about Mende attitudes about women's hair? How much time might such a hairdo require? What kind of skills would one need to possess to create such a hairstyle?
6. This mask is not a portrait of a particular woman but rather a generalized symbolic mask representing Mende womanhood. What aspects of the mask suggest that? What aspects of ideal physical beauty are suggested? What desirable character qualities are suggested?
7. There is an animal somewhere on this mask. What kind of animal is it? What is the bird doing? **Explain why the artist might have put it on this particular mask.**
8. What materials do you think the artist used to make this mask? What do you see that makes you think that? What are some of the differences between raffia and wood? What different effects might each of these materials convey while the wearer dances?

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