

*Discovering the Story:  
A City and Its Culture*

*ART OR ARTIFACT?*

A Social Studies Lesson  
for Grades K-3



Mary Louise McLaughlin (1847-1939), The Cincinnati Pottery Club (1879-1890), Frederick Dallas Hamilton Road Pottery (1865-1882), United States (Cincinnati)  
*Ali Baba Vase*, 1880  
Gift of the Women's Art Museum Association, 1881.239



Maria Longworth Nichols Storer (The Rookwood Pottery Company)  
*Aladdin Vase*, 1882  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. James J. Gardner, 2002.94

The lesson *Art or Artifact?* is based on

*Aladdin Vase*

by Maria Longworth Nichols Storer

and

*Ali Baba Vase*

by Mary Louise McLaughlin

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Based on *Aladdin Vase* by Maria Longworth Nichols Storer  
and *Ali Baba Vase* by Mary Louise McLaughlin

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## CONCEPT

In this lesson, students will closely examine the Museum's *Ali Baba Vase* and *Aladdin Vase* and in doing so learn the definitions of art and artifact. Students will understand the difference between these terms and will be able to decide whether these objects are in fact works of art, artifacts or both. Students will go on to apply this knowledge to objects in school and at home and will discuss the use of artifacts in the study of history.

The teacher will facilitate students in hands-on applications and study through pre-videoconferencing classroom activities, a videoconference visit with Cincinnati Art Museum Staff and post-videoconferencing lesson activities. Emphasis is on student understanding of the terms art and artifact.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand and apply their knowledge of the terms *art* and *artifact*.
- Students will learn that historians use artifacts to gather information about people from the past.
- Students will learn that objects in the Museum's collection can be both a work of art and an artifact.

*"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."*

Pablo Picasso

## Teacher Preparation

### CLASS PERIODS REQUIRED

- 1 (30-50 min.) period for Pre-Lesson Activities
- 1 50-min. class period for Videoconference
- 1 (30-50 min.) period for Post-Lesson Activities
- 1 to 2 (30-50 min.) periods for Art Enrichment Activity (optional)

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Refer to [Background Information](#) for more on the *Ali Baba Vase* and the *Aladdin Vase* and the artists who created them. Background Information has been written for teachers to review before the lesson and then share with students.

### VIDEO

Share the [ceramics video](#) with your students prior to the videoconference. The video depicts archival film from Rookwood Pottery and an interview with a Museum curator on the two vases. This video is an excellent resource that will help to prepare students for the videoconference.

Video Duration – approx. six and a half minutes.

*"Art is idea. It is not enough to draw, paint, and sculpt. An artist should be able to think."*

Gordon Woods

## PRE- VIDEOCONFERENCE

### VOCABULARY

Definitions can be found in the [Glossary](#) on the [Discovering the Story](#) Website.

Art  
Artifact  
Culture  
Ceramics  
Historian

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is art?
- What is an artifact?

### MATERIALS

- Modeling Clay
- Paper
- Crayons
- Colored Pencils
- Print Reproductions of the Museum's [Ali Baba Vase](#) and [Aladdin Vase](#)
- Set of *Decision Cards* (index cards that read ART or ARTIFACT – one of each for each student)

### PROCEDURE

Teacher will:

- Ask students to draw a detailed picture of something they think is pretty (flower, tree, bug).
- Ask each student to create a small pinch pot that can be used to hold paper clips or other small classroom objects.
- Hang all drawings in one area of the classroom and place all pinch pots in another area of the classroom. Display areas should be close enough to each other for ease of compare and contrast activities.

- Ask students to describe their drawings and pinch pots. Ask students the following questions:
  - Which are nicer to look at? The drawings or the pinch pots? Why?
  - Which are more useful? The drawings or the pinch pots? Why?
- Review *Guiding Questions* with students and introduce the concepts of Art and Artifact.
  - Art: The creation of beautiful or significant objects by an individual or group of individuals.
  - Artifact: An object produced or shaped by a person, especially a tool, weapon or ornament, that is of historical interest for future generations.

*Teacher may choose to show various examples of each – Art (drawings, paintings, sculptures) and Artifact (desk, book, toy, etc.), and discuss how each can tell future historians about who we are.*
- Inform students they have each just created a work of art and an artifact; ask them to decide which is which. (*The drawing is the work of art and the pinch pot is the artifact.*)
- Display print reproductions of the Museum’s *Ali Baba Vase* and *Aladdin Vase*. Ask students to describe the vases; encourage the use of descriptive language.
- Ask students if these vases are works of art or artifacts. Distribute *Decision Cards* to students. *Each student will receive an ART and ARTIFACT Decision Card.*
- Have each student place the *Decision Card* in front of the pictures of the vases. Students must decide if they think the vases are works of art or artifacts.
- Discuss the results with the students.
  - Why did they think the Museum vases were works of art?
  - Why did they think the Museum vases were artifacts?
  - Could the Museum vases be both works of art and artifacts? *YES!*
- Review with students the Background Information and Video on the Museum’s vases. Ask students again whether they think the Museum vases are works or art or artifacts or both.
- Discuss that often works from a museum’s collection are considered artifacts because they can tell us how people lived during the late eighteenth century, but they are also works of art because they are beautiful and were created by an artist.
- Have students, individually or as a class, create a list of questions to ask the Museum staff about the vases during a scheduled videoconference. Fax or email these questions to the Cincinnati Art Museum. If time allows, the videoconferencing instructor will answer student questions. Email the questions to [emily.holtrop@cincyart.org](mailto:emily.holtrop@cincyart.org) prior to the videoconference.

*“Culture is something that evolves out of the simple, enduring elements of everyday life; elements most truthfully expressed in the folk arts and crafts of a nation.”*

Thor Hansen

## VIDEOCONFERENCE

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will interact with the Cincinnati Art Museum staff through a sixty-minute [videoconference](#).
- Students will learn about Cincinnati history from 1850 to 1900.
- Students will use Museum objects to reinforce activities completed in preparation for this [videoconference](#).

### CONCEPT

A [videoconference](#) conducted by the Cincinnati Art Museum staff extends student learning through emphasis on the viewing and discussion of art objects. During this [videoconference](#) with the Museum, students will explore Cincinnati art history and the methods and practices of many of the artists working in the city.

### SCHEDULE

- **5 minutes** Introduction to CAM staff (*This is also buffer time in case of connection complications*)
- **10 minutes** Brief discussion of student pre-videoconferencing activities.
- **10 minutes** Museum staff will lead an interactive discussion with students on the history of Cincinnati from 1850-1900
- **20 minutes** Museum staff will lead students in an in-depth investigation of selected Museum objects.  
**Objects Include**
  - [Bedstead](#) by Benn Pitman, Adelaide Nourse Pitman, and Elizabeth Nourse
  - [Reception Dress](#) by Selina Cadwallader
  - [Aladdin Vase](#) by Maria Longworth Nichols Storer
  - [Ali Baba Vase](#) by M. Louise McLaughlin
  - [Vase and Dedication Medallion](#) by Tiffany & Co.
- **10 minutes** Questions and student sharing of art projects.
- **5 minutes** Closing (*This is also buffer time in case of connection complications*)

## POST- VIDEOCONFERENCE

### MATERIALS

Set of *Decision Cards* (index cards that read ART or ARTIFACT—one of each for each student)

### PROCEDURE

Teacher will:

- Review with students what they learned during the videoconference with the Museum, students should be more aware of the history of not only the *Ali Baba Vase* and *Aladdin Vase*, but also the city of Cincinnati.
- Review with students the terms *art* and *artifact*. Were the objects they looked at on the videoconference works of art, artifacts or both? If both, what did each object tell us about the time it was created?
- Have students look for objects in class that could be considered both works of art and artifacts (*desk, lunch bag, flower pot*). Brainstorm as a group what they think an historian would learn about this classroom object if found 200 years from now. Do they think it would be in a museum of the future? Why? Why not?
- Ask students to bring an object from home that could be both an artifact and a work of art. Ask students to present their objects, sharing with the class why their objects are both an artifact and a work of art.
- Have students write what they think an historian would learn about their object if found 200 years from now. Do they think it would be in a museum of the future? Why? Why not?

### ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

- Students understood and applied their knowledge of the terms *art* and *artifact*.
- Students learned that historians use works of art and artifacts to gather information about people from the past.
- Students learned that objects in the Museum's collection could be both works of art and artifacts.



## ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

### NATIONAL STANDARDS: SOCIAL STUDIES

#### Grades K-4 History

**Standard 7:** Understands selected attributes and historical developments of societies in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe.

#### Grades K-2

**Benchmark 3:** Understands the daily life, history and beliefs of a country as reflected in dance, music or the other art forms (such as paintings, sculptures and masks).

### NATIONAL STANDARDS: VISUAL ARTS

**Standard 2:** Knows how to use structures (e.g., sensory qualities, organizational principles, expressive features) and functions of art.

#### Grades K-4

**Benchmark 1:** Knows the differences among visual characteristics (e.g., color, texture) and purposes of art (e.g., to convey ideas).

**Standard 4:** Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

#### Grades K-4

**Benchmark 1:** Knows that the visual arts have both a history and a specific relationship to various cultures.

**Benchmark 3:** Knows how history, culture and the visual arts can influence each other.

### OHIO STANDARDS: SOCIAL STUDIES

**History:** Students use materials drawn from the diversity of human experience to analyze and interpret significant events, patterns, and themes in the history of Ohio, the United States, and the world.

#### Grades K-2

**Benchmark C:** Compares daily life in the past and present demonstrating an understanding that while basic human needs remain the same, they are met in different ways in different times and places.

**People in Societies:** Students use knowledge of perspectives, practices and products of cultural, ethnic and social groups to analyze the impact of their commonality and diversity within local, national, regional and global settings.

#### Grades K-2

**Benchmark B:** Identifies ways that different cultures within the United States and the world have shaped our national heritage.

## OHIO STANDARDS: VISUAL ARTS

**Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts:** Students understand the impact of visual art on the history, culture and society from which it emanates. They understand the cultural, social and political forces that, in turn, shape visual art communication and expression. Students identify the significant contributions of visual artists to cultural heritage. They analyze the historical, cultural, social and political contexts that influence the function and role of visual art in the lives of people.

### Grades K-4

**Benchmark A:** Recognizes and describes visual art forms and artworks from various times and places.

**Benchmark B:** Identifies art forms, visual ideas and images and describes how they are influenced by time and culture.

**Benchmark C:** Identifies and describes the different purposes people have for creating works of art.

**Analyzing and Responding:** Students identify and discriminate themes, media, subject matter and formal technical and expressive aspects in works of art. They understand and use the vocabulary of art criticism to describe visual features, analyze relationships and interpret meanings in works of art. Students make judgments about the quality of works of art using the appropriate criteria.

### Grades K-4

**Benchmark A:** Identifies and describes the visual features and characteristics in works of art.

**Benchmark B:** Applies comprehension strategies (e.g., personal experience, art knowledge, emotion and perceptual and reasoning skills) to respond to a range of visual artworks.

**Valuing the Arts/Aesthetic Reflection:** Students understand why people value visual art. They present their beliefs about the nature and significance of selected artworks and the reasons for holding these beliefs. Students reflect on and respect diverse points of view about artworks and artifacts.

### Grades K-4

**Benchmark A:** Applies basic reasoning skills to understand why works of art are made and valued.

**Benchmark B:** Forms own opinions and views about works of art and discusses them with others.

**Benchmark C:** Distinguishes and describes the aesthetic qualities in works of art.