

THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Do- It- Yourself

The Ancient Greeks

Key Stage 2

This is one of our range of DIY resources, which aim to provide you with what you need to teach your pupils in the galleries. We hope that the following teaching ideas include some which are suitable for your needs. As we do not know your pupils, or the specific aims of your visit, these ideas may need adapting, but we hope they will act as a springboard. Each idea includes signpost sequences all of which point to pupil interaction with the exhibits, *example prompt questions written in italics*, and information. Many are followed by suggested extension ideas that can take place in the galleries. 'Into Action' sheets, which are linked to these teaching ideas, are available for pupils to use in the galleries.

When you are talking in front of any work of art in the Museum, be very careful not to touch it yourself. Also, as the children sit down in front of the painting, make sure that they can all see the painting – the gallery lighting can make this difficult if the children sit too close. Often it is better to sit the children a little further back to give them a good view.

Aims of 'The Ancient Greeks' session

- To encourage children to fully engage with the objects in the Greek gallery and to feel the power of 'real' artefacts.
- To enable children to make their own discoveries through careful looking, selection and interpretation of real evidence.
- To gain confidence and develop historical and reasoning skills.

- To move from observation, to deduction and into the realms of their own imagination through the first hand experience of artefacts.
- To develop specific thinking skills needed to learn through objects.

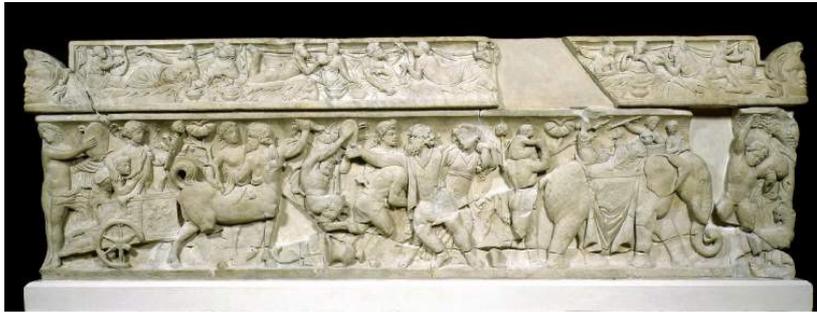
Galleries used in this session:

Gallery 21

You will need to bring:

- One clipboard for each pupil
- Paper and pencil for each pupil
- Photocopied 'Into Action' sheets

Teaching idea – The Real World



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No: GR.I.1835

Approximate Timing:
30 minutes

Location: Gallery 21,
The Pashley sarcophagus

This activity helps children to link historical evidence and their knowledge of the natural world. It combines whole class discussion with focused group searches for images and objects.

Sit the children facing the Pashley Sarcophagus..

How is this museum going to help us learn about the Ancient Greeks?

Ask the children why they have come to the Fitzwilliam Museum. Do not assume that the children understand that they are surrounded with real Ancient Greek objects. Encourage the children to think about museums and first hand evidence, questions you could ask:

- *Where were these objects made?*
- *When were they made?*
- *Who made them?*
- *What are they made from?*
- *How were they used?*
- *Do they look they same now as they did when they were new?*
- *How have they changed?*
- *How did they get here to the museum?*

Think about colour – these objects were once brightly painted. Discuss why some are broken or have bits missing.

Ask if the Ancient Greeks only had stone, metal and clay in their world?

Where is the other material - wood, fur, leather, plants? They have decayed and rotted away. Where is the evidence of this? On the pots and in the carvings.

Objects give us information about the people who made, owned and used them.

Think of the things in your bedroom, what do these tell us about you?

Examples might be favourite sports, music, the kinds of books you like, which people are important to you, places you've visited. *Will these things be around in 2,500 years time?*

Guided looking: The Pashley sarcophagus

Focus the children on the sarcophagus itself. Explain that this is an ancient object, used to hold the body of a dead person. It is carved from marble and was put inside a catacomb not buried in the earth, which is why it is in such good condition but there are still bits missing. It is covered in detailed carvings of a celebration.

What can you see?

The things we can see on the coffin can give us some clues about life in ancient times. For each of the children's responses, consider whether they are seeing:

- A real human form or a Mythological creature (look closely for tails and check the legs!)
- A real animal (elephant, panther, snake)
- A creature from mythology (satyr, centaur, gods)
- A made object (chariot, pot, basket)
- A natural object (grapes, vines, branches, flowers)

The carvings show a procession celebrating the return of Dionysus from the East. As well as being the god of wine, he was also the god of rebirth, which may explain his presence here celebrating triumph over death.

Independent looking and sketching

Divide the class in half. Ask them to use the Pashley sarcophagus and the other objects in this half of the gallery to find out about the real plants and animals that the Ancient Greeks showed in their art. At this point, they could sketch what they see. Encourage them to look closely to draw the plants and animals as they are shown on the objects, rather than how the children themselves would show them. There are birds, worms, lizards, fruit swags on the urns next to the sarcophagus.

Feedback

Why might the Greeks have chosen things like this to decorate their objects?

Invite the children to share their sketches or things they have seen, either in pairs or with the whole group. This was the natural world that the Ancient Greeks saw all around them; things they were familiar with.

These animals and plants link with certain gods and goddesses:

Panther, grape & vine leaves	Dionysus,
Owls and olives	Athena.
Domestic Pets and wheat	Demeter
Flowers and pomegranates	Persephone

Animals	Plants
Horse	Wheat
Ram	Pomegranate
Dolphin/fish	Grapes
Squid	Vine leaves
Goat	Olives
Lion	Flowers
Panther	
Ox	
Donkey	
Bird	

Teaching idea: Greek Life

What did the Greeks do?

This activity helps children to feel a sense of connection to the people of the past through the objects that they left behind. It introduces the idea of **primary** and **secondary** evidence, for example a pot is the actual 'thing' and the painting on it is secondary to that – it doesn't mean that these paintings are 'factual evidence' of an event, material evidence gives only an incomplete picture of what life was like in the past.



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Approximate timing: 20 minutes

Teaching location: Gallery 21

Move to the other side of the gallery and sit the children in the space in front of the small Herakles figure.

No: GRI.1864

Now we know a little bit more about the natural world that the Ancient Greeks lived in, but what did the ancient people do all day?

Explain that we are going to find out the answer to the question:

'What did the Greeks do?' using evidence from the gallery. Help the children to recognise that there are two different kinds of evidence available:

- **Real objects:** such as coins, jewellery, helmets, mirrors, pots
- **Pictures and carvings:** showing scenes from myths, battles, parties.

Give the children around 10 minutes to search this end of the gallery to find evidence of what the Greeks did.

They may find evidence that people engaged in the following pursuits:

- Playing music (flutes, lyres on statue and pot paintings)
- Playing sports (javelin, discus, wrestling)
- Trading (coins)
- Farming (Statuettes of ploughing and animals)
- Making themselves beautiful (jewellery, mirrors, cosmetic pots)
- Partying (wine jars and drinking cups)
- Worshipping gods and goddesses (votive statues, temple artefacts)

Bring the group back together again and repose the question, *'what did the Greeks do?'*

Encourage the children to give evidence for their answers, and help them to understand that the evidence in the museum is unlikely to tell the whole story. Only certain types of people and activities are represented –Who might be missing and why?

- *Did everyone play sports?*
- *Who was invited to these types of parties?*
- *What type of person did this jewellery belong to?*
- *Who would have used the coins?*

Teaching idea: Missing People – The story of a pot

This whole class activity enables children to uncover a technology used by the Ancient Greeks. It introduces the people involved in the production of pots and their role in the broader context of Ancient Greek society. The activity builds up a chain of 'hidden people' and it works well if a child takes on each role as it is defined. So by the end of the activity there will be up to 7 children, standing in front of the class, forming a row of the characters in the story.

Approximate timing: 20 - 30 minutes

Location: Gallery 21.

Seat the children in front of case 21 and choose a large pot everyone can see clearly. And one that has a painting on it of one or more people.

Can you imagine how many missing people there are in all the objects in the Greek Gallery?

By unpicking the production, sale and use of one pot this activity introduces the children to a cross section of society, to workers and craftsmen vital to the economy of this ancient civilization and yet often omitted from the History books.

I. The Clay Digger

If I told you that this pot was full of the 'spirits' of all the ancient Greeks that had anything to do with it, what sort of 'spirits' do you think it might contain?

The children usually start by telling you about the people painted on the pot, now take them on a bit further.

Let's go back to the beginning of this pot's story, how did it start? What was it before it became a pot? Clay, that had to be dug from the ground, Who dug the clay? low paid worker or slave.

What did they use to dig the clay? children often say "hands", help them deduce – have they seen metal in the galleries – what sort – so the Greeks could have made metal spades even if there isn't one in the gallery.

What sort of work was the clay digging, easy or heavy? Hard work, need to be strong. Choose your clay digger and bring them to the front.

2 . The Clay Cleaner

So we've got some clay, but it's from the ground so what will be mixed in with it?

Earth and stones that have to be removed - how - get the children to think out the possibilities.

Pick the stones out one by one? Very slow.

What happens if you add water to clay - could this help? How?

The children may come up with sieving, or other feasible solutions, all good thinking.

The Greeks actually watered down the clay, put it in a pit, allowed the debris to sink, tapped off the fine clay suspension from the top. Whatever the children suggest as a solution the next stage is removing the water - get the children to think it out - the Greeks did it by evaporation in shallow trays in the hot sun.

So what sort of person would have done this work, is it skilled? Well paid? No another worker or slave. Choose your clay cleaner and bring them to the front.

3. The Potter

So now we have clean clay and someone can start making the pot.

Who makes the pot? A potter.

But how did he do it? Build on the children's knowledge of the various ways clay can be shaped. Get them to go and observe more pots closely to decide if they were coiled, made from slabs, or made on a potter's wheel. They were formed on wheels. The evidence is how smooth and symmetrical the pots are and the marks made by drawing the clay upwards whilst it turned on the wheel. Draw out from the children their ideas on what the wheels were made of and how they would have been powered - by a slave or assistant spinning it to the instructions of the potter (the pedal was invented by the Romans). Look at the different elements of the different pot forms - *how many handles does it have, where are they positioned? Why do you think that is? - Think about pouring and carrying.*

Do you think the potters were skilled or unskilled workers?

Does this give you any more ideas about why they wouldn't have dug and cleaned their own clay?

This introduces the division of labour and the slave underclass which was essential to the success of the Greek economy. Choose your potter and bring them to the front.

4. The Pot-Painter

So the pot has been made, what happens next? Ask the children to look again at the pot and draw their attention to the decoration. This was often carried out by a specialist pot-painter.

What do we think of his skill all these thousands of years later? Encourage the children to look closely at the surface of the pot. What colours do they use? – You could talk about Red figure ware and black figure ware – notice what colour the figures are painted – red or black?

Can you work out how the decoration was added? If you look closely at the pot you can see that some coloured areas are slightly raised and that details have been scratched into the surface. Liquid clay was painted on either as an outline or as a silhouette with the details scratched into the slip or painted on top with diluted clay in other colours. Choose your pot-painter and bring them to the front.

5. The Wood Collector

Is the pot ready to use straight away? The clay has not yet been hardened ready for use. *How was this done?* The children may be able to tell you about kilns and the process of heating the pot at high temperature.

How would Ancient Greek potters have powered their kilns in the days before electricity? Burning wood- *Who do you think would have collected up the firewood and tended the kiln? Would it have been another labourer or slave or the same one who collected the clay?* Choose your wood collector and bring them to the front.

6. The Merchant

What happens to it now? Ask the children to think about why the potter made pots. The potter and the pot painter would both be dependent on money to pay for food and other expenses for themselves and their family. This was a breakthrough in Ancient times as it signalled a move away from barter to the use of coins.

Where would the pot have been sold? The potters in the big cities had stalls in the agora. More successful potters may have used specialist pot merchants and so the pot might have been packed carefully and transported across land or sea to get to the merchant's shop. Choose your merchant and bring them to the front.

7. The Wealthy Citizen

Who would have bought a pot like this?

Ask the children if they think the pot would have been expensive to buy.

Look at the size, shape and quality of the pot. Would it have been an expensive object? Yes.

Who would have gone to the agora to buy it? Women weren't able to go shopping, their husband or a slave would have done it instead. Choose your wealthy citizen and bring them to the front.

What did they use the pot for? Could it have been for a special occasion like a party? Might the wealthy citizen that bought it be having a special celebration?

At the end of the activity you should have 7 people representing the production and sale of this one pot. *Can you imagine how many missing people there are in all the objects in the Greek Gallery?* Encourage the children to think about those people as they work in the gallery and see how many more they can find.

You can extend this story to bring the pot into the present day by adding:

an archaeologist, a conservator, a museum curator, a museum teacher and a school group looking at the pot!

Close observation and deduction

The remainder of the session allows children time to focus their attention on particular objects and themes, and to use the gallery to feed their curiosity.

Approximate timing: 30 minutes

Location: Gallery 21

Distribute a selection of the Into Action sheets – children may wish to select particular topics for themselves, or you may prefer to divide them into groups. In any case, it is a good idea for children to work from different sheets to avoid overcrowding in any one area. Encourage adult helpers to engage with the children, talk about what they are doing, and to ask their own questions. They may be supported by being given Factsheets in advance of the visit (see below) for their own background information.

In the final five minutes, ask children to have one last look around the gallery to choose their favourite of all the objects. Call everyone together and have individuals answer yes/no questions about their object until the group can guess what they are thinking of: 'what is it made of?', 'is it bigger than a clipboard', 'can you put things in it?' etc. Reflect on interesting learning points and discoveries made during the session and make links with previous or planned work from school.

Resources for 'The Ancient Greeks'

The following "Into Action" sheets are available from the Education Department, and can be found here:

<http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/education/schoolscolleges/selfled/ancientgreeks.html>

- Missing People – Mirror, mirror
- Design a Postcard
- Not to be missed!
- Missing People – True or False
- Which pot for which job?
- Missing People – Find the clues...
- Goddess of the Harvest

The following "Fact Sheets" are available from the Education Department, and can be found here:

<http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/education/learningresources/learningresources.l.html>

- Altars, Libations and Sacrifices
- Athletics
- Childhood and Education
- Clothing
- Drama, Music and Dance
- Greek Influences on the Museum
- Greek Pots
- Metal
- Warfare
- Women
- Writing

Further information about many exhibits is available on our website Pharos –

www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/pharos