



Grade One

Understanding Cultural Diversity

Goal

To enhance understanding of diverse cultures through reading and discussing *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun*; viewing, discussing, and writing about *Ganesha*, *The Pure Land of Amitabha*, and *Sakyamuni as an Ascetic*; participating in a studio activity.

Book: *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun*, Alejandro Cruz, Children's Book Press, San Francisco, 1991.

Focus Art Works: *Ganesha*, 11th-13th century, Khmer people, Cambodia, sandstone
The Pure Land of Amitabha, 15th century, China, polychrome, gilding, and gesso on plaster
Sakyamuni as an Ascetic, Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), China, Wood, fabric, lacquer, and pigment

Art Productions: Glue line drawings
Clay animals
Repeated Lines in a Crayon Resist

Focus Art Work

Ganesha

[Link to enlarged image](#)

Looking at the Work of Art

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is a legend? Discuss the ancient Mexican legend *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun*. Why were the people afraid of Lucia? What lesson can you learn from this legend?
- Tell students the legend of Ganesha and discuss its importance to the Hindu culture. Ask students to think about other stories they have heard (e.g. *The Tortoise and the Hare* from *Aesop's Fables*, etc.)
- Look closely at this statue. What do you see? What looks strange about the figure? Is the figure an animal or a human? What tells you it is an animal? What tells you it is a human?
- Discuss common symbolism of animals. Examples: sly as a fox, brave as a lion, slow as a turtle, etc. Make a list of animals on the board and ask students to think about what each symbolizes. Refer to examples.
- Look closely at the way Ganesha is dressed. Do the clothes on the figure look like your clothes? In what way is this figure dressed differently from you? Locate Cambodia on a map. Do you think the weather is hot or cold in the country of Cambodia, where this statue was made? What is it about the way Ganesha is dressed that makes you say this?
- If you had the head of an elephant, how would your life be different? What are some things that you could do that you cannot do now? Would you like having an elephant's head? Why?
- If you could create a magic, imaginary animal-person, what would it look like? What colors would you paint it? What materials would you use to make your imaginary animal-person?



Ganesha, Khmer, 11th-13th century
Cambodia, Angkor style
Sandstone
Collection of Birmingham Museum of Art; Gift of Dr. and Mrs.
Charles B. Crow Jr. and Mr. and Mrs. William Grant Jr.
1978.73

LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE WORK

Ganesha is a Hindu god of wealth and good fortune, and he is the patron god of merchants and shop-keepers. He can be found everywhere—along the roadsides, in household shrines, in temples, and in shops. The son of the Hindu gods Shiva and Parvati, Ganesha is always shown as a pot-bellied boy with the head of an elephant.

One of the most popular accounts of how Ganesha (the boy) got his elephant head is told in a sacred Hindu text. According to legend, his mother, Parvati, ordered her son to stand guard while she took her bath in the river. While he was guarding the path, Shiva, Parvati's husband, came along and wanted to pass. The boy refused to let him through the river. The boy and Shiva fought, and Shiva cut off the boy's head, which rolled into the river. Parvati was broken-hearted. To pacify her, Shiva ordered the gods to find a head. The gods returned with the head of an elephant, attached it to the boy's body, and brought the boy back to life. A pleased Parvati took the boy to Shiva, where he apologized and was forgiven by Shiva and the gods. Much pleased, Shiva adopted the boy and named him Ganesha.

The statue of Ganesha is carved from one large block of sandstone. The god is dressed in the royal clothing of the Khmer people of Cambodia: pants, elaborate jewelry, and a crown. In his right hand he holds a ball of sweetmeats. In his left, he holds a part of his broken-off tusk, which legend says he used to write sacred words. It is thought that this statue would have been brightly painted when new.

Focus Art Work

The Pure Land of Amitabha

[Link to enlarged left panel](#)
[Link to enlarged right panel](#)

Looking at the Work of Art

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Look at the mural and discuss Buddhism. Ask the students to describe what they see.
- Ask the students to look closely at the panels and to count as many figures as they can see. Discuss the garments the figures are wearing. Do these garments look like the clothes we wear?
- Discuss the flowers, fruits, and especially the jewel trees. Ask the students to name the items depicted around the figures and on the trees.



The Pure Land of Amitabha, China, Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Polychrome, gilding, and gesso on plaster
 Collection of Birmingham Museum of Art; Museum purchase with funds provided by the 1987 Museum Dinner and Ball
 1988.34.1-2
 [127 x 126 inches]

- Explain to the students that art is created by all cultures and sometimes is directly related to the religion(s) of the culture. Ask the students to think about art and symbols of their own religions.
- Compare the images of the *Beaded Elephant Mask* (found in lesson plan *Social Skills and Responsibility*), *Ganesha*, and *The Pure Land of Amitabha* in a discussion of the different cultures. Have the students list the similarities and differences of the various cultures.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE WORK

This mural was originally from a Chinese Buddhist temple of the Ming Dynasty. It is made of mud mortar board bound with chopped straw and covered with a layer of cloth that has plaster on it.

Murals such as this were sometimes used in the temples as backdrops for groups of sculpture. The two panels are depictions of Buddha, a religious leader who lived in India sometime around 560-480 B.C. and was the founder of the world religion, Buddhism.

Buddhism emerged in India in the sixth century B.C. as a Hindu reform movement. A man named Buddha, who became enlightened through years of meditation, founded the movement. Buddhism emphasizes three basic points: charity to all creatures, the equality of all beings, and the practice of moderation. The goal of Buddhism is to achieve nirvana, the final state of eternal bliss.

It is thought that these two large panels were once part of a larger composition of the *Sukhavati Paradise of Amitabha Buddha*. Amitabha is the Buddha of Infinite Light, the most widely respected of the various Buddhas who presides over the Sukhavati, or Western Paradise.

The Sukhavati is shown in these wall panels as a beautiful place filled with a rich diversity of flowers and fruits, and adorned with jewel trees. These jewel trees are of many colors and embellished with the seven treasures: gold, silver, beryl, crystal, coral, red pearls, and emeralds. Also depicted on the mural are thirty-three figures of musicians, monks, and possibly several donor portraits as they all crowd around the central figures of Amitabha Buddha.

Easily understood by followers of Amitabha Buddha, murals such as this were created to further explain the visions of Paradise described in Buddhist writings.

Focus Art Work

Sakyamuni as an Ascetic

[Link to enlarged image](#)

Looking at the Work of Art

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Look at the focus art work and discuss Buddhism. Have the students look at the sculpture and describe what they see.
- Ask the students to identify the material that the statue is made of.
- Discuss briefly the story legend of Sakyamuni and ask the students about the meaning of the term “legend.”
- Ask the students to look closely at the sculpture and describe what they see in relation to the figure’s emotions. Does this Buddha look like he is happy, sad, thoughtful, etc.?
- Compare and contrast this sculpture with *Ganesha* and with the Buddha figures depicted in *The Pure Land of Amitahba*.



Sakyamuni as an Ascetic,
China, Yuan dynasty (1279-1368)
Wood, fabric, lacquer, and pigment
Collection of Birmingham Museum of Art;
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William M. Spencer III
1979.316

LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE WORK

Sakyamuni as an Ascetic is a sculpture carved from a single piece of wood that was hollowed out from the bottom. This opening or chamber in the statue originally would have been used to hold relics to sanctify the image. This cavity also helped in the drying out of the block of wood. Wood that has not been hollowed out will crack from the outside in, whereas wood that has been hollowed out will dry much more evenly. The whole of this image was then covered with lacquered cloth and finally gilded and painted. Traces of blue and red pigment remain that highlight the hair and other features of the figure.

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This statue is a replica of Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha. The first Buddhists looked upon him as a great teacher and model on whose ideals they could base their own lives. Sakyamuni placed great importance on the values of self-help and self-denial or the renunciation of desires.

This particular statue depicts that time in the life of Sakyamuni when he was in the midst of very stern religious practices. So intent was he in these morally strict practices that after six years his strength was extremely reduced. Legend repeats that his mother was so worried about his health that she came down from the heavens to plead with him to give up these practices. Sakyamuni relented and retreated to a river where he bathed and accepted food. He soon retired to a grove of trees where he eventually attained the ultimate awakening. The last advice of Sakyamuni to his followers was “All composite things must pass away. Strive onward vigilantly.”

Glue Line Drawings

OBJECTIVE

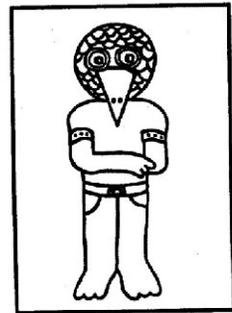
- The students will view Ganesha and discuss the legend behind the statue. The students will create an original drawing of an imaginary animal-person.

VOCABULARY

Statue
Legend
Glue line drawing

MATERIALS

- 12” x 18” colored construction paper
- Black glue (Add black tempera paint to glue)
- Pencils
- Oil pastels



PROCEDURE

A. View the Museum focus art work and discuss the legend of how the boy acquired an elephant head. Have students think of an imaginary animal-person to draw in their picture.

B. Activity

1. Using a pencil, draw the animal-person (sitting or standing) on the construction paper. Make the drawings very simple; do not add too many small details.
2. Outline the pencil lines with a thick line of glue by tracing over the pencil lines. Allow glue to dry.
3. Using oil pastels, color in the creature.

EVALUATION

The teacher will evaluate the drawings based on originality and on students' recognition of vocabulary words.

EXTENSIONS

- Have the students write a new legend to go along with their drawings.
- Have students name their creatures.

Alabama Course of Study Visual Arts (Bulletin 1998, No. 17), first grade

#1-Identify art associated with various cultures

#34-Use art media and processes to express ideas, feelings, moods

Clay Animals

OBJECTIVE

- The students will view and discuss *Ganesha*.
- The students will create a three-dimensional decorative clay animal.

VOCABULARY

Stylized

Three-dimensional

Decorative

MATERIALS

- Alabama red clay or modeling clay
- Wooden clay tools
- Pencils or sticks
- Acrylic paints, various colors
- Small paint brushes

PROCEDURE

A. Discuss religious traditions in art. Refer to the *Beaded Elephant Mask* (from the lesson plan *Social Skills and Responsibility*) as an example of an art form from Africa. Compare and contrast the elephant mask with the Hindu *Ganesha*. Locate Cameroon, Africa, and India on the map.

B. Activity

1. Demonstrate the forming of a simple pinch pot by rolling a golf-sized piece of clay into a ball, pressing a thumb into the center of the ball, and turning and pinching the sides of the ball to “open” it into a bowl form.
2. The student will:
 - a. Form a pinch pot from the clay to create the animal’s body.
 - b. Roll coils or pinch small pieces of clay to add to the body, keeping the entire form very stylized and simplified. Add necessary details to form whatever animal is desired (owls, ducks, toucans, pigeons, horses, cats, fish, turtles, etc.).

- c. Allow the animal sculpture to dry thoroughly, then fire the sculpture.
- d. Paint the sculpture with acrylic paints using small fine brush strokes to create floral motifs and repeated patterns.

EVALUATION

The teacher will evaluate the sculptures based on individuality and on students' recognition of the vocabulary words.

Alabama Course of Study Visual Arts (Bulletin 1998, No. 17), first grade

- #1-Identify art associated with various cultures
- #2-Compare differences in artistic styles
- #25-Use a variety of three-dimensional processes and materials

A Jewel Tree

OBJECTIVE

- The students will view and discuss the wall panels, *The Pure Land of Amitahba*, and create a collage using symmetrical shapes cut and decorated in the likeness of the jewel tree images depicted in the panels.

VOCABULARY

Symmetrical
Collage
Tree
Jewel
Curving line

MATERIALS

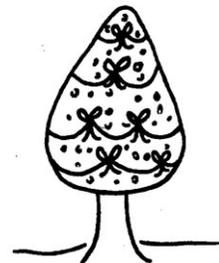
- 12" x 18" sheets of black construction paper
- 9" x 12" sheets of red and green construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Gold glitter or gold glitter pens
- Plastic crystals and beads in various colors
- Crayons or oil pastels

PROCEDURE

A. View and discuss the focus art work *The Pure Land of Amitahba*, paying particular attention to the jewel trees and the gilded line details. Discuss the fact that these trees resemble our Christmas trees.

B. Activity

1. Demonstrate folding a sheet of paper in half lengthwise.



Define symmetry.

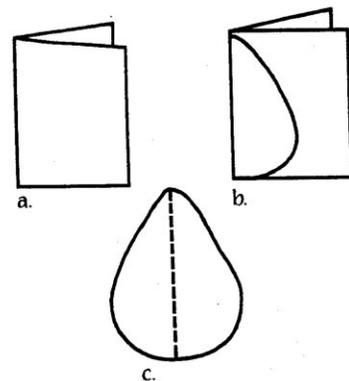
2. Demonstrate where and what a folded edge is.
3. The student will:
 - a. Fold a 9" x 12" sheet of green construction paper in half length-wise.
 - b. Draw a curving line to create one-half of an egg shape (see b).
 - c. Keeping the paper folded, cut on the line and through both thicknesses of the paper.
 - d. Open the green "tree" shape and glue it onto the 12" x 18" black background paper.
 - e. Cut curved strips of red paper and glue them onto the green tree to resemble the ribbons depicted on the jewel trees of the panels.
 - f. Decorate the trees with the plastic beads and crystal "jewels."
 - g. Finish the collage using crayons, oil pastels, glitter, and glitter pens to add details.

EVALUATION

- Display the jewel tree collages along with the focus art work.
- Evaluate based on individuality of work created and students' recognition of vocabulary and key words.

Alabama Course of Study Visual Arts (Bulletin 1998, No. 17),
first grade

- #1-Identify art associate with various cultures
- #2-Compare differences in artistic styles
- #31-Use different kinds of textures in creating works of art



Sakyamuni in Clay

OBJECTIVE

- The students will view and discuss *Sakyamuni as an Ascetic* and will sculpt and statue from air-dried clay.

VOCABULARY

Sculpture
Clay
Form
Coil
Statue
Buddha
Three-dimensional



MATERIALS

- Alabama red clay or modeling clay
- Small paper plates

- Crayons
- Clay tools or found objects as clay tools (paper clips, toothpicks, etc.)

PROCEDURE

A. View and discuss the Museum focus art work *Sakyamuni as an Ascetic*, noting the seated, head down position of the figure. Discuss the fact that the figure's arms and folded hands seem to create the form of the letter *W*, while the knees and calves of the legs create the form of a backward letter *L*. Also, the shoulders and raised knee seem to create the form of the letter *T*.

B. Activity

1. Demonstrate rolling coils from the clay and forming the coils into the letters discussed.
2. Demonstrate rolling a ball from the clay.
3. The student will:
 - a. Roll three coils of lay as demonstrated by the teacher.
 - b. Roll one small ball of clay as demonstrated by the teacher.
 - c. Form one coil into the letter *W*, one coil into the letter *L*, and one into the letter *T*.
 - d. Attach the formed coils together as shown to create the legs, arms, and body of the figure.
 - e. Attach the ball onto the shoulders (the *T*) to create the head of the figure.
 - f. Finish the sculpture by using the clay tools to press lines and shapes into the form to create various textures; e.g. hair, facial features, clothing, etc.

EVALUATION

Display and discuss the statues, reviewing the letters used to create the figure of Sakyamuni. Evaluate based on individuality of work created and students' recognition of vocabulary.

Alabama Course of Study Visual Arts (Bulletin 1998, No. 17), first grade
 #25-Use a variety of three-dimensional processes and materials