Lesson Title: Living in the Ancient World
Grades: 3-5
Time Required: 2-3 class periods
Subject Areas: Visual Art, Social Studies

Lesson Overview: Students analyze objects from ancient Rome, Greece, and Egypt, drawing inferences about life in the ancient world. Students then create an object and accompanying label that reflects an element of contemporary life.

Standards Addressed:

Social Studies Framework
D2.His.2.3-5. Compare life in specific historical time periods to life today
D2.His.11.3-5. Infer the intended audience and purpose of a historical source from information within the source itself.

National Core Arts Standards
VA:Re.7.1.3a
Speculate about processes an artist uses to create a work of art.
VA:Re.7.2.5a
Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery.
VA:Cn10.1.4a
Create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions.
VA:Cn11.1.4a
Through observation, infer information about time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created.

Learning Objectives:
Students will be able to:

- Discuss how material culture provides information about what is important to a society
- Draw conclusions about life in ancient communities by looking at objects produced by them
- Make comparisons between ancient cultures and their own lives

Artworks in Focus:
Click on the links below to access these images through the Wadsworth’s Public Portal. Once on the portal, click on the image to view the object information. Click on the image again to download a jpeg version of the work. NOTE: The works of art used in this lesson may not currently be on view at the museum.

**Egypt**

- Upper part of a figure of Sakhmet, New Kingdom, c. 1390-1352 BCE
- Canopic jar cover in the form of an ape (Hapy), c. 1070-343 BCE
- Canopic jar covers in the form of a jackal head (Duamutef), c. 1070-343 BCE
- Cat, Ptolemaic period, 3rd-1st century BCE, Egyptian, Bronze, 1917.520

**Greece**

- Cosmetic Box (pyxis) 8th century BCE
- Water jar (hydria), c. 525-510 BCE
- Oil flask (lekythos), c. 490-475 BCE
- Draped warrior, c. 510-500 BCE

**Rome**

- Warrior, 40 BCE – 30 CE
- Bottles, probably 1st century CE
Materials:
- Access to the Artworks in Focus
- Projector and Screen, SMART Board, or equivalent
- Crayola Model Magic® or similar sculpting material
- Paint or markers
- Copies of the Object Label worksheet

Lesson Procedures

Part One: Guided Looking
1. Introduce concept of analyzing works of art to learn about society and culture. Talk about what is important to us today and whether all cultures find importance in the same things.

2. Project the images of ancient objects from the museum’s collection. Tell students to imagine they are archaeologists [someone who studies human cultures in the past by looking at the things people leave behind] and have uncovered these objects. They are going to try to find out as much as possible by looking carefully. Use the following questions to help guide the discussion, sharing information from the Background Information section when necessary to further the discussion:
   - Describe the object. Push students to be as specific and use as many details as possible.
   - What do you think the object is made out of? Do you think this is a man-made material or a material you can find in nature? If it is man-made material, what raw materials do you think you were needed? What colors are the materials?
   - Has the object been decorated in any way? If so, how? What purpose does the decoration serve?
   - How do you think the object was made? Who made it? Was it a single person or many people? Do you think it took a long time? Do you think you could make this object yourself?
   - Who do you think owned this object? Was it a single person? A family? Do you think this person was wealthy? What makes you say that?
   - How old would you say this object is? What clues tell you the object’s age?
   - Can you tell where this object is from? Can you tell the country/part of the world?
   - Where might you find an object like this? In a home? In a public space? If so, what kind of public space? What makes you say that?

3. If you haven’t done so already, share with students the information from the Background Information and have a discussion focusing on the purpose of the object/how it was used. As objects are discussed, make comparisons to current culture. Do we have similar ideas about what is important to us as a society and as individuals? Do we have objects today that are comparable to what they see in the museum? Note: depending on student background knowledge of ancient cultures, additional student research may be needed on the cultures discussed. Depending on the object, discuss:
   - Religious beliefs and ceremonies
   - War and Politics
   - Entertainment
   - Daily Life and the Home
Part Two: Art Activity

1. Tell students to think of an object that is significant to them or that represents something important to society today or your community, drawing from their discussion of ancient objects as inspiration.

2. Have students sculpt the object using Model Magic® or similar sculpting material, being sure to add details like logos, writing, or any other decorative markings.

3. Students can then add color with paint or markers, again paying close attention to details.

4. Hand out copies of the Label Worksheet and ask students to imagine that an archaeologist finds that object 4,000 years from today and puts it in a museum. Create a label for it from the perspective of the writer inside the museum. Think about the following:
   - Who made this object?
   - How might this object have been used?
   - Why did this object survive?
   - What does it tell us about this society?

5. Conclusions by discussing the following question: If we were to put all of the objects into a time capsule, would a future society be able to understand our culture? Why or why not? What is missing?
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Upper part of a figure of Sakhmet,
New Kingdom, 18th dynasty, reign of Amenhotep III, c. 1390 – 1352 bce
Egyptian, Thebes, probably found at the temple of Mut in Karnak
Granodiorite
Gift of Reverend D. W. Marsh and Burgess P. Starr through the courtesy of the Connecticut Historical Society, 1955.103

This bust was originally part of a larger statue of the goddess Sakhmet, who represented violence, disaster, and illness. The lioness head of the goddess, when intact, would have had a complete solar disk crown, identifying her as the daughter of the sun god Ra. Six hundred similar statues were commissioned by Amenhotep III for his mortuary temple in western Thebes. In Egyptian mythology, leonine and feline statues, whether raging lionesses or beneficent cats, were vital to the maintenance of the divine order and, if not placated, might abandon Egypt.

Canopic jar covers in the form of an ape (Hapy) and a jackal head (Duamutef),
Third Intermediate to Late Period, c. 1070 – 343 bce
Egyptian
Limestone
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles K. Wilkinson, 1968.196-97

Canopic jar covers in the form of an ape (Hapy) and a jackal head (Duamutef),
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Canopic jars were made to contain the embalmed viscera removed from the body in the process of mummification. The organs were placed under the protection of the Four Sons of Horus, whose heads form the lids of the jars: Hapy [baboon-headed], Imsety [human-headed], Duamutef [jackal-headed], and Qebehsenuf [falcon-headed].

Cat,
Ptolemaic period,
3rd–1st century bce
Egyptian
Bronze
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917.520

Several Egyptian gods were depicted as felines. This cat probably represents the maternal, protective goddess Bastet, who was associated with the sun god Ra. Ra is represented here by the scarab beetle (symbolizing the rising sun and rebirth) carved between the cat’s ears. A collar-like necklace called an aegis is incised into the bronze, bearing the head of Sakhmet — the ferocious, lion-like alter ego of Bastet — adorned with her distinctive solar disc. Donors placed small bronze cats in temples to honor Bastet in the hope that she would help cure illness or ensure successful childbirth.

TEACHER RESOURCE
thewadsworth.org/teachers

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, School and Teacher Programs
teachers@wadsworthatheneum.org
Cosmetic box (pyxis),
8th century bce
Greek, Attica
Terracotta
Purchased through the gift of
James Junius Goodwin, 1932.220

Pyxides were used to store cosmetics, trinkets, and jewelry, and most of those with horses have been found in women’s graves. Because horses were very costly and only the wealthiest could afford them, the four steeds on the lid of this pyxis and its large size attest to the owner’s status. The surface is covered with linear decoration, typical of pottery from this so-called Geometric Period. The angles, squares, triangles, and zigzags create simple designs of mathematical precision and clarity, which emphasize the shape of the pottery.

Water jar (hydria),
c. 525–510 bce
Greek, Attica
Psiax
Greek, active c. 525–510 bce
Terracotta
The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin
Sumner Collection Fund, 1961.8

This hydria, a vessel used to store water, depicts the harnessing of horses to a chariot, probably in preparation for a race. On the shoulder of the jar, Hercules battles the sea deity Triton as Nereus, called the Old Man of the Sea, looks on. The scene probably relates to the story of Hercules’s eleventh labor to obtain the golden apples of the Hesperides—Hercules first had to learn the location of the apples from Nereus.

Additional information on Greek Hydriai can be found here:
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gkhy/hd_gkhy.htm

Oil flask (lekythos), c. 490–475 bce
Greek, Attica
Brygos Painter
Greek, active c. 490–470 bce
Terracotta
The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund, 1963.40

A goddess, accompanied by a ram, holds a phiale (sacrificial libation dish) and a scepter. She may be Hera and the scene an extract from the Judgment of Paris. The red-figure technique of vase painting was invented in Athens around 530 BCE. An artist covered the surface of the vessel with a clear glaze and then delineated the outline and many details of the figure with a thin black paint. Dark red and white paints were used, along with incised lines, to add dimension and perspective.

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Spartan warrior, c. 510 – 500 bce  
Greek, probably Sparta  
Bronze  
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917.815

The fearsome reputation of the Spartans, Greece’s fiercest fighters, comes through in this figure. He wears a Corinthian helmet, and his closely fitting cloak is wound tightly in diagonal folds. The direction of the crest on the helmet suggests that he may be an officer. More information on Sparta can be found here:  
http://www.pbs.org/empires/thegreeks/background/8a.html

Warrior, perhaps late Republican or Early Imperial, 40 bce–30 ce  
Roman  
Bronze  
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917.820

This warrior wears a Corinthian helmet, worn by Greek foot soldiers in the 6th and 5th centuries bce. The sculpture, however, may be later. Roman sculptors commonly made miniature copies of earlier Greek statues.

Perfume bottle,  
1st century ce  
Roman, Eastern Mediterranean  
Blown and tooled glass  
Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917.609

For more information on the history of perfume in the ancient world, see this blog post from the Getty Museum:  
Object Label Worksheet

1: Title for object: ____________________________

2: Place the object was made: ____________________________

3: Materials the object is made from:

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________________________________________________________________________________________

4: Year object was made: ____________________________

5: Discoveries

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