

Honolulu Museum of Art

Literature through Art



Student Tour Booklet

Penelope

Bronze sculpture
From *The Odyssey* by Homer

Penelope waited patiently for over 20 years for her husband, King Odysseus, to return from the Trojan War. While she waited, many men wanted to marry her, certain that her husband would never return. Penelope was steadfast and remained faithful to her husband. Under pressure, she agreed that when she finished her weaving project, she would select a new husband. Each night, when no one was around, she would undo her weaving. Finally, she could delay no longer. She told her suitors that she would agree to marry whomever could shoot one arrow through a series of 12 small hanging rings. Many men tried but failed. The last man to try was a tired and worn out traveler; he shot his arrow easily through the rings. It was Odysseus, her husband, who was home just in time.



How does the artist help you understand that Penelope was determined to wait for her husband to return?

If you were the sculptor, how would you sculpt the final scene of the story?

Hercules

White marble relief sculpture
From Greek mythology

Hercules was a great hero in ancient Greek and Roman times. Hercules had strong muscles and curly hair. He was well trained to use weapons → bows and arrows, clubs, and swords. He used these weapons to free the world from 12 terrible creatures. After he strangled the ferocious man-eating lion, he wore the lion's head and skin as his cloak. He used his powerful bow and arrows to stop a flock of vicious birds from destroying crops. He fought Hydra, a nine-headed snake who grew two more heads each time he cut off one head. When all the creatures were destroyed, Hercules became a god.



If Hercules were here today what evil would he remove from Earth?

What means would he use?

The Nativity

Oil painting
A story from the Bible

Two thousand years ago, an angel came to a young woman named Mary and told her she was chosen to have a special baby. The baby would be the Son of God and he would be called Jesus. Before the baby was born, Mary and her husband Joseph were traveling to pay their taxes. One night, there was no place to stay except a stable filled with animals. That night baby Jesus was born, so he slept on a bed of hay. A bright light appeared in the sky to announce his birth. Shepherds in the field came to see the baby. Wise men traveled far on camels when they saw the star because they knew a great ruler had been born. They brought him gifts.



How does the artist include so many characters within the circular?

Create the conversation among those visiting the baby.

Poetry and Asian Landscape Painting

Ink on silk
A Chinese scroll painting

At the changing of the seasons, my emotions become sad and lonely. In my wooden hut I dwell in peace. The winds of the mountains sometimes come. And in the coolness and harmony I hear the sound of the branches and trunks.



Write a poem to describe the painting on view today.

Raven

Wood and painted rattle
A Native American legend



When the world was first created, it was in total darkness. A great white bird called Raven wanted to bring light to the world. He heard that the River Chief had a box of light and so he cleverly changed into a small pine needle and dropped into the drinking water of the River Chief's daughter. After the girl drank the needle, the Raven was reborn as the River Chief's grandson. Because the grandfather adored the baby, he gave him special objects to play with. When the chief gave his grandson the Box of Light to play with, the Raven happily changed back into a bird. He escaped through the smoke hole in the roof of the house, turning his feathers to black, holding the box of light tightly in his beak. When he was far enough away from the house, he let out the sun and flooded the world with light.

How does this legend help us connect with the natural world around us?

Saint Roch

Wood and painted sculpture
A popular legend in the Philippines

Long ago and far away, a young man dedicated his life to help those who were sick from a plague. When he himself fell ill, he fled to the forest to keep others from catching his illness. To survive, he drank water from a natural spring. A friendly dog from the village brought him food every day and licked his wounds until he was better. Because Roch was declared a Saint for his work, his image is popular in homes to bring good health. He is seen pointing to his wounded leg, with a dog by his side.



Draw an image of a person or animal who has helped you in your life.

Rama and Sita

Clay relief sculpture
Story from the Mahabarata



The Mahabarata is one of the longest stories ever told. In a favorite chapter, Rama's girlfriend Sita is kidnapped by the evil demon Ravenna and taken to his fortress on a faraway island. Rama asks his friend Hanuman, the Monkey king, to help rescue his true love. Hanuman slips into Ravenna's fortress and tries to convince Sita to follow him back to Rama. She knows to trust Hanuman when she sees he has brought Rama's ring for her. Rama and Sita are soon reunited.

On the next page, describe the characters in the story.

Then draw the next scene of the story.

Ganesha

Stone relief sculpture
A Hindu legend

Ganesha was the elephant-headed son of the Indian God Shiva and his beautiful wife Parvati. This pudgy little boy loved to eat sweet treats and ride around on his rat. Late one night, as he was traveling in the dark, he fell and spilled his bowl of sweets. When the moon laughed at him, he broke off his elephant tusk and angrily threw it at the moon, knocking it out of the sky. The world was suddenly in total darkness. Later, after people complained of the dark nights, Ganesha let the moon come and go in the sky every month.



How do legends help us understand our world?

Shiva and Parvati

Stone relief sculpture
A Hindu Legend

Long ago on top of the highest mountain, Mt. Kailasa, lived Shiva and his wife Parvati and their two children Ganesha and Skanda. An evil demon named Ravenna wanted to overpower Shiva and rule Mt. Kailasa. At the base of the mountain Ravenna pushed and shook the mountain hoping to scare everyone away. Shiva was not bothered by this event, but sat calmly on his bull Nandi, holding his lovely wife, while his children played. His powerful foot trapped Ravenna under the mountain and the family lived in peace.



Describe what it is that makes you feel safe.

Name _____

Teacher _____

School _____

Date _____

**Enjoy the stories and art.
Come back and visit us again!**

Honolulu Museum of Art

**900 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817**

