

# Honolulu Museum of Art

## Literature through Art

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Student Tour Booklet

This booklet contains works of art you may have seen on your recent tour to the Honolulu Museum of Art.

Enjoy the works of art, the stories and activities back in the classroom or at home.

Come visit the Museum again!

# 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?*

# 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.*

# 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?*

# St John the Evangelist

Oil painting  
A story from the Bible

There are many Bible stories of men and women asked to prove their faith in God by doing dangerous acts. John the Evangelist was asked to drink a cup of poisoned wine to test his faith. Before he drank the poison, John blessed the deadly cup. With the blessing, the poisoned wine turned into a snake which slithered away. John did not have to drink the poison and therefore lived a long life. He was later declared a saint for his bravery and faith.



*When you look at this man in the painting, what words describe John's character?*

# Buddha Muchalinda

Bronze sculpture

A story from the Buddhist Sutras

Long ago in India, a young prince was saddened when he saw people suffering from old age, illness, and poverty whenever he left his palace. Determined to help others, he spent time sitting in meditation, thinking about how to stop suffering. When he was deep in thought, it began to rain very hard and the nearby river flooded. The snake Muchalinda coiled his body and lifted the prince above the floodwaters and sheltered him with his seven heads. In time, the prince was known as the Buddha, and he taught people how to live without suffering.



*How does this tiny work of art give a feeling of peace? Where do you sit and think quietly?*

# 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?*

# Moon Goddess and Rabbit

Bronze mirror  
A Chinese legend

A Chinese legend tells the story of a rabbit and toad who lived on the moon with a beautiful goddess. The three are said to be visible during the Mid-Autumn moon. On the moon, the rabbit spends his time pounding the elixir of life with a tall mortar and pestle. The elixir is a powerful medicine to cure illness. The legend says that whenever there is been a deadly illness on earth, the goddess sends the rabbit to earth with the elixir to cure the sick.



*What roll might the toad play in this legend?*

# Rama and Sita

Clay relief sculpture  
Story from the Mahabharata



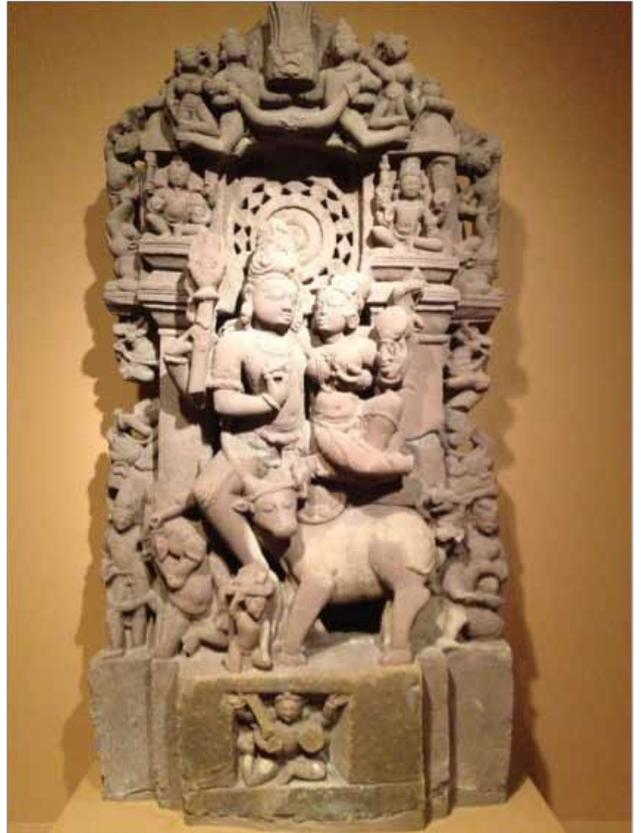
The Mahabharata is one of the longest stories ever told. In a favorite chapter, Rama's girlfriend Sita is kidnapped by the evil demon Ravenna and taken to his fortress on a far-away island. Rama asks his friend Hanuman, the Monkey king, to help rescue his true love. Hanuman slips into Ravenna's fortress 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.

*Draw the next scene of the story.*

# 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.*

# 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 a person or animal who has helped you in your life.*

# 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?*



# Night Stick

Oil painting on canvas  
A contemporary story



This New York City artist, Jane Hammond, asked a poet to create a title for a painting that she would then create. Inspired by the title *Night Stick*, she painted what looks like an open book with comic book images that seem to tell a story. This painting suggests that the viewer imagine the story for the painting.

*Create a story to go with these images. Compare your story with a friend's story to see how different or similar your stories are.*

# Characters and Conversations

Every story has some great characters that engage in conversation.

Pick two people from paintings in the Portrait Gallery.

Look closely at their expressions, dress, and poses. Think about who these people might be.

Imagine the two were to meet. Create their conversation.

