

## CLASS ACTIVITIES

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### BECOME AN ANCIENT GREEK IN NAME ONLY

(Greek transliterated into English and otherwise tinkered with)

**The Goal:** The following activity gives students a sense of the meaning of many ancient Greek names and also builds up their vocabulary, since many English words derive from ancient Greek.

**The Activity:** Photocopy the following list of ancient Greek words, which are arranged in two columns on one sheet, and distribute two to each student. Ask the students to fold each of their two papers in half, then have them move the papers up and down (like a slide rule), matching together one word from each column to make up his or her own ancient Greek name. For instance, Perikles, the names of the famous Athenian statesman of the fifth century B.C., is made up of the words *peri* (“around”) and *kleos* (“glory”), while the name of the philosopher Sokrates comes from the Greek words *isos* (“equal”) and *kratos* (“strength”).

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“up” = ANA  
 “out of” = EK  
 “before” = PRO  
 “in” = EN  
 “with” = SYN  
 “down ” = KATA  
 “with” or “after” = META  
 “beyond” = HYPER  
 “upon” = EPI  
 “beside” = PARA  
 “around” = PERI  
 “under” = HYPO  
 “lead” = AGO  
 “best” = ARISTOS  
 “virtue” = ARETE  
 “glad” = ASMENOS  
 “safe” = ASPHALES  
 “firm,” “sure” = BEBAIOS  
 “help” = BOETHEIA  
 “sweet” = GLYKUS  
 “brave” = ANDREIOS  
 “terrible” = DEINOS  
 “mistress” = DESPOINA  
 “race” = GENOS  
 “woman” = GYNE  
 “mind,” “judgment” = GNOME  
 “people” = DEMOS  
 “gift” = DORON  
 “justice” = DIKE  
 “spear” = DORY  
 “running” = DROMOS  
 “power” = DYNAMIS  
 “peace” = EIRENE  
 “freedom” = ELEUTHERIA  
 “hope” = ELPIS  
 “knowledge,” “understanding” = EPISTEME  
 “love” = EROS  
 “well” = EU  
 “youth” = HEBE  
 “leader” = HEGEMON  
 “pleasure” = HEDONE  
 “sweet” = HEDYS  
 “custom” = ETHOS  
 “quiet” = HESYCHAIOS  
 “wonder” = THAUMA  
 “god, goddess” = THEOS, THEA

HIPPOS = “horse”  
 ISOS = “equal”  
 KATHAROS = “pure”  
 KALOS = “beautiful,” “good”  
 KARDIA = “heart”  
 KEPHALE = “head”  
 SOTERIA = “safety”  
 KOSMOS = “order,” “adornment”  
 KLEOS = “glory”  
 KRATOS = “strength, might”  
 KRITES = “judge”  
 KYDOS = “glory”  
 KYRIOS = “lord”  
 LAMPROS = “bright”  
 LEON = “lion”  
 MAKARIOS = “blessed”  
 MACHE = “battle”  
 MEGA = “great”  
 MESOS = “middle”  
 MATER = “mother”  
 PATER = “father”  
 MYRIOS = “countless”  
 NAUS = “ship”  
 XENOS = “stranger”  
 OLBOS = “wealth,” “happiness”  
 PAN = “all”  
 PETRA = “rock”  
 PISTOS = “faithful”  
 PLOUTOS = “wealth”  
 POTHOS = “desire”  
 POLY = “much,” “many”  
 SOPHOS = “wise”  
 SOPHIA = “wisdom”  
 STEPHANOS = “garland”  
 SCHOLE = “leisure”  
 SOTERIA = “safety”  
 SOPHRON = “prudent”  
 TAUROS = “bull”  
 TACHY = “swift”  
 TELOS = “end”  
 TYCHE = “chance,” “fate”  
 HYGIES = “healthy”  
 PHILOS = “friend”  
 PHONE = “voice”  
 PHOS = “light”  
 CHARIS = “favor”  
 PSYCHE = “soul”  
 OPHELIA = “help”

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## ANCIENT GREEK GODS, GODDESSES, AND HEROES IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

**The Goal:** To learn about Greek mythology and literature, and to see how even today they have relevance for our society.

**The Activity:** After some preparation in Greek mythology (and perhaps after some reading of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), you may want to try the following exercise.

Announce to your class that now they will use their knowledge of ancient Greek stories and legends to engage in a competition.

Each student will search a ten-block square around his or her home for signs of ancient Greece, copying entire signs that include the name or image of a figure from ancient Greek mythology. In class, each student will present the information, give a brief description of the mythological personage attached to the name or image, and explain why the reference makes sense for the entity that took it. Students receive five points for each successful completion of this exercise.

Those students who find visual representations of Greek mythology (such as Goodyear's winged sandals of Hermes) in their neighborhood can make a sketch or take a picture of it. Then they should bring their representation to the classroom and explain the symbol's link to Greek mythology, and why the reference is relevant to the institution it symbolizes. Ten points are awarded for this discovery.

As with winners in ancient Olympic games, who, in addition to their victory crown of olive branches, were often presented with free housing and food in their hometown, have the class bring lunch to the winner and "immortalize" him or her in victory poems, stories, and artwork.

As variants of this exercise, you may want your students to note architectural features in their neighborhoods that derive from ancient Greek architecture, or allow the students to broaden their search for Greek mythology to include television references.

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## A COIN FOR YOUR COUNTRY

**The Goal:** Coins were—and are—one of the most widespread means of communication, trade, and control. This activity gives the students a sense of the power of symbols and of issues relating to public art.

**The Activity:** You will need the following materials:

- Gold or silver, round paper dessert plates
- Pens or felt markers

Have your students pretend that they are ancient Greek artists creating coins for the governments of:

- The city-state of Athens, ruled by a democracy, and with access to the sea
- The city-state of Corinth, ruled by merchants, and with access to the sea
- The kingdom of Macedonia, ruled by a king
- The city-state of Sparta, militaristic, landlocked, and ruled by a council of elders and two kings

In designing their coins, ask the students to consider the following:

- What are the chief deities of the city-state or kingdom?  
What are their attributes?
- What does the prosperity of the city-state or kingdom depend on—agriculture, fishing, herding, manufacturing?
- Does the city-state or kingdom have famous monuments, famous historical figures, or a glorious past?
- What inscription should you put on your coin? Should it be abbreviated to fit into the small round format of the coin?
- If you have a portrait of a ruler, should it emphasize his or her job, or his or her personal appearance and/or attributes?

Now, for each of the governments above, have your students design a large gold and a smaller silver coin. Who are the main users of each coin? Which coin might be more likely to have an inscription?

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## SOMETHING FOR YOUR FAVORITE BEVERAGE

**The Goal:** Special cups with special decorations were created for Greek wine-drinking parties called symposia. Illustrations often covered the inside and outside of the cup, as well as the bottom of the interior. The following activity will acquaint students with some of the subject matter and conceptual challenges that confronted the Greek artists who decorated these drinking vessels.

**The Activity:** You will need the following materials:

- Black pens or black felt markers
- Large clear plastic tumblers with straight sides
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Clear tape
- Terracotta-colored construction paper

Measure the circumference and height of one plastic tumbler. Using these measurements, cut a strip from the construction paper that is a little longer than the circumference so that when stretched around the tumbler there is a little overlap. Then use the bottom of the tumbler to trace a circle onto the construction paper. Using the black pens or felt markers, decorate both sides of the strip, remembering that one side will be the interior and the other the exterior of the ancient Greek cup. Then decorate the circle, known as a “tondo,” keeping in mind that the image will be visible only after the liquid has been drunk. Glue the strip and circle onto the tumbler, cover the edges with clear tape, and fill the cup with your favorite beverage. If your school has picnic tables, you might ask your students to imitate the Greek way of dining by lying on their sides on cushioned benches.

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In creating their designs, students should consider the following questions:

- What kind of themes fit drinking a soft drink and thus would be appropriate for such a glass?
  - Which areas of the tumbler would be seen by which audience? For instance, the drinker will see the interior, his or her companions will see the outside.
  - Which zones of the tumbler should receive decoration with figures, which should receive pleasing patterns?
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# LESSON PLANS

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## COMMEMORATION AND MEMORIAL IN ANCIENT GREECE

Grade level: Junior high and high school

### Objectives

- Students will discuss afterlife beliefs, and the commemorative or memorial function of art.
- Students will discuss family and genealogy in ancient Greece and the present.
- Students will look at examples of funerary relief sculpture from ancient Greece.
- Students will design, draw, and/or sculpt their own relief sculptures.

### Materials

- Drawing paper
- Pencils
- Rulers

Optional: plaster of Paris and four-sided quart-size paper milk cartons (one for each student), or self-hardening clay, and tools to remove plaster

### Slides

Slide 6 Marble grave stele of a youth and a little girl

Slide 7 Marble capital and finial in the form of a sphinx for the grave stele in slide 6

Slide 14 Grave stele of a girl with doves

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## Vocabulary

<i>epitaph</i>	A funerary inscription.
<i>palmette</i>	An ornament of radiating petals on a calyx-shaped or budlike base; along with the sphinx, palmettes often top Greek grave markers.
<i>relief</i>	A sculpted surface in which the decorations stand out, in varying degrees of depth; reliefs are meant to be viewed frontally, not in the round.
<i>sphinx</i>	A fabled creature that is half human and half animal; in Greek art and legend the sphinx has the head and torso of a woman.
<i>stele</i>	An upright slab of stone usually inscribed and sometimes decorated with designs or figures that are painted or carved in relief; used by the Greeks as grave markers or for displaying public notices.

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### Classroom Discussion

- Read the section on ideas about death and the afterlife in **Key Aspects of Fifth-Century Greek Life**, and the entries for slides 6, 7, and 14.
  - Ask students to think of someone they know who has died. How is that person remembered? Students might have photographs, a memento of that person, something the person has written, or they may be named after that person. If the person died young, there might be a special way of memorializing that short life—a playground might have been built and dedicated, a scholarship fund established, or special poems or works of art created in that person’s name.
  - Discuss genealogy and the importance of family to the ancient Greeks and to all of us today. How does the concept of family fit in with beliefs of an afterlife? With the commemorative function of art?
  - Look at slides 6, 7, and 14, funerary monuments from ancient Greece. Discuss the young age of the figures depicted. Who would have commissioned these works of art (family or other loved ones)? Where would they have been located (outside the city walls, in family plots, along the roads or on roads)? Why do they take the form that they do (to mark and identify the grave)? The portrayal of a young person would bring to mind certain qualities or attributes. Students should look for clues in the pose, gesture, and objects depicted on the stele. An inscription or epitaph also may reveal these attributes or qualities. The shafts of the monuments were decorated with palmettes and scrolls, and might be topped with a sphinx or other three-dimensional form that would have been sculpted separately and then attached.
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**Activity:** Design or construct a personal memorial

- Ask the students to identify one personal quality that they feel best describes them—honesty, loyalty, perseverance, humor, strength, and so on. Is this a quality that friends and family would agree best epitomizes them? They may take a short survey and ask their parents or friends.
- On drawing paper, have each student design a funerary monument for him- or herself, using the form of a pillar topped with a distinguishing three-dimensional form as illustrated in the slides—a palmette or a sphinx, for example. Monuments may be rendered in pencil or charcoal, or used as preliminary designs for a three-dimensional sculpture. Students should look carefully at the slides and identify the way that each form is sculpted in relief and the contrast between smooth and textured surfaces; for example, the smooth faces and arms, and the textured hair and drapery folds.
- For three-dimensional projects, prepare individual stelai for the students by pouring plaster of Paris into four-sided quart-size milk cartons. When the plaster is set and cooled, strip away the paper. For best results, the plaster should be carved immediately, while it is still slightly damp. Therefore, students should have ready their preliminary drawings and be able to spend a whole class period carving. Demonstrate how various tools can be used to gouge away the damp plaster, creating a form in relief, and how textured and smooth areas can be combined. If plaster is not available, students may sculpt slabs of self-hardening clay.

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## Extensions

- Using *The Art of Ancient Egypt: A Resource for Educators* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), have students compare and contrast an Egyptian funerary monument in relief (slide 33: Stele of a Middle Kingdom Official) with the Greek monument in slides 6 and 7. What kind of person is represented? Who is memorializing the dead person? What are the important features of each representation? What is the role of the inscription, and why do we know so much more about the Egyptian stele? Describe the technique of carving. How do the compositions of the reliefs and the depictions of the human bodies differ?
- Throughout the history of ancient Greece, various works of art served commemorative functions. Students in a ceramics class could study the krater in slide 2 and make a commemorative vase decorated with geometric patterns and scenes of a funeral procession rendered in geometric shapes.

## Interdisciplinary Connections

- *Language Arts.* Greek memorials sometimes bear inscriptions. Some of these epitaphs are contained in anthologies of literature. Have students read examples of these inscriptions, and then write their own, using the unique quality for which they wish to be remembered.

### EXAMPLE

Stranger, go back to Sparta and tell our people that we who were slain obeyed the code.

—Simonides of Keos (556–468/7 B.C.), memorial to the Spartans who were killed at Thermopylae in 480 B.C. by the Persian army (Willis Barnstone, trans., *Greek Lyric Poetry* [New York: Schocken Books, 1972], p. 136, no. 366)

- *Social Studies.* For a unit on family and genealogy, have students design a funerary monument or write an epitaph for one of their immediate family members or ancestors, based on interviews with family members, old letters, family stories, or other sources.

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## ANCIENT GREEK GAMES

Grade level: Elementary school through high school

### Objectives

- Students will discuss the Olympic games and where the concept of these games originated.
- Students will collaboratively organize their own version of Greek games, involving contests in sports, music, and poetry.
- Students will design awards, commemorative works of art, and other ways to honor the winners of the games.

### Slides

Slide 3 Kouros

Slide 8 Terracotta Panathenaic prize amphora (storage vessel)

Slide 16 Fragments of a marble statue of the Diadoumenos  
(youth tying a fillet around his head)

Slide 18 Terracotta statuette of Nike, the personification of victory

### Vocabulary

*Diadoumenos* An athlete tying a fillet around his head.

*kouros* From the Greek word for “young man,” or “a youth.” A type of Greek sculpture representing a standing young male figure in a frontal position with one leg slightly forward; the weight is usually evenly distributed, the arms are parallel to the sides of the body, the hair is stylized, and there is often an Archaic smile.

*Nike* Greek goddess of victory.

*Panathenaic* All territories connected to Athens.

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### Classroom Discussion

- Read the section on sports in **Key Aspects of Fifth-Century Greek Life**, and the entries for slides 3, 8, 16, and 18.
  - Discuss the modern Olympic games with the students, asking them to share information from what they have seen on television. What kinds of sports are included? How are the winners chosen? What kinds of prizes and recognition are given? Students may have attended or participated in Special Olympic tournaments or other sports competitions, music contests, writing or speaking contests, art contests, or other competitive events. Discuss how these events are organized.
  - Do the games of ancient Greece relate to today's Olympics? The Greek games honored the gods and included both musical and athletic events. Sometimes work or even war was stopped for the duration of the games so that all Greek citizens could attend or participate. People from all parts of Greece came to the games, setting up tents or sleeping outside. Vendors selling food, amulets, votive offerings, and horses mingled with statesmen and other politicians. At night there was feasting and entertainment for the crowds. Prizes for victory might include wreaths of olive branches, oak, or parsley, or an amphora filled with olive oil. A winner's community also might honor him or her with cash prizes or a free meal at public expense for the rest of the winner's life. Commemorative works of art and poetry were produced for the games.
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**Activity:** Design a day of Greek games

- Students can work together in small groups, as a class, or the whole school might engage in a project to design and schedule a version of the Greek games. The events might include footraces in a variety of forms, horse races (with students wearing “horse” masks), and poetry and music contests. Some of the decisions to be made are:

What games should be included?

How should they be organized?

Who should judge the games?

How should the winners be declared?

What should the prizes be?

How should the winners be honored?

To whom should the games be dedicated?

- As much as is age-appropriate, students should research ancient Greek games for their ideas and methods of implementation.

### Interdisciplinary Connections

- *Language Arts.* Besides the poetry contest, students may write commemorative poems to celebrate a particular winner or event. These can be declaimed during the games or afterwards.
- *Social Studies.* Students may wish to invite parents or other members of their community to the games, creating a “Pan–New York” atmosphere. In this event, they can present the results of their research and how it relates to the day’s program. Or, students may wish to dress and act the part of an ancient Greek character, historical or fictitious, that they have researched.
- *Science.* Using what students have studied about exercise and health, have them devise a series of exercises that the participants in the games can use to prepare themselves for competition.
- *Math.* A math class can be responsible for measuring tracks and distances, adding up points earned, and performing other calculations for the events.

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## ANCIENT GREEK VASES

Grade level: Upper elementary/junior high

### Objectives

- Students will look at examples of Greek vases and learn about their forms, decorations, and functions.
- Students will discuss the forms, decorations, and functions of containers used to serve beverages and liquids in their everyday life.
- Students will design and execute their own red-figure or black-figure vase, using a crayon-resist technique.

### Materials

- Heavy drawing paper, 8½ x 11 inches
- Orange, rust, or red-orange wax crayons
- Stencils pre-cut in the shapes of Greek vases
- Scissors
- India ink or diluted black tempera
- Pointed styli, or top-hat pins

### Slides

- Slide 2 Terracotta funerary krater (shape of a mixing bowl for water and wine)
- Slide 4 Terracotta alabastron (perfume vase) in the shape of a woman
- Slide 5 Terracotta neck-amphora (storage vessel) with lid
- Slide 8 Terracotta Panathenaic prize amphora (storage vessel)
- Slide 9 Terracotta calyx-krater (vessel for mixing water with wine, with handles in the shape of the calyx of a flower)
- Slide 10 Terracotta amphora (storage vessel)
- Slide 11 Terracotta pyxis (box)
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## Vocabulary

<i>alabastron</i>	A small vase for olive oil, often scented.
<i>amphora</i>	A two-handled terracotta storage jar used by the ancient Greeks to hold or measure oil, wine, or milk.
<i>calyx</i>	The external, cup-shaped, leafy part of a flower.
<i>calyx-krater</i>	A krater with handles in the cupped shape of a calyx.
<i>krater</i>	A large pottery vessel with a mouth broad enough to allow a jug to be dipped into it; used for mixing wine with water in ancient Greece.
<i>neck-amphora</i>	An amphora whose neck is not part of a continuous curve but is set off from the rest of the body.
<i>negative space</i>	The area around the decorative subject on a work of art; the external or outside area that defines the subject.
<i>positive space</i>	The area on a work of art where the subject is represented; the internal area.
<i>registers</i>	In art, horizontal bands of images that often appear in vertical series on walls, vases, and so forth.
<i>symmetry</i>	The duplication of an image on either side of a real or imaginary central axis.
<i>terracotta</i>	Clay that has been fired at a relatively low temperature, brownish-red or buff in color.

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### Classroom Discussion

- Read about the symposium and ceramics in **Key Aspects of Fifth-Century Greek Life and Artists and Materials**, and the entries for slides 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11.
- Bring in examples of large and small containers used to serve drinks—a punch bowl, wine glass, coffee mug, juice pitcher, etc. Ask students to think of examples of family celebrations and occasions where beverages are served and toasts are made, such as weddings and anniversaries, the birth of a child, on the occasion of a raise or promotion, a family reunion, or a graduation.
- Discuss the concept of the Greek symposium with the students, explaining that it was usually a controlled drinking party, with music, poetry, and clever conversation. Have students imagine what it would be like at one of these parties, for example: the garments worn; the seating of guests on couches arranged in a circle in order to facilitate conversation and interaction; the mixing of wine with water in a large bowl or container; the need for individual cups; the display of these vessels; the designation of a symposiarch, and so forth.
- Look at slides 5, 9, and 10 and discuss how large vases like these could have been used in a symposium. How are these containers alike (colors, decoration, symmetry)? If necessary, explain symmetry and give examples from nature, or demonstrate how to cut a symmetrical shape from folded paper. Discuss the shape of each vase in relation to its decoration. Which is more important?

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- Note how the designs are applied to the vase in horizontal registers and how they include both patterns and human figures. What is the role of the human figure in the decoration? How many figures relate the story? What are the figures' poses and gestures? How are the figures arranged? Are they symmetrical? Do they overlap? Discuss the use of positive and negative space to delineate the figures on red-figure and black-figure vases. Point out the incision technique of black-figure decoration and the more painterly brushwork of red-figure vases.
  - The potters of ancient Greece made and decorated vases in much the same way that ceramics are made today. Have students seen potters at work? Have they themselves had experience working with clay? What is clay? How is it formed into three-dimensional shapes? How is it made hard and permanent? How is it decorated? Explain the differences between the two techniques of red-figure and black-figure vase painting.
  - Greek potters worked in centers such as Athens and Corinth, where pots were produced in great numbers and exported around the Mediterranean. Sometimes one artist made the vase and another would decorate its surface. Sometimes the same person was both potter and painter. Over time, certain shapes were standardized. Many vases came from the same center, and this is why Greek pottery in museums around the world looks very similar.

**Activity: Making a black-figure vase**

- Distribute sheets of strong drawing paper to students and have them color one side of the paper heavily with an orange, red-orange, or rust crayon. They should build up a thick layer of wax over the entire surface.
- Have students determine the function of their vases, then make a stencil of the shape of their vases based on their use. They should trace around the stencil on the uncolored side of their prepared sheet of paper, then cut around the outline with scissors. They should then make a second tracing of the stencil.

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- Lay out the shapes on sheets of newspaper, orange side up, and have students brush India ink or diluted black tempera over the entire waxed surface, making sure it is covered.
  - While the ink or paint is drying, have students draw the design for their vase on the other tracing of the stencil. They should use rulers to create horizontal registers, then fill the narrow areas with repeated geometric patterns. The widest register should contain a scene from Greek mythology or everyday life, such as a single figure like a musician or a group of figures that tell a story. Remind the students of the use of positive and negative space and how the gestures of the figures are important to the design.
  - Using a sharp pointed instrument, students can scratch away at the black coating to reveal the orange wax layer underneath. They may wish to start with the narrow decorative patterns, saving the figures in the widest register for last. The black areas around the figures should be carefully removed to reveal the orange background, and the figures themselves will remain black. Finally, details like eyes, hair, and folds of clothing can be incised into the black areas.
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## Extensions

- For younger students, project slide 2. Discuss the symmetry of the vase and the use of geometric shapes to create a decorative pattern on its surface. Show students how to cut a bilaterally symmetrical shape from a piece of black construction paper, then have them experiment with cutting a symmetrical vase. The teacher may wish to cut a very large black vase shape and place it on the floor. Students can then use long strips of orange construction paper to make squares, rectangles, circles, and triangles. While working together in small groups, they can position their shapes horizontally across the vase. Additional shapes may be cut as necessary. The students may combine their shapes to form people, horses, houses, and so on, or to repeat patterns.
- Older students in a pottery class may make their own drinking cup, decorating it with a mythological scene or hero, a battle, a musician, a contemporary hero or heroine, and so forth. Students should keep in mind that the images chosen for drinking cups in ancient Greece often were understood by all Greek-speaking peoples, and that the image would have embodied a familiar concept like “war” or “drinking” or “music.”

## Interdisciplinary Connections

- *Language Arts.* Choose a story from Greek mythology. Have students write the story in their own words to identify the important events, then choose one of these events to depict on their vases.
- *Social Studies.* Some vases are decorated with scenes of life in ancient Greece—musicians playing instruments, athletic events, horses and chariots, or household duties, like weaving. From the study of Greek civilization, choose an activity to portray on the vase.
- *Science.* List the processes that go into making a ceramic vase. If possible, visit a potter in a studio or watch a video about how pots are made.
- *Math.* Symmetry, pattern, geometry, and proportion are mathematical concepts that can be explored or reinforced through this activity.