

E D U C A T I O N

PRE-VISIT GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

THE ART OF MEDIEVAL EUROPE

IN THE MAIN BUILDING OF THE
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

*Use this guide to prepare for your
self-guided visit with your students.*

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



This guide will help you prepare for your self-guided visit to the Metropolitan Museum with your students. Use the links to the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History and the Department of Medieval Art on the Museum's website to access descriptions of works of art, thematic essays, and other relevant content.

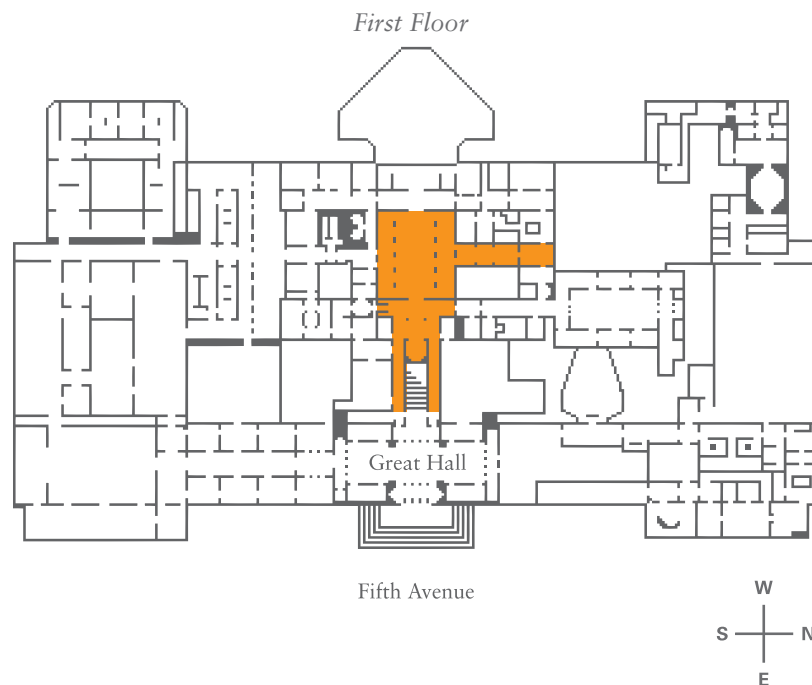
Introduction

Art of the Middle Ages—roughly the period between the late Roman era (about A.D. 300) and, at least in northern Europe, the early sixteenth century—is compelling both in its expressions of beauty and in the complexity and importance of its meanings, which still shed light on the cultures that created them. Made within a span of 1,200 years by mostly anonymous artists who often had great talent and extensive training, medieval art set new standards of technical achievement. Contrary to the perception of the Middle Ages as a “dark age,” the centuries spanning early Christendom through the late Gothic period saw ever-changing confluences of ideas and cultures that, despite political and religious wars, precipitated the development of monasteries, universities, guilds, and the emergence of early European political states.

The Galleries

The Museum's medieval art collection in the Main Building includes works made throughout Europe, from the Latin West (western and northern Europe, including the British Isles and the Iberian Peninsula) to Byzantium (extending from modern-day Greece and Turkey through the Balkans and originally to Egypt). The collection is mostly displayed chronologically, with late Roman, Barbarian, early Medieval (including Viking), and Byzantine art arranged around the Grand Staircase on the first floor (the Mary and Michael Jaharis Galleries for Byzantine Art). Nearby, the Medieval Europe Gallery displays art of the West until about 1300, with later works from the West in the Medieval Sculpture Hall and the Medieval Treasury. These galleries include examples of architectural elements, wooden and stone sculpture, stained glass, metalwork, enamels, ivories, panel painting, tapestries, and illuminated manuscripts. A visit to the Arms and Armor collection may complement a tour of medieval art, and earlier European pieces can be discussed in the context of weaponry, heraldry, and tournament games. (However, most of the Museum's armor collection dates to the Renaissance or later. It also includes armor from Asia and the Islamic world, as well as American arms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.)

Learn more about the [Department of Medieval Art](#).



The Cloisters Museum and Gardens

The Museum has an even more extensive medieval art collection presented within a unique architectural setting at its branch, [The Cloisters Museum and Gardens](#), located in Fort Tryon Park in northern Manhattan. Its flower and herb gardens contain more than two hundred species of plants grown in the Middle Ages. Teachers who wish to arrange a guided or self-guided visit to this collection with their students should call The Cloisters directly at (212) 650-2280.

Planning a Tour

When visiting the Metropolitan Museum with your students, prepare your tour with the following in mind:

- Less is more. Select five or six works of art to discuss over the course of an hour in the galleries.
- Choose works that are located away from doorways and areas that are heavily traversed by visitors.
- Include works that are visible to all students in your group for purposes of discussion and viewing.
- Make sure that there are enough chaperones in your group to divide the students into smaller groups for gallery discussions.
- While touring the galleries, please give priority to lecturers wearing Museum IDs who are guiding groups. If they are discussing a work that you would like your students to see, please select another work to view and discuss in the interim.

Please Note: Although most of the suggested works in this guide will be on view when you visit the Museum, some gallery installations may be subject to change. We recommend that you use [Search the Collections](#) online or come to the Museum to verify that the objects you want to discuss are on display prior to bringing your group.

Questions to Consider

- What underlying meanings do you think the artist intended in this work of art?
- How does the work of art indicate its function?
- What does the work of art tell us about its audience and original context?

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's school tour program is made possible by the generosity of Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman.

Suggested Works of Art to Explore

Please note that titles, dates, and other object information on the website and on gallery signage may vary as the result of ongoing research.



[Sarcophagus with Scenes from the Lives of Saint Peter and Christ](#),

early 300s (with modern restoration)

Roman

Marble; 26 x 84 x 22 13/16 in. (66 x 213.4 x 58 cm)

Gift of Josef and Marsy Mittleman, 1991 (1991.366)



[Fragment of a Floor Mosaic with a Personification of Ktisis](#), 500–550;

modern restoration

Byzantine

Mosaic, marble, glass; 59 1/2 x 78 5/8 x 1 in. (151.1 x 199.7 x 2.5 cm)

Harris Brisbane Dick and Fletcher Funds, 1998 (1998.69)

Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, and Dodge and Rogers Funds, 1999 (1999.99)



[Plate with the Battle of David and Goliath](#), 629–630

Byzantine; made in Constantinople

Silver; Diam. 19 7/16, depth, 2 5/8 in. (Diam. 49.4, depth, 6.6 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.396)

Learn more about the [full set of plates](#), of which this was a part.

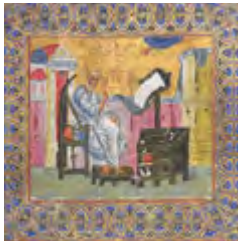


Medallion from an Icon Frame, ca. 1100

(One of a group of nine on view)

Byzantine; from the Djumati Monastery, Georgia
(now Republic of Georgia); made in Constantinople
Cloisonné enamel, gold; Diam. 3 1/4 in. (8.3 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.678)



Jaharis Lectionary, ca. 1100

Byzantine; made in Constantinople, probably for Hagia Sophia

Tempera, ink, and gold leaf on parchment; leather binding;

14 1/2 x 11 5/8 x 4 7/8 in. (36.8 x 29.6 x 12.4 cm)

Purchase, Mary and Michael Jaharis Gift and Lila Acheson Wallace Gift,
2007 (2007.286)

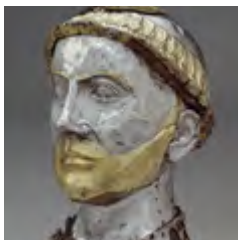


Plaque with the Journey to Emmaus and the Noli Me Tangere, ca. 1115–1120

Spanish; made in León

Ivory, traces of gilding; 10 5/8 x 5 1/4 x 3/4 in. (27 x 13.4 x 1.9 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.47)



Reliquary Bust of Saint Yrieix, ca. 1220–40; with later grill

French; Limoges, from the Church of Saint-Yrieix-la-Perche

Gilded silver with rock crystal, gems, glass; originally over walnut core;
reliquary: 15 x 9 3/16 x 10 1/4 in. (38.1 x 23.4 x 26.1 cm); wooden core:
14 7/16 x 8 7/8 x 9 13/16 in. (36.6 x 22.5 x 24.9 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.352a,b)

Learn more about [Relics and Reliquaries in Medieval Christianity](#).



Scenes from the Legend of Saint Vincent of Saragossa and the History of His Relics, 1244–1247

French; from the Lady Chapel (now destroyed) of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Paris

Pot-metal glass with vitreous paint; 147 x 43 1/2 in. (373.4 x 110.5 cm)

Gift of George D. Pratt, 1926 (24.167a–k)

Learn more about [Stained Glass in Medieval Europe](#).



Aquamanile in the Form of a Mounted Knight, ca. 1250

German; Lower Saxony, probably Hildesheim

Copper alloy; 14 3/4 x 12 5/8 x 5 9/16 in. (37.5 x 32 x 14.2 cm)

Gift of Irwin Untermyer, 1964 (64.101.1492)

Learn more about [Medieval Aquamanilia](#).



Virgin and Child in Majesty, 1150–1200

French; made in Auvergne

Walnut with paint, gesso, and linen; 31 5/16 x 12 1/2 x 11 1/2 in. (79.5 x 31.7 x 29.2 cm)

Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1916 (16.32.194)



Virgin and Child, ca. 1415–1417

Attributed to Claus de Werve (French, ca. 1380–1439, active in Burgundy, 1396–ca. 1439)

French; from the Franciscan convent of the Poor Clares Poligny, Burgundy

Limestone, with paint and gilding; 53 3/8 x 41 1/8 x 27 in. (135.5 x 104.5 x 68.6 cm)

Rogers Fund, 1933 (33.23)



[Scenes from *The Story of the Trojan War*: The Battle with the Sagittary and the Conference at Achilles' Tent; Andromache and Priam Urging Hector Not to Go to War](#), 1470–1490

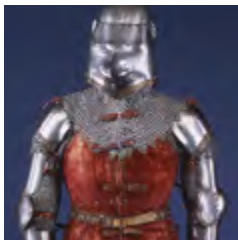
South Netherlands, probably produced through Pasquier Grenier of Tournai (fl. 1447–93)

Wool warp, wool wefts with a few silk wefts; 52.69: 172 x 156 in. (436.9 x 396.2 cm); 39.74: 190 x 104 in. (482.6 x 264.2 cm)

Fletcher Fund, 1952 (52.69)

Fletcher Fund, 1939 (39.74)

Learn more about [How Medieval and Renaissance Tapestries Were Made](#).



[Armor](#), ca. 1400 and later

Italian

Steel, brass, textile; H. 66 1/2 in. (168.9 cm)

Bashford Dean Memorial Collection, Gift of Helen Fahnestock Hubbard, in memory of her father, Harris C. Fahnestock, 1929 (29.154.3)



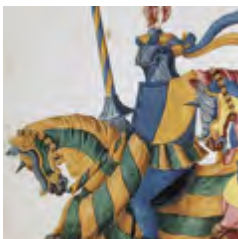
[Sallet in the Shape of a Lion's Head](#), 1470–80

Italian

Steel, copper-gilt, glass, polychromy; H. 11 3/4 in. (30 cm),

Wt. 8 lb. 4 oz. (3.7 kg)

Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1923 (23.141)



[Tournament Book](#), late 16th century

German (Nuremberg)

Pen and colored wash on paper

Rogers Fund, 1922 (22.229)

Themes to Consider

Use these links to access selected thematic essays on the Museum's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History.

General Themes

[Art for the Christian Liturgy in the Middle Ages](#)

[The Art of the Book in the Middle Ages](#)

[The Cult of the Virgin Mary in the Middle Ages](#)

[Art and Death in the Middle Ages](#)

[Jewish Art in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium](#)

[Medieval European Sculpture for Buildings](#)

[Monasticism in Medieval Christianity](#)

[Private Devotion in Medieval Christianity](#)

Selected Periods and Styles in Medieval Art

[Byzantium \(ca. 330–1453\)](#)

[Gothic Art](#)

[Romanesque Art](#)

The World of Knights

[Arms and Armor—Common Misconceptions and Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Arms and Armor in Medieval Europe](#)

[The Crusades \(1095–1291\)](#)

[Fashion in European Armor](#)

[Feudalism and Knights in Medieval Europe](#)

[The Function of Armor in Medieval and Renaissance Europe](#)

Selected Resources

These and many more resources are available in Nolen Library in the Ruth and Harold D. Uris Center for Education.

Teachers

Alexandre-Bidon, Danièle, and Didier Lett. *Children in the Middle Ages*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000.

Evans, Helen C., et al. "The Arts of Byzantium." *Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art* 58, no. 4 (Spring 2001).

Morales, Esther M., et al. [*A Masterwork of Byzantine Art: The David Plates: The Story of David and Goliath*](#). A Closer Look. New York: MMA, 2001.*

Norris, Michael, et al. [*Medieval Art: A Resource for Educators*](#). New York: MMA, 2005.*

Sekules, Veronica. *Medieval Art*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Elementary School Students

Anno, Mitsumasa. *Anno's Medieval World*. New York: Philomel Books, 1990.

Robertson, Bruce. *Marguerite Makes a Book*. Los Angeles: Getty Museum, 1999.

Rumford, James. *Traveling Man: The Journey of Ibn Battuta, 1325–1354*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

Wisniewski, David. *Golem*. New York: Clarion, 1996.

Whute, T. H. *The Book of Beasts: Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1984.

Middle School Students

Barrett, Tracy. *Anna of Byzantium*. New York: Random House, Inc., 1999.

Langley, Andrew E. *Medieval Life*. Eyewitness Books. New York: DK Publishing, 2004.

MacDonald, Fiona. *A Medieval Castle*. New York: Hodder Wayland, 1997.

Marston, Elsa. *The Byzantine Empire*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, Inc., 2002.

Shulevitz, Uri. *The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela: Through Three Continents in the Twelfth Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

High School Students

Cantor, Norman F., ed. *The Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*. New York: Viking, 1999.

Hollister, C. Warren, and Judith M. Bennett. *Medieval Europe: A Short History*. 10th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2006.

Power, Eileen. *Medieval People*. New York: Dover, 2000.

What Life Was Like Amid Splendor and Intrigue: Byzantine Empire, AD 330–1453. Alexandria, Va.: Time-Life Books, 1998.