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## **Beauty and Belief**

Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture

# Letter to the Educator

Welcome to the Brigham Young University Museum of Art (MOA)! The MOA is excited to announce a new education program for the K-6 community: *Custom and Culture: Exploring World Communities through Art*

*Custom and Culture: Exploring World Communities through Art* is an education program designed to engage elementary students in the world around them via a guided exhibition tour and hands-on art making. *Custom and Culture* uses the visual arts to help students and educators learn more about their role in local, national, and international communities while introducing them to the various cultures and nationalities of their friends and neighbors. The ultimate aim of *Custom and Culture: Exploring World Communities through Art* is to use the visual arts to help nurture an informed, visually literate, and culturally sensitive generation of young people.

*Custom and Culture* is a cross-curricular program that incorporates Utah State Core Curriculum Standards in visual arts, social studies, dance, music, and language arts. Museum and classroom activities will implement writing, dance, and music to enhance visual arts learning while exploring themes of community, cooperation, and personal responsibility. *Custom and Culture* will be adapted to various exhibitions throughout the Museum, providing teachers with a consistent yet versatile program in which to participate each year.

Each program will include an educator's packet containing pre- and post-museum visit lesson plans highlighting a particular exhibition. The lessons contained within this packet are to be used in conjunction with the MOA's current exhibition *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture*. The first two lesson plans, *Khamsa Hands* and *Aphorism Trivets*, can be conducted prior to a museum visit, while *Magical Jinni Pots* and *Mythical Creature Sculptures* can be taught afterwards to help reinforce concepts learned at the MOA. Teachers may use the lesson plans as presented or adapt the activities to suit their classroom needs.

We look forward to seeing you at the MOA where lives are enriched through the arts.

—Brigham Young University Museum of Art Education Department

P.S. Please see the Nuts 'n' Bolts section of this packet if you would like to register for the *Custom and Culture* program in conjunction with the MOA's current exhibition *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture*.

# Nuts ‘n’ Bolts

## Museum Hours

Monday–Wednesday, Saturday: 10:00 AM–6:00 PM  
Thursday–Friday: 10:00 AM–9:00 PM  
Closed Sunday

## Contact Information

Information Desk: 801-422-8287  
School Program Scheduling: 801-422-5323  
Website: moa.byu.edu, www.Beauty-and-Belief.com

## Custom and Culture: Exploring World Communities through Art

### Registration Information

- ◆ Please register online at <http://moa.byu.edu/schoolprograms/>
- ◆ The 120-minute school program includes a 60-minute interactive exhibition tour and 60-minute hands-on art activity. An educator packet with pre- and post-visit lesson plans is also provided. The fee of \$50.00 per class will be waived for this school program because of a generous grant from the George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation.
- ◆ School programs are conducted during regular museum hours with sessions beginning at 10:00 AM and 12:30 PM, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday and lasting 2 hours.
- ◆ School programs must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance.
- ◆ A basic 45-minute exhibition tour is always available free of charge but does not include art making. Please register for the basic tour at 801-422-1140.
- ◆ Title I schools may request funding for bus fees on a first come first serve basis.
- ◆ Participating schools in Utah County may request a pre-museum visit to their classroom from a MOA educator. The classroom visit will provide students with background information about the exhibition and engage the class in a hands-on art activity to help better prepare them for their visit to *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture*.

### Exhibition Dates

*Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* will be open February 24, 2012–September 29, 2012.

### Museum Manners

1. Thank you for not bringing gum, food, and drinks into the museum.
2. Please leave your backpacks and large bags at the coat room.
3. Please make sure you are at least one big step away from the artworks so that you don't accidentally touch them.
4. Students, please make sure your teachers don't get lost!
5. Thank you for using only pencils in the gallery.
6. If you have questions, please find a museum employee. We are happy to help!

# Exhibition Introduction

The act of storytelling inspires physical connection. We reach for a quivering hand as we listen to our neighbor's story of unforeseen loss. We link arms with our friends as we share personal legends and ancient myths around the campfire. We press our shoulders against the shoulders of others in the audience as we sit crowded and captivated under a storyteller's tent. This physical movement towards another human echoes a profound journey into the heart. Through stories, the space between you and the other dwindles. Gulfs of misunderstanding shrink and bridges of compassion are crossed. We empathize and remember. We forgive and restore. Storytelling brings insight into the lives of those in our communities (local, national, world) and reminds us of our common humanity.

*Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* employs the culture of Islam to tell a story that is both specific and universal. Using objects from Islamic communities—manuscripts, ceramics, textiles, and paintings—*Beauty and Belief* shares a narrative about what we as humans find meaningful and where we seek grace. Each object in the exhibition acts as a storyteller, bringing to our consciousness the good, the true, and the beautiful not only within Muslim communities but within the larger human community as well. We recognize each other through these shared pursuits of the sublime within the mundane, regardless of our cultural, geographical, or religious orientations.

The lessons in this educator packet aim to reinforce the themes of narrative, communion, and interconnectedness that are expertly woven through *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture*. It is our hope that students and educators who participate in this programming come away with a pronounced appreciation for the arts of Islamic culture as well as the role beauty and belief play in their own lives and communities.

# Program Overview

## **Pre-Visit Lesson Plans in the Classroom**

Each pre-visit lesson plan will provide students with an introductory understanding of Islamic communities and an appreciation for the role of personal and collective storytelling among Muslims. Students will also explore the role of storytelling within their own communities and will reflect on the important role stories play in communicating a culture's value system and beliefs. An investigation of these themes will better prepare students for their visit to the Brigham Young University Museum of Art where they will participate in a guided exhibition tour of *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* and related art-making activity.

## **Guided Tour at the Museum of Art**

As part of the 120-minute school program, students will participate in a 60-minute guided tour of *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture*. The tour will be interactive and inquiry based with an emphasis on Islamic art objects and the stories they tell about the history and culture of Islamic communities. Students will reflect on how these new and/or familiar stories shape their world view.

## **Art-Making Activity at the Museum of Art**

As part of the 120-minute school program, students will participate in a 60-minute art-making activity inspired by themes of storytelling and community within the *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* exhibition.

## **Post-Visit Lessons Plans in the Classroom**

Each post-visit lesson plan will review themes of storytelling and community as experienced in the exhibition tour and art-making activity at the Museum of Art. Students will discuss storytelling as a practice used to unite and serve people within a community. They will relate information they've learned about Islamic communities with their experiences in family, neighborhood, and classroom groups.

# Pre-Tour Lesson

## Khamsa Hands

### Grade Level

Lower Elementary, 1-3 (may be adapted for older students)

### Time Required

60 minutes (can be modified for a 30-minute class period)

### Lesson Overview

Students will look at their hands and describe the differences and similarities they see between their hands and the hands of their class members. They will acknowledge that just as each hand is unique, each person in the class has a unique life story made up of likes, dislikes, experiences, and beliefs. All of their distinctive personalities come together to form a vibrant classroom community. Students will learn about the use of amulets, specifically Khamsa Hands, to protect and heal members of Islamic communities; they will look at several images of Khamsa Hands and discuss their role as symbols of good fortune and happiness. With their preferences, family, friends, and life experiences in mind, students will create a Khamsa Hand amulet and decorate it with symbols that help tell a story about them. These hands will be hung around the classroom to express diversity and bring good luck and happiness to everyone in the class. At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be better prepared to engage with themes of diversity, symbolism, and storytelling in the exhibition *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* while visiting the Brigham Young University Museum of Art.

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- ◆ Discuss the importance of Khamsa Hands as symbols of healing and good fortune in Islamic communities
- ◆ Acknowledge personal interests and translate those interests into symbols
- ◆ Create a Khamsa Hand amulet that helps tell a story about them
- ◆ Acknowledge that every student makes valuable and unique contributions to the classroom community

### Utah State Core Curriculum Standards

#### Visual Arts (Grade 1) Rainbow Chart

- ◆ Produce line drawings showing an awareness of self in the (local) world, using symbols in communicating meaning.

#### Visual Arts (Grade 3) Rainbow Chart

- ◆ After drawing the outside edge of an object, experiment with creating multiple lines within the object to show pattern and depth.



**Social Studies (Grade 2) Utah Education Network**

- ◆ Standard 1: Students will recognize how people within their community, state, and nation are both similar and different.

**Language Arts (Grade 2) Common Core: Language Standards**

- ◆ Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 2 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies

**Language Arts (Grade 1) Common Core: Speaking and Listening Standards**

- ◆ Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media
- ◆ Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings

**Materials**

- ◆ Several images of Khamsa Hands from the internet or books
- ◆ Reproductions of the *Bowl* and *Incense Burner*. Reproductions of these images are included in Appendix II of this packet.
  - A 5" x 8" sheet of poster board or thin cardboard for each student
  - Markers
  - Crayons
  - Buttons, beads, sequins, fabric scraps and other bits and bobs to decorate the hand
  - Scissors
  - Glue
  - Single hole punch
  - Ribbon or thread
  - Pencils
  - "Story of Me" worksheet (optional)

**Lesson Steps****Part 1: Observation, Discussion, and Reflection****Observation and Discussion**

1. Have the class look at their hands, and ask them to describe what they see. Some hands are peach, some are brown, and some are freckled. Some hands have skinny fingers and some have painted fingernails. Have them look at the hands of the students sitting next to them. Explain that just as our hands are unique and interesting, each person in the classroom has a unique and interesting story to tell about who he or she is. Illustrate to students that when all of these different people come together they form an exciting classroom **community**.
2. Explain to students that they are going to look at some hand amulets from Islamic communities. Amulets are objects that bring good luck, health, and protection to members of a community. Explain to students that when they visit the Beauty and Belief exhibition at the Museum they will encounter many amulet-like objects such as incense burners and bowls that are used for health and protection. Show them the images of the *Bowl* and *Incense Burner*. Display several images of **Khamsa Hands** (also commonly referred to as Hamsa Hands) such as wall hangings,

jewelry, or stained glass (examples can be found in the “Internet Sources” section of this lesson plan). Have students look quietly at the amulets for 30 seconds. Then guide the class in a discussion about what they see. You may want to ask questions such as:

- ◆ We’ve just been talking about our hands. Whose hands do you think these belong to?
- ◆ What kinds of lines and shapes do you see on these hands?
- ◆ What materials do you think these hands are made out of?

3. Share some background information about the Khamsa Hands.

- ◆ Khamsa Hands, also known as the Hand of Fatima (named after Muhammad’s daughter), are often used by Islamic communities in Spain, the Middle East, and North Africa to bring good luck, health, and protection. The word “Khamsa” is the root for the Arabic word for “five.” Why do you think the number five is significant? The five fingers of a Khamsa Hand represent the five pillars of Islam; each pillar represents a foundational religious act in Islam including daily prayer and alms giving. It is common to find Khamsa Hand amulets hanging from doorways or walls in Arabic dwellings to give residents spiritual protection. Sometimes people wear Khamsa Hands as jewelry to ensure health and good luck. The fingers of the hand can be shown open or closed and often have a protective eye engraved into the center of the palm. Khamsa Hand amulets come in all shapes and sizes just like our own hands. They are made out of many materials including gold, metal, clay, glass, and fabric.

### Reflection

1. Have students reflect on things they like to do, places they’ve lived or traveled, their favorite animals, how many family members they have, etc. Explain that all of these things—our likes and dislikes, experiences, and family—help tell a story about us. You may want to create a simple “Story of Me” sheet for them to fill out that includes a few questions such as:

- ◆ What is your favorite food?
- ◆ Where were you born?
- ◆ Do you have any brothers and sisters?
- ◆ Where is one place you have traveled?

2. Have students draw small pictures next to each of their answers representing their response. (E.g., if they write “pizza” as their favorite food, they might draw a slice of pizza.) Explain that these small drawings are **symbols**. They are a visual representation of an object, event, person, place, or idea.

### Part 2: Creating and Sharing Creating

1. Explain that each student will make his or her own Khamsa Hand amulet similar to the Khamsa Hands the class has been discussing. Give students a piece of poster board, and ask them to draw an outline of their hand. Using their “Story of Me” sheet as a guide, they can then use markers and crayons to decorate their hand with the symbols about them. You may want to have students create one symbol for each finger (E.g., draw your favorite food on your thumb, draw a picture of one place you’ve traveled on your forefinger, etc.) or just draw the symbols randomly on the hand. Remind them that many Khamsa Hand amulets include a protective eye in the center of the palm and that they may want to add an eye to the center of their hand for protection as well.

2. Once they finish coloring their hand with symbols, have students glue beads, sequins, glitter, or other decorative materials onto the hand similar to the lines or patterns they see in the Khamsa Hand examples. Make sure they

enhance the appearance of their hand without covering up any of their symbols. Have students cut out their hands, punch a hole in the wrist, and attach a ribbon or thread for hanging.

### Sharing

1. Have students share their Khamsa Hand amulets with the class. Encourage them to talk about the symbols they used to depict their life story and what each symbol represents for them.
2. Remind students that their Khamsa Hand amulets represent an Islamic belief in the healing and protective powers of certain objects. Reiterate that they will see several such objects in the *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* exhibition.
3. Hang the Khamsa Hand amulets throughout the classroom for everyone to enjoy.

### Assessment

Students will be assessed on:

- ◆ Their ability to understand the importance of diversity and unique contributions within communities
- ◆ Their ability to discuss the Khamsa Hand symbol and its use in Islamic communities
- ◆ How well they use symbols to describe information about their lives
- ◆ How well they construct their Khamsa Hand amulet based on the teacher's instruction
- ◆ Their ability to reflectively share their artistic process and intent with the class

### Book Sources

*Hands-on Ancient People, Volume I: Art Activities about Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Islam* by Yvonne Y. Merrill (ISBN-13: 978-0964317789)

*Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* Exhibition Guide by Sabiha Al Khemir

### Internet Sources

Several examples of Khamsa Hand amulets: <http://www.judaica-mall.com/hamsa-chamsa.htm>

Google Images has hundreds of great Khamsa Hand pictures

PBS's *Islam Empire of Faith*: <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/index.html>

*Beauty and Belief* Exhibition Website: <http://beauty-and-belief.byu.edu/>

## Pre-Tour Lesson

# Aphorism Trivets

### Grade Level

Upper Elementary, 3-6 (may be adapted for younger students)

### Time Required

2 45-minute class periods (does not include drying time)

### Lesson Overview

Students will observe an Islamic bowl and horseshoe onto which Arabic aphorisms are written. The class will define aphorisms as short sayings that embody a general wisdom or moral and then identify some aphorisms from their own communities. The class will discuss the concept of “the voice of the object”—the idea that everyday objects are valued transmitters of principles and morals in Islamic cultures. The class will then discuss the importance of storytelling as a transmitter of morals within both Islamic and American cultures (e.g. *The Arabian Nights*, *Kalila and Dimna*, *Aesop’s Fables*, etc.). The class will read a story from *The Arabian Nights* and discuss the tale’s moral. Students will then decorate a trivet onto which they will write their own aphorism related to a moral or value that is important to them. At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be better prepared to engage with themes of storytelling and community values in the exhibition *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* while visiting the Brigham Young University’s Museum of Art.

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- ◆ Describe and make interpretations about Islamic art objects
- ◆ Define aphorisms and discuss their importance within communities
- ◆ Discuss the aphorisms within selected tales from *The Arabian Nights*
- ◆ Design a trivet with an aphorism written on its surface
- ◆ Acknowledge the role of storytelling and everyday objects in transmitting morals to a community

### Utah State Core Curriculum Standards

#### Visual Arts (Grade 3) Rainbow Chart

- ◆ Examine and discuss the use of shapes in artwork, industry, and other cultures

#### Visual Arts (Grade 6) Rainbow Chart

- ◆ Practice seeing and combining basic shapes found in common everyday objects

#### Social Studies (Grade 3) Utah Education Network

- ◆ Standard 2: Students will understand cultural factors that shape a community



**Language Arts (Grade 4) Common Core: Reading Standards for Literature**

- ◆ Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text

**Language Arts (Grade 5) Common Core: Speaking and Listening Standards**

- ◆ Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally

**Materials**

- ◆ Reproduction of the *Bowl* and *Horseshoe*. Reproductions of these images are included in Appendix II of this packet.
  - ◆ Selected tales from *The Arabian Nights* retold by Neil Philip
  - ◆ One 6" x 6" bisque tile for each student (bisque tiles are pre-fired ceramic tiles; they can be purchased at your local craft store)
  - ◆ Non-toxic acrylic paint
  - ◆ Clear acrylic varnish
  - ◆ Small paintbrushes
  - ◆ Large paintbrushes
  - ◆ Peel and stick rubber or cork pads (4 pads per tile)

**Lesson Steps****Day 1: Observation, Discussion, and Reflection****Observation and Discussion**

1. Show students images of the *Bowl* and *Horseshoe*. Have students look quietly at the artworks for 30 seconds. Then guide the class in a discussion about their observations of the two pieces. You may want to ask questions such as:
  - ◆ What shapes and patterns do you see in these objects?
  - ◆ What do the designs on these objects look like to you?
  - ◆ Do these objects have writing on them? If so, what do you think the writing says?
2. Share some background information about the objects
  - ◆ In Islamic cultures, artists often inscribe or paint aphorisms onto everyday objects like bowls, vases, and horseshoes to help the owner of the object remember important wisdoms. **Aphorisms** are short sayings that relay a general truth or moral. Sometimes the writing conveys a blessing over the owner or is a warning to protect the owner's safety. Everyday objects are important transmitters of morals and principles within Islamic cultures and are considered both visually beautiful and spiritually uplifting. These objects have a voice inasmuch as they tell us about the culture and worldview of Islamic communities. The *Bowl* has a **Kufic** inscription written in calligraphy that beautifies the bowl both visually and spiritually. The inscription reads, "He who talks much, errors much." This aphorism would have been a topic of conversation for those eating their meal together. What do you think this aphorism means? In Islamic tradition, silence is considered a sign of wisdom. The *Horseshoe* is intricately decorated with inlaid silver and is inscribed with a

message that is supposed to help the rider. It reads, “This, also, shall pass.” What do you think this aphorism means? Often, the inscription on one horseshoe acts as a riddle—it must be combined with the inscriptions on the other three horseshoes for the complete message to be revealed.

### Reflection

1. Discuss some of the aphorisms that are popular in American culture such as “All that glitters is not gold” or “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Talk about what these aphorisms mean and where we hear them. Discuss the importance of storytelling as one of the main ways we transmit the wisdom of these aphorisms to people in both Islamic and American cultures. Briefly review some familiar stories containing important morals such as “The Tortoise and the Hare” from *Aesop’s Fables*. Introduce ***The Arabian Nights*** as a collection of stories heroine Scheherazade tells her king over the course of 1,001 nights to placate his loneliness and anger. Explain that *The Arabian Nights* uses storytelling to impart timeless values. Using your discretion (as some stories have mature themes), choose a story from *The Arabian Nights* to read to the students. (E.g., “True Knowledge” is a concise story with a strong moral.) After reading the story you may want to ask questions such as:

- ◆ What do you think is the important moral from this story? Why do you think this?
- ◆ What are some morals or values that are important in our classroom? Our homes? Our community?
- ◆ What are some short sayings we can think of together to describe our community values?

2. Explain to students that they will be decorating a trivet onto which they will write an aphorism they create. As homework, have them write an original aphorism onto a piece of paper along with some of the designs they may want to use on their tiles. Explain to students that their aphorism should reflect a value that is important to them and their community.

### Day 2: Creating and Sharing Creating

1. Review the definition of an aphorism with students and remind them that they will be decorating a trivet onto which they will write their own aphorism.
2. Give each student a bisque tile, and have them paint an aphorism onto the face using a small paintbrush. Encourage students to use decorative strokes and stylized letters. They can also incorporate traditional Islamic patterning such the **arabesque** with its interlacing tendrils and lines. You may want to have examples of simple Islamic design posted around the classroom as inspiration. (Examples can be found in the “Internet Sources” section of this lesson plan.)
3. Explain to students that they may need to paint two coats, as the bisque tile is porous. Once the tile is dry (you may want to dry them overnight), have students use a large paintbrush to apply one or two coats of clear acrylic varnish.
4. Once the varnish is dry (you may want to dry them overnight), give each student 4 peel-and-stick rubber or cork pads; have students stick the rubber pads onto the four bottom corners of their tile.

### Sharing

1. Have students share their trivets with the class. Encourage them to talk about the aphorism they chose and why it is important to them.
2. Display the trivets for everyone to enjoy.

### Extension

Using tile adhesive and grout, combine and adhere the tiles to a board to make a classroom aphorism mosaic. Use grout to fill in the gaps between the tiles.

### Assessment

Students will be assessed on:

- ◆ Their understanding of the role aphorisms play within Islamic and American communities
- ◆ How well the decoration on their trivet demonstrates their understanding of aphorisms as well as an Islamic aesthetic
- ◆ Their ability to reflectively share their artistic process and intent with the class
- ◆ Their understanding of objects and stories as transmitters of a community's values

### Book Suggestions

*The Arabian Nights* retold by Neil Philip (ISBN-13: 978-0531068687)

*Kalila and Dimna: Fables of Friendship and Betrayal* retold by Ramsay Wood (ISBN-13: 978-0863566615)

*Aesop's Fables* retold by Jerry Pinkney (ISBN-13: 978-1587170003)

*Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* Exhibition Guide by Sabiha Al Khemir

### Internet Sources

Patterns in Islamic Art: <http://www.patterninislamicart.com/>

PBS's *Islam Empire of Faith*: <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/index.html>

*Beauty and Belief* Exhibition Website: <http://beauty-and-belief.byu.edu/>

# Post-Tour Lesson

## Magical Jinni Pots

### Grade Level

Lower Elementary, 1-3 (may be adapted for older students)

### Time Required

60 minutes

### Lesson Overview

Students will review two of the vessels they saw in the exhibition *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Cultures* and talk about their practical and aesthetic significance. The class will read “The Anklet” from *The Arabian Nights* retold by Neil Philip and discuss the role of the magical Jinni (genie) pot in the story. Students will create their own Jinni pot by decorating a paper maché pot with Islamic patterning. Inspired by the protagonist in “The Anklet,” students will write down three wishes to benefit their community--one wish for themselves, one wish for a classmate, and one wish for a family member--and store their wishes in the pot.

### Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- ◆ Describe the practical and aesthetic significance of vessels from the exhibition
- ◆ Identify geometric and organic patterns on Islamic pots
- ◆ Discuss important characters and objects in “The Anklet”
- ◆ Use Islamic patterning to design individual Jinni pots
- ◆ Write three Jinni pot wishes to benefit their community

### Utah State Core Curriculum Standards

#### Visual Arts (Grade 1) Rainbow Chart

- ◆ Recognize the difference between organic lines and man-made geometric lines

#### Visual Arts (Grade 2) Rainbow Chart

- ◆ Combine organic and geometric line to create simple, repetitive patterns

#### Social Studies (Grade 3) Utah Education Network

- ◆ Standard 2: Students will understand cultural factors that shape a community.

#### Language Arts (Kinder) Common Core: Reading Standards

- ◆ With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text

#### Language Arts (Grade 3) Common Core: Reading Standards

- ◆ Describe characters in a story (e.g. their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events



## Materials

- ◆ Reproduction of *Large Pot* and *Albarelo*. Reproductions of these images are included in Appendix II of this packet.
- ◆ *The Arabian Nights* retold by Neil Philip
- ◆ Small paper maché pots from any craft or home improvement store (one for each student). For an example, see: <http://www.ssw.com/item/paper-mache-mini-pots-PS1213/>
- ◆ Non-toxic tempura paint (red, blue, yellow, black, white, and gold)
- ◆ Paintbrushes
- ◆ Small strips of paper (three for each student)
- ◆ Pencils

## Lesson Steps

### Part 1: Observation, Discussion, and Reflection

#### Observation and Discussion

1. Show students an image of **Large Pot**. Have students look quietly at the artwork for 30 seconds. Then guide the class in a discussion about the vessel. You may want to ask questions such as:

- ◆ What kinds of lines do you see on this pot?
- ◆ What kinds of patterns do these lines make?
- ◆ What do you think this pot was used for?

2. Show students an image of the *Albarelo*. Have students look quietly at the artwork for 30 seconds. Then guide the class in a discussion about the vessel. You may want to ask questions such as:

- ◆ What lines do you see in this vessel? How are they different from the lines in the pot we just discussed?
- ◆ How are they similar?
- ◆ What kinds of patterns do these lines make?
- ◆ What do you think this vessel was used for?

3. Share some background information about the objects.

The design on *Large Pot* exemplifies the use of organic lines in Islamic Art. **Organic lines** are lines that represent nature. For example, the lines may resemble bird feathers, vines and tendrils, or flowers. When these lines repeat they create an organic pattern. The lines on the *Albarelo* exemplify the use of both organic and geometric lines. **Geometric lines** create shapes that we use in math such as squares, triangles, and rectangles. What geometric shapes do you see in the *Albarelo*? What organic lines do you see in the *Albarelo*?

#### Reflection

Tell the class that you are going to read a story about a very special vessel. Read or summarize “The Anklet” from *The Arabian Nights*. Discuss the significance of the **Jinni pot** with the class. You may want to ask them questions such as:

- ◆ What was so special about the youngest sister’s clay pot?
- ◆ What kinds of wishes did the youngest sister make with her Jinni pot?
- ◆ If you had a magical Jinni pot, what kinds of wishes would you make?

**Part 2: Creating and Sharing****Creating**

1. Explain to students that they will be making their own Jinni pot. Ask them to use their paint and paintbrush to decorate the outside of their pot with Islamic designs. Hang various Islamic patterns at the front of the room to provide students with visual inspiration. (Examples can be found in the “Internet Sources” section of this lesson plan.)
2. Once they finish painting their pots, give each student three small strips of paper. Ask them to write down three wishes: on one strip write a wish that will help themselves, on another strip write a wish that will help a classmate, and on the last strip write a wish that will help a family member. When they are finished, they can fold up their wishes and store them in their pot.

**Sharing**

1. Once dry, have students share their Jinni pots with the class. If they feel comfortable, invite them to share one or more of the wishes they put into their pots.
2. Display the Jinni pots in the room for everyone to enjoy.

**Extension**

As a class, compare and contrast the story of “The Anklet” with Cinderella. Introduce other popular stories or fairy tales that have Islamic or Middle Eastern roots (e.g. “Aladdin”). Have students write and illustrate their own, modern-day version of one of these fables/fairy tales.

**Assessment**

Students will be assessed on:

- ◆ Their ability to discuss the aesthetic and practical importance of Islamic vessels from the exhibition
- ◆ Their ability to define the role of the magical pot in “The Anklet”
- ◆ How well they followed directions in designing their own Jinni pot using Islamic patterns
- ◆ Their ability to write three Jinni pot wishes for themselves and others
- ◆ Their ability to reflectively share their artistic process and intent with the class

**Book Sources**

*The Arabian Nights* retold by Neil Philip (ISBN-13: 978-0531068687)

*Hands-on Ancient People, Volume I: Art Activities about Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Islam* by Yvonne Y. Merrill (ISBN-13: 978-0964317789)

*Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* Exhibition Guide by Sabiha Al Khemir

**Internet Sources**

*Beauty and Belief* Website: [www.Beauty-and-Belief.com](http://www.Beauty-and-Belief.com)

PBS’s *Islam Empire of Faith*: <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/index.html>

Patterns in Islamic Art: <http://www.patterninislamicart.com>

## Post-Tour Lesson

# Mythological Creature Sculptures

### Grade Level

Upper Elementary, 3-6 (may be adapted for younger students)

### Time Required

2 45-minute class periods (may be adapted for one 45-minute class period)

### Lesson Overview

Students will review some of the mythological creatures they saw in the exhibition *Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Cultures* including the *Griffin* and the *Mythical Peacock with a Woman's Head*; they will talk about the importance of mythological creatures in Islamic stories and culture. Students will discuss some of the mythological creatures from popular Western culture such as mermaids, unicorns, and centaurs. Using found objects, students will create a mythological creature from their own imagination. They will write a short story about their creature and how it uses its magical powers to benefit the community.

### Learning Outcomes

#### Students will be able to:

- ◆ Define 'mythological creature'
- ◆ Acknowledge the importance of mythological creatures in Islamic and Western cultures
- ◆ Describe specific creatures from the exhibition and why they are significant
- ◆ Create a mythological creature using found objects
- ◆ Write a short story about their creature and its magical powers

### Utah State Core Curriculum Standards

#### Visual Arts (Grade 5) Rainbow Chart

- ◆ After listening to a science fiction story, create an imaginary alien or monster using basic shapes and 3-D forms

#### Social Studies (Grade 3) Utah Education Network

- ◆ Standard 2: Students will understand cultural factors that shape a community.

#### Language Arts (Grade 3) Common Core: Writing Standards

- ◆ Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences



**Language Arts (Grade 4) Common Core: Speaking and Listening Standards**

- ◆ Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally

**Materials**

- ◆ Reproduction of *Griffin* and *Mythical Peacock with a Woman's Head*. Reproductions of these images are included in Appendix II of this packet.
- ◆ Images of mythological creatures from popular Western culture
- ◆ Textiles: leftover fabric, faux fur, yarn, string
- ◆ Bits and Bobs: buttons, beads, seashells, pipe cleaners, balloons
- ◆ Cardboard: toilet paper rolls, paper towel rolls, corrugated cardboard, egg cartons
- ◆ Textured Materials: sand paper, feathers, magazines, maps, Styrofoam
- ◆ Glue
- ◆ Tape
- ◆ Paper
- ◆ Pencils

**Lesson Steps****Day 1: Observation, Discussion, and Reflection**  
**Observation and Discussion**

1. Show students an image of the *Griffin*. Have students look quietly at the artwork for 30 seconds. Then guide the class in a discussion about the sculpture. You may want to ask questions such as:
  - ◆ What do you see in this sculpture?
  - ◆ What animals do you recognize?
  - ◆ What material do you think this sculpture is made out of?
2. Show students an image of the *Mythical Peacock with a Woman's Head*. Have students look quietly at the artwork for 30 seconds. Guide the class in a discussion about the painting. You may want to ask questions such as:
  - ◆ What do you see in this painting?
  - ◆ What is similar about this mythical peacock and the sculpture we just looked at?
  - ◆ What is different about this mythical peacock and the sculpture we just looked at?
3. Share some background information about the objects.
  - ◆ Both of these objects are representations of **mythological creatures**. Mythological creatures are similar to monsters in that they are make believe and often look unlike anything we have ever seen in real life. Sometimes they are part human and part animal like the mythical peacock. Sometimes they are composed of many different animals like the griffin, which is part feline and part bird. Often mythological creatures have special powers such as the ability to protect people from harm. For example, a griffin has the spiritual power of a bird and the protective ferocity of a lion, giving it the ability to protect

people spiritually and physically. Similarly, the mythical peacock represents heaven and is endowed with tremendous spiritual power. Mythological creatures are very important in Islamic cultures not only because they act as guardian figures but because they remind us that all animals are interconnected. The bird cannot survive without the worm and the lion cannot survive without the zebra. Every animal is important in the world community.

### Reflection

1. Discuss with the class some of the popular mythological creatures from Western culture. You may want to show them images of mermaids, unicorns, and/or centaurs and talk about the special powers these creatures have. Discuss examples of popular books and movies that feature mythological creatures such as *Harry Potter* or *The Lord of the Rings*. You may want to ask them questions such as:

- ◆ Can you think of any mythological creatures you've read about in a book?
- ◆ Can you think of any mythological creatures you've seen in movies?
- ◆ Did any of these creatures have special powers that helped the community?
- ◆ Would you like to have a mythological creature as a friend? What special powers would you want him/her to have?

2. Explain to students that they will be making their own mythological creature sculptures out of found objects. Ask them to consider what different animal or human attributes they would like to include in their sculptures, and have them create a quick sketch of their ideas.

### Day 2: Creating and Sharing

#### Creating

1. Briefly review the definition of a mythological creature and its importance in Islamic and Western cultures.
2. Using their sketch from the day before as a guide, encourage students to choose from a variety of materials to create their sculpture. You may want to brainstorm some ideas with the class about ways to use the assorted objects and materials to create different animal or human attributes. (E.g., toilet paper rolls can be used for legs, pencils can be used for horns, sea shells can be used for eyes, etc.) Make sure students know that there is no right way to create their sculptures.
3. Once they finish their sculptures, ask them to consider what special powers their mythological creatures have and how they can help the community with those powers. Have them write a short story about an adventure they have with their mythological creature friend in which they help their family, neighbors, or classmates in some way.

#### Sharing

1. Have students share their sculptures with the class. Encourage them to read the short story they wrote about their adventure with their mythological creature.
2. Display the creatures in the room for everyone to enjoy.

#### Extension

Write and perform a classroom play using the different mythological creatures each student has created.

#### Assessment

Students will be assessed on:

- ◆ Their ability to discuss the importance of mythological creatures in both Islamic and Western cultures
- ◆ How well they followed directions in designing and creating a mythological creature out of found objects
- ◆ Their ability to write a short story about their creature and its magical powers
- ◆ Their understanding of the importance of using special gifts to help other people in the community
- ◆ Their ability to reflectively share their artistic process and intent with the class

### **Book Sources**

*Arabian Nights: Three Tales* retold by Deborah Nourse Lattimore (ISBN-13: 9780060247348)

*The Arabian Nights* retold by Neil Philip (ISBN-13: 978-0531068687)

*The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien

*Harry Potter* by JK Rowling

*Beauty and Belief: Crossing Bridges with the Arts of Islamic Culture* Exhibition Guide by Sabiha Al Khemir

### **Internet Sources**

*Beauty and Belief* Website: [www.Beauty-and-Belief.com](http://www.Beauty-and-Belief.com)

PBS's *Islam Empire of Faith*: <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/index.html>

*Marvels of Creatures and Strange Things Existing* (ancient Islamic text online): <http://archive.nlm.nih.gov/proj/ttp/flash/qazwini/qazwini.html>

# Glossary

**Amulet:** Any object used to bring good luck or protection

**Aphorism:** A short saying embodying a general truth or piece of wisdom; examples include, “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” or “A penny saved is a penny earned”

**Arabesque:** Traditional Islamic decorative patterning that is identified by its use of intertwining lines that resemble vines and foliage

**The Arabian Nights:** Also known as *One Thousand and One Nights*, *The Arabian Nights* is a collection of folk tales compiled during the Islamic Golden Age (c. 750 C.E.–c. 1250 C.E.). The text tells the story of a young bride named Scheherazade who attempts to mollify her angry husband, the king, through 1,001 nights of storytelling.

**Community:** A community is a group of people living together in one place. Communities can be formed in neighborhoods, classrooms, or at home. In communities, people work together and learn together. We often make friends in the communities in which we live.

**Geometric Line:** A line that forms an angular, geometric shape such as a rectangle or square

**Khamsa Hand:** A hand-shaped amulet popular in the Middle East and North Africa that is often hung in homes and worn as jewelry to bring health and protection from evil spirits. Also commonly referred to as Hamsa Hand.

**Islam:** A monotheistic religion practiced by almost a quarter of the world’s population. Islam is found in countries all over the world including Indonesia, Iraq, and America. Followers of Islam study a sacred text called the Qur’an, pray to Allah (God), and revere Muhammad as a prophet.

**Jinni Pot:** A magical pot featured in the story “The Anklet” from *The Arabian Nights*. A jinni (genie) lives in the pot and grants wishes to the pot’s owner.

**Kufic Script:** The oldest calligraphic form of the various Arabic scripts. The first copies of the Qur’an were written in Kufic script.

**Organic Line:** A line that forms an irregular shape like one that might be found in nature

**Muslim:** An adherent to the religion of Islam

**Mythological Creature:** An imaginary creature from fairy tales or folk lore that often contains attributes from different animals or humans. For example, a mermaid is a mythological creature that has the torso of a woman and the tail of a fish.

**Symbol:** Something such as a word, color, or object that represents something else such as an idea or a person. For example, a red octagon is a traffic symbol for ‘stop.’



**Bowl**

Tortoise-shell inlaid in ivory, Turkey, circa 1900, H. 2.5 cm Diam. 13.5 cm. Private Collection, London



**Incense Burner**

Cast bronze with openwork and engraved decoration, Eastern Iran or Afghanistan, 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century, H. 24.5 cm W. 11.5 cm L. 29.5 cm. The David Collection, Copenhagen 48/1981



**Large Pot**

Silver plated copper, Hajj Ghasem Satvat; engraved by Hossein Bazyar, Iran, 1969, H. 33 cm W. 35,6 cm. Dr. Mary H. and Hooshang Farahnakian



**Horseshoe**

Silver inlaid iron, Turkey, 18<sup>th</sup> century, H. 10.2 cm W. 8.5 cm. Ahuan Islamic Art



**Mythical Peacock with a Woman's Head**

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, India (Andhra Pradesh), circa 1750, Hyderabad, H. 20.9 cm W. 11.7 cm. The San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection 1990:531



**Griffin**

Cast bronze with engraved decoration, Probably Spain, 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century. H. 107 cm W. 43 cm L. 87 cm. Opera della Primaziale Pisana, Pisa



**Albarello**

Fritware, decoration carved through a black slip under a turquoise glaze, Silhouette ware, Iran (probably Kashan), late 12<sup>th</sup> century, H. 29 cm Diam. 26.2 cm. The al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait LNS 207 C



**Bowl**  
Earthenware, slip painted, Iran or Transoxiana, 10<sup>th</sup> century, H. 6.6 cm Diam. 19.1 cm. The al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait LNS 119 C