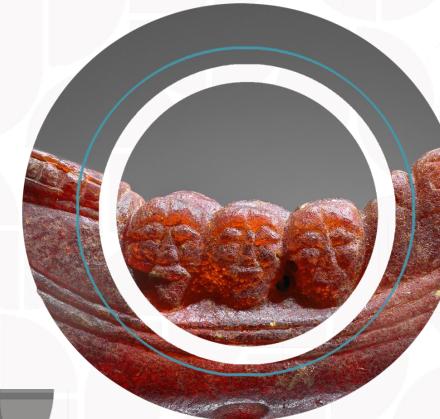


Grades 6-8  
LEARNING GUIDE

# EXPLORE AN ANCIENT AMULET

getty





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## FEATURED ART OBJECT

### Pendant: Ship with Figures



Object Name: [Pendant: Ship with Figures](#)

Date Created: 600-575 BCE

Place Created: Italy

Culture: Etruscan

Material: Amber

Maker: Unknown

Dimensions: 35 x 10 x 120 mm

(1 3/8 x 3/8 x 4 3/4 in.)

Gift of Gordon McLendon

Getty Museum

This large (almost 5-inch-long) pendant was carved out of **amber** in about 600 BCE. It is Etruscan work, made by an artist whose homeland was north of Rome in Etruria. By this time the Etruscans had gained power over a large area of central Italy, including Rome, and an Etruscan king was in power in Rome. Amber was a beautiful material, and the pendant's size implies a wealthy owner. This carved piece is three-dimensional and shows a wooden ship carrying seven people. It is a merchant vessel with a rounded belly to hold lots of cargo (traded objects). Such ships sailed along the coast of Italy and into the Mediterranean Sea to trade. Seafaring in small vessels was dangerous, and shipwrecks were always a risk. Merchants had to accept losses. Sailors had to understand winds, currents, and stars.

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#### Amber

Tree resin that has become a fossil. It is semi-transparent and gem-like. Amber is used in jewelry today as it has been for thousands of years.



## FEATURED ART OBJECT

### **Odyssey**

Greek epic poem about the return of the hero Odysseus from the Trojan War, told orally for centuries and then written down by about 700 BCE.

Attributed to the poet Homer.

### **Amulet**

Object, organic or inorganic, believed to provide protection and turn away bad luck. Amulets were often worn as jewelry in antiquity.

Six sailors with round faces and short hair sit in the middle of the pendant ship. They face outward, three on each side, back-to-back. Next to them is a seventh person, perhaps a passenger or the captain. He has a long beard and hair. He sits higher up than the others, toward the stern (back) of the ship, in profile. From either side of the pendant, a viewer can see him facing three people who are looking out at us. This man leans against a rectangular cabin and seems to be holding a sack. There is one hole at each end of the ship and one hole in the middle (between two sailors' necks) for hanging the pendant.

An amber ship may have symbolized sea travel, in general, or a merchant's trade in amber. It may have been carved because of a successful or especially dangerous voyage. Perhaps it even showed a journey to the afterlife. Or maybe the owner just enjoyed the tales in Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus, the hero of the *Odyssey*, sailed home across the Mediterranean after many dangerous adventures, bringing a cargo of gifts. Whatever the ship's story was, the pendant was likely an **amulet**, providing magical support.



## FEATURED ART OBJECT

Amber has special qualities. It reflects light and looks liquid or glows like fire. It becomes warm when it is held. It can also float. The ancient Roman author Pliny the Elder wrote of its ability to heal and protect from harm. Magic, religion, and medicine were connected in antiquity. Supernatural help was often needed, especially during life changes and transitions (birth, marriage, travel, disease). An amulet could be intended to prevent specific harm or provide a general defense against illness and bad fortune. Amulets were carried, worn as jewelry, and hung in homes and shops. They were also placed in tombs as burial gifts. Some amulets needed a special chant or prayer to activate them. Others were made of materials, like amber, thought to have natural powers.

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# VOCABULARY

## **Amber**

Tree resin that has become a fossil. It is semi-transparent and gem-like. Amber is used in jewelry today as it has been for thousands of years.

## **Amulet**

Object, organic or inorganic, believed to provide protection and turn away bad luck. Amulets were often worn as jewelry in antiquity.

## **Odyssey**

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TAKE A CLOSER LOOK



Closeup of Pendant: Ship with Figures



## DISCUSSION

### Analyze an Ancient Pendant

30  
MINS

**Up close observation and discussion to form inferences and opinions about this ancient pendant made of amber.**

**OBJECTIVES:**

After completing this activity, you will be able to:

- Examine and describe an ancient object
- Listen to others' perspectives about an ancient object

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- High-resolution digital images of [Pendant: Ship with Figures](#)
- [Featured Art Object information](#) for Pendant: Ship with Figures
- [Audio: Pendant with a Ship Carrying Sailors](#)

**Note for Teachers:**

This activity works best as a lead-in activity before students read about or research the object and focus specifically on what can be discovered through visual analysis.



# DISCUSSION

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Begin by looking closely at [Pendant: Ship with Figures](#) using high-resolution images.
2. Then discuss the following questions as a class or in small groups.

## Discussion Questions:

- What is a pendant?
- This pendant was “carved.” What does it mean to say that something is “carved”? How do you carve something?
- What kind of material do you think this pendant is carved from?
- Describe the details you see carved on this pendant.
- There are seven sailors shown. Can you identify them all? (You might need to look at the object using images that show different points of view.)
- Can you point to one of the sailors who is facing forward? Can you point to one sailor who is shown in the profile?

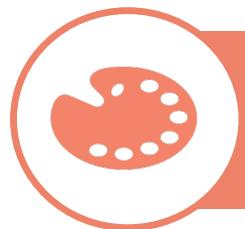


## DISCUSSION

3. Next, read the related [Featured Art Object information](#) and/or listen to the related [audio clip](#).
  4. Discuss which details you read that you already noticed from your visual analysis of the object.
  5. Identify four new pieces of information that you learned from reading about the object and/or listening to the audio clip. Make a list of the new information that you gathered.
- 

### Did You Know?

Etruscan culture was Italy's earliest civilization (about 800-100 BCE). During the time when this pendant was created, Rome was even ruled by an Etruscan king.



## ART-MAKING ACTIVITY

# Design and Make an Amulet for Today

90  
MINS

**Explore the historical role of amulets, and then design and make an amulet for yourself or someone you care about.**

### OBJECTIVES:

After completing this activity, you will be able to:

- Describe the role of amulets both in the ancient world and how they might be used today
- Identify and interpret a work of art or design that reveals how people live and what they value

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Sketch Paper
- Pencil
- Art materials to make your amulet (choose among the following options or other similar materials)
  - Drawing materials (pencils, pens, or markers) and paper
  - Clay (model, air-dry or oven-dry) and optionally, clay carving or shaping tools such as toothpicks. (Examples of clay brands: polymer: Sculpey or Fimo; oven-dry: Fimo's Soft Clay; air-dry: Crayola Model Magic)



# ART-MAKING ACTIVITY

- Found/recycled materials for a 2D or 3D assemblage
- **OPTIONAL:** Leather cords, heavy-duty string, or ribbons

## DIRECTIONS:

### Introduction

1. Before getting started with your art project, discuss the following questions in class or in small groups:

### Discussion Questions:

- What is an **amulet**?
- What kinds of things did people need or want protection from in ancient times?
- What kinds of things could people need or want protection from today?
- Compare what you came up with. What are the similarities and differences between ancient times and today when it comes to people's need for protection?



## ART-MAKING ACTIVITY

### Did You Know?

Homer's *Odyssey* tells of unlikely dangers facing early sailors. In addition to winds and storms, Odysseus met up with cannibals, the bird-human Sirens who sang sailors to their deaths, and Skylla, who ate Odysseus's men with her six heads.

### Plan Your Project

2. Think about the person you are making an amulet for. Is it for yourself? Someone you care about?
  3. Consider what kinds of protection might be useful for the person for whom the amulet will be made. Brainstorm and make a list of ideas. You could also think about things that might be worries or fears.
  4. Narrow down your list of ideas to one or two. You will be designing an amulet that might help to offer protection against these things.
  5. Think about what your amulet might look like. What materials will you use? Will it have specific images? Will it be 2D or 3D?
  6. Consider how your amulet will be carried or worn. Is it a bracelet or necklace? Can it go in a pocket or bag? Will it stay at home or in a specific place?
  7. Make a brief sketch of the amulet that you imagine.
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# ART-MAKING ACTIVITY

## Make an Amulet

8. Use various materials to create your amulet, depending on what's available. Here are some suggestions:
  - Keep it simple: Draw your amulet with pencils, pens, or markers, using your brief sketch as a guide.
  - Sculpt your amulet using clay and your fingers, carving, or shaping tools (like toothpicks).
  - Make an assemblage of found materials. It could be 2D or 3D.
9. Consider how your amulet will be carried or worn. Does it need hooks or holes added for attaching a string?

## EXPLORE MORE

Write a paragraph explaining what kinds of protection the amulet you designed might offer. Describe your design decisions, the materials you used, and how this amulet might be used.

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## RELATED LINKS

[Ancient Carved Ambers in the J. Paul Getty Museum](#) online book from Getty Museum

[Chapter 7 Pendant: Ship with Figures](#) from Getty Museum

[All That Glitters: Jewelry in the Ancient Mediterranean](#) from Google Arts and Culture

[Amber in Antiquity](#) from World History Encyclopedia

[Etruscan Religion](#) from World History Encyclopedia

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# STANDARDS

## National Core Arts Standards:

- 6.VA:Cr1.1** Combine concepts collaboratively to generate innovative ideas for creating art.
- 6.VA:Cr2.1** Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design.
- 6.VA:Cr3** Reflect on whether personal artwork conveys the intended meaning and revise accordingly.
- 6.VA:Re7.1** Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value.
- 6.VA:Cn11** Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses.
- 7.VA:Cr2.1** Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and approaches in creating works of art or design.
- 7.VA:Cr3** Reflect on and explain important information about personal artwork in an artist statement or another format.
- 7.VA:Re7.1** Explain how the method of display, the location, and the experience of an artwork influence how it is perceived and valued.
- 7.VA:Cn11** Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses.
- 8.VA:Cr1.1** Document early stages of the creative process visually and/or verbally in traditional or contemporary media.
- 8.VA:Cr2.1** Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of artmaking or designing.
- 8.VA:Cr3** Apply relevant criteria to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for a work of art or design in progress.

## Common Core English Language Arts Standards:

- SL.6.1.A** Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.
- SL.6.1.C** Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.



# STANDARDS

**SL6.2** Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

**SL.6.4** Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

**SL.6.5** Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

**RI.6.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

**RI.6.7** Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

## California Social Studies Standards:

**6.7** Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures during the development of Rome.

**6.7.3** Identify the location of and the political and geographic reasons for the growth of Roman territories and expansion of the empire, including how the empire fostered economic growth through the use of currency and trade routes.

**6.7.8** Discuss the legacies of Roman Art and architecture, technology and science, literature, language, and law.