

THE AGE OF ANTIQUITY

MIDDLE SCHOOL ACTIVITY SHEET



SUMER: INGENIOUS INNOVATORS

Primitive people? Hardly! The Sumerians were accomplished in numerous areas including music. This detail from the “Standard of Ur” illustrates their advances in music. Click on the image to find out more about the Standard. Want to see a real Sumerian lyre? Click [HERE](#).

SUMERIAN INVENTIONS:

The Sumerians were very creative and invented many items that we still use today.

Look at the inventions below:



WRITING ACTIVITY:



Can you imagine life today without these inventions? Which invention do you think has impacted our lives the most?

Write a paragraph explaining which invention you chose and why. Describe how that invention has impacted us and what life would be like without it.

ARCHITECTURAL MODEL:

The Sumerians were not just ingenious innovators. They were also ingenious architects. Do you remember learning about their ziggurats? Would you like to build one? Click on the picture below to learn how.



ZIGGURAT OF UR

ART ACTIVITY: PERSONALIZED SUMERIAN SEAL:

Have you ever signed an important document? Sumerians used cylinder seals instead of signatures. The cylinder seal was small and was covered in writing, pictures, or both. Sumerians would press and roll their cylinder seals across wet clay instead of signing with pen and paper like we do today.

Find out how to make your own cylindrical seal on the next page!



Cylinder Seal Project

Adult supervision recommended for the wire and oven.

(Adapted from *Ancient Egyptians and their Neighbors: An Activity Guide*, Marian Broida. Chicago Review Press, 1999.)

Materials:

- Newspaper
- 1 block polymer clay, such as Sculpey or Fimo, in one or more colors.
- 8-inch length of heavy wire, such as the straight part of a coat hanger
- Plastic knife
- Scissors
- Sheet of typing paper (the paper needs to be somewhat transparent)
- Marker
- Pencil
- Oven-proof bowl
- Oven
- Potholders
- Toothpicks
- 12-inch length of thin cord

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven according to the directions on the clay and cover your table with newspapers.
2. Using half of the clay block, knead it and roll it into a fat cylinder one to two inches long. (You can knead several colors together if you like.)
3. Using the wire, pierce the middle of the cylinder from one end to the other.
4. Twist the wire so the hole gets bigger. Leave the wire inside and move the clay to the center of the wire. (It will look like an elongated clay “bead” strung on a wire running lengthwise through the clay.)
5. Use the plastic knife to trim the ends of the cylinder.
6. Cut a 1”x 2” piece from the typing paper.
7. Using a thin marker, write your name on it in big letters.
8. Turn the paper over and place the pattern on the clay to trace your name backward.
9. Remove the paper and using the scratched markings as a guide, even out the design more clearly with the pencil.



Directions (cont.):

10. Using toothpicks, dig out the letters in the clay, so they are wide and deep. (You can carve your name along the length of the cylinder or around it—or even diagonally.)
11. Carve other decorations if you like. Remember, whatever you carve out (as an indented, recessed area) will appear as a raised area when you use the seal.
12. Lay the wire across the rim of the bowl so that the cylinder is suspended in the middle of it.
13. Bake according to the clay directions.
14. When the clay is done, remove the bowl from the oven with potholders and let it cool. Slide the seal off the wire. **Remember to turn off the oven.
15. Form the remaining wet clay into a flat rectangle. It should be wider than your seal.
16. Roll your seal across the clay, gently pressing.
17. Use the knife to cut apart and trim each impression of your name.
18. Once the pressed clay is dry, you can use these tags as name tags for your desk or room or as a place card at the dinner table.
19. Be sure to clean your cylinder seal with a toothpick after making impressions. It will clean best while the clay is still moist.
20. To wear your seal like a Sumerian, push the cord through the hole and tie it around your neck.

ART ACTIVITY: MAKE A SUMERIAN LADY'S HEADDRESS AND NECKLACES:

Use materials you have at home to make a reproduction of a headdress or piece of jewelry found in Ancient Sumer. Before you begin, click [HERE](#) to view pictures from the Penn Museum for inspiration. Take time to appreciate all the wonderful detail provided in each photo.

Suggested Materials:

- Newspaper or other cover to protect the table
- Paper: to sketch design
- Pencil
- String or thin gauge wire like floral wire
- Hot Glue Gun and glue sticks (Please use parental caution when using a hot glue gun.)
- Metallic Paint markers
- Gold or aluminum foil
- Beads or glitter



Suggested Materials (cont):

- Posterboard or cardboard: to make a strip around your head
- Stapler or tape: to secure the ends of the headband
- Matboard or posterboard: for cutting out leaves or other shapes (You may be able to get some leftover from a local frame shop.)
- Model Magic: to form beads, earrings or leaves
- Macaroni Noodles: to paint for beads
- Ribbon or curling ribbon: to form base of headdress underneath
- Gold or metallic pipe cleaners: to form base of headdress or gold rosettes
- Cosmetology Mannequin Head or a ball of approximate size

Directions:

1. Plan your design. Go to the linked websites and study the images. Sketch out your plan. Study the layers of the headdresses and the “hairstyle.” (It doesn’t have to be exactly like the picture.)
2. Decide on the materials you would like to use and gather them. This may require going to a store or ordering online.
3. Find a base on which to build or form your headdress. A mannequin head is not necessary. Be creative. Maybe you have a mixing bowl or ball that can serve as the head. You may need to cover it in foil so that your bowl or ball doesn’t get covered in hot glue.
4. Cut a strip of posterboard or cardboard to be the firm base of your headband. You can attach other decorations to this. Measure around your head and leave an extra 2” to overlap.
5. Form leaves and rosettes by cutting them out of matboard and coloring them with paint markers or embossing them. You could go another route and make them out of Model Magic and paint them.
6. Use wire to make shapes that dangle.
7. Begin connecting the parts of your beautiful headdress with wire, pipe cleaners, or ribbon while carefully using the hot glue gun.
8. Add decorations until you’re satisfied.
9. Be flexible. Don’t get frustrated. Take your time. You can work on it more than one day. This is probably how the people who made the original headdress felt!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [*Ram in the Thicket*](#)
- [*Votive Male Worshiper*](#)
- [Cylinder Seal](#)
- [Overview of Sumerian culture](#)
- [Musical Instrument and Theory Discussion](#)
- [Fashion](#)
- [Sumerian Wheels and Engineering](#)
- [*Ancient Egyptians and their Neighbors*](#) is a wonderful resource for Mesopotamian art related projects, including the two on this Activity Sheet.

Due to the changing nature of web resources, M&G strongly urges you as the parent to preview these sites before your child accesses them. The fact that these sites are available on this handout does not imply that M&G endorses their content from the standpoint of morals, philosophy, theology, or scientific hypotheses.

EDUCATIONAL MISSION STATEMENT

Through tours, events, and publications, the Museum & Gallery at Bob Jones University seeks to partner with educators in fulfilling all of the National Visual Arts Content Standards. By integrating art into the core curriculum, students learn to value the arts, to communicate through the arts, and to become creative problem solvers. M&G's individual STEAM lessons and fully-developed unit plans are designed to help students better understand history and culture in light of the arts, to improve their literary interest and understanding through visual storytelling, to hone their aesthetic perceptions and to enrich their analytical skills. Through this mission, M&G is privileged to inspire educators in the task of developing a community of citizens who have the ability to think, feel, and understand the world in which they live.

MUSEUM  GALLERY

at Bob Jones University

www.bjumg.org