

Objects linked to The Iliad and The Odyssey at the Ashmolean

- Most objects connected with The Iliad and The Odyssey are on display in Gallery 16 : The Greek World.
- Scenes are painted on Greek pottery and illustrated through other objects in the Ashmolean's collections. Homer himself is represented in sculpture and casts of statues.
- As well as forming the basis for Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, the poignant stories about the causes, battles, warriors and aftermath of the ten year siege by the Greeks on the city of Troy captured the imagination of ancient Greek artists.
- Around the eighth century BC they began to paint images of Greek myths and legends on pottery. They used these pots for storage, drinking and as vessels for personal hygiene, also for rituals. These mythological paintings served as a way of showing new ideas, beliefs and ways of thinking.

Other galleries containing Greek Objects

- Gallery 7: Money
- Gallery 6: Reading and Writing
- Gallery 14: Cast gallery
- Gallery 20: Aegean World
- Gallery 13: Rome
- Gallery 21: Greek and Roman Sculpture

Gallery 16: The Greek World

1. Marble head of Homer, AD1-100



Homer is thought to have been a travelling poet who spoke his verse aloud, following a long tradition of storytelling. All portraits of Homer were created long after his death. Artists typically portray him as blind, so his opened eyes are unusual here.

LI 1022.1

Gallery 16: The Greek World

2. Wedding of Peleus and Thetis, Gela, Sicily, 525-475 BC



The goddess of discord, Eris, was not invited to the wedding but came anyway with an apple inscribed 'fairest one of all'. It is this apple that started the cycle of events that led to the Trojan War. Athenian black-figure lekythos (oil jar) attributed to the Painter of Oxford 245.

AN 1889.1012

Gallery 16: The Greek World

3. Achilles fights the Ethiopian king Memnon, 550-501BC



The Greek warrior Achilles fights the Ethiopian king Memnon in front of their divine mothers Thetis and Eos. Athenian black-figure amphora (storage jar) attributed to the Antimenes Painter.

AN 1965.116

Gallery 16: The Greek World

4. Achilles and Ajax , 550-501BC



Resting from battle, Achilles and Ajax play a board game in front of the goddess Athena. Athenian black-figure oinochoe (jug) attributed to the Painter of Oxford 224.

AN1885.653

Gallery 16: The Greek World

5. Odysseus escapes from Polyphemus, 550-501 BC



Odysseus escapes from the blinded cyclops Polyphemus tied under a huge ram from the monster's flock. Athenian black-figure lekythos (oil jar).

AN1943.249

Gallery 16: The Greek World

6. Odysseus, Thebes, Greece, 425-375 BC



Holding a trident and blown by the North Wind Boreas, the hero Odysseus surfs across the sea on two overturned amphorae. Greek letters name the figures. Boetian black-figure skyphos (deep drinking cup) attributed to the Cabirion Group.

AN1896-1908 G.249

Gallery 16: The Greek World

7. The Odyssey , plaster casts from Trysa, Lycia, c370BC



This section of a relief frieze was originally situated on the inner south wall of the funerary enclosure for a local elite family. It depicts, left to right: Penelope with a maid behind a chair gesturing to female companions; two servants at Odysseus' court, the despairing maid Melanthe and the swineherd Eumaios; Odysseus with a bow and arrows and his son Telemachus with a sword, both attacking Penelope's suitors lying on couches, banqueting. CG A 119 a-f

Gallery 13: Rome

8. Felix Gem, the sack of Troy, AD1-50, probably made in Rome



Odysseus , wearing a hat, and Diomedes. The Palladion, cult statue of the warrior Goddess Athena showing her helmet and spear, is already in Diomedes' grasp. This scene reflects the story of the Trojan War as told in Virgil's Aeneid. The gem is signed 'Felix made me' in Greek letters, while the name of the Roman owner, Calpurnius Severus, is written above Diomedes' head.

AN1966.1808

Gallery 14: Cast Gallery

9. Archelaos relief, second century BC



The relief celebrates Homer and the Muses. Zeus reclines with Mnemosyne (Memory), mother of the Muses, next to him. Apollo and the Muses are shown below. Homer is seated at the left to receive the cult honors, flanked by the Iliad and Odyssey. D95

Gallery 20: Aegean World

10. Odysseus and Polyphemus, c500BC



Attic black-figure ware lekythos showing Odysseus escaping from Polyphemus, attributed to the Theseus Painter.

AN1934.372

Lines of enquiry: Classics

- Re tell the story of The Odyssey using objects and images, reflecting the oral tradition.
- Explore shapes and designs of Greek pots.
- See how sculpture and objects show different themes e.g. leadership, heroism, victory.
- What do objects and their decoration reveal about daily life in ancient Greece?
- What was the significance of the gods in myths and everyday life for the Greeks?
- Discover more about crafts and craftspeople in ancient Greece using objects as evidence.
- Research Homer and other Greek poets, orators, artists and philosophers.

Lines of enquiry: Art & Design

- Explore different styles, images and techniques used to decorate pottery and find out about the different 'Painters' of Greek pots.
- Look at the way the Greeks represented the human form through illustration and sculpture. Compare and contrast their style, skill and approach with different cultures and times.
- Make a study of key design elements from ancient Greek objects including the key and egg and dart pattern. Find examples of other designs and use these as inspiration to create your own repeat patterns.
- Research different shapes of pottery and explore how shape and form have changed over time. Design pots for storing or drinking which reflect their function today.

Cross curricular links

- History: the rise and expansion of the Greek empire, achievements of Greek civilization and its legacy today
- English: storytelling and the oral tradition
- Citizenship: explore the origins of democracy

Working with objects: key questions

- Who made it?
- Where and when was it made?
- What materials is it made from?
- How was it made?
- What was it used for? How was it used?
- Who used / owned it?
- How might it be interpreted by different people? At different times?



Circe at her loom, she invited Odysseus's crew to a feast, laced with magical poison. AN1896.1908.G 249

Further resources (to change)

The Beazley Archive:

<http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/tools/default.htm>

Cast Gallery

<http://www.ashmolean.org/departments/castgallery/research/>

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