

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Neponset River Watershed

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John Joseph Enneking, *Neponset River, Hyde Park*, 1891, oil on canvas, Museum purchase 1974.8

The Neponset River is a 29-mile inlet that starts in Foxborough, Massachusetts and ends in Dorchester/Quincy. It runs through 14 cities in the state and is surrounded by marshlands and freshwater wetlands.

During the 1600s, the Neponset tribe, along with the Nipmuc, Pokanuket, and Wampanoag tribes, inhabited various areas surrounding the river. The earliest recorded history by colonists begins in 1619 when Native Americans traveled down the river to

trade furs with English settlers. Soon after that, tribes were greatly affected by disease, war, and theft by European settlers.

After 1620, the river became one of the first in New England to be utilized for water power and a series of dams and mills were built. This included the country's first paper mill, gunpowder mill, and mechanized chocolate production. Over time, the Neponset River and its streams have been modified for various human activities, but wildlife diversity remains rich.



**Observe the painting of the river and compare it to the modern photograph. How do you think human activities and technologies have affected the Neponset River and surrounding communities?**

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## West African Masks - Female Power

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The mask on the right was created by a Yoruba artist in Nigeria during the 20th century. It is used in masquerades in Southern Yorubaland to honor “Our Mothers,” who include elderly women, female ancestors, and deities. Gelede masquerades can include characters based on anyone in society, but this specific mask would have highlighted women’s powers.

Look closely at this object. Pay close attention to material, details, etc. Discuss the following questions with a partner.

What do you notice?

What do you think?

What do you wonder about it?



Yoruba, *Gelede mask*, 20th century, polychromed wood, Gift of John Friedman and Jane Furse (Class of 1979), 2003.79



This *Sowe* mask is from the Mende-speaking people of southern and eastern Sierra Leone (along with a small group in Liberia). This mask is specifically worn by women in the *Sande* society, which is an all-female association made to teach the principles of womanhood. It is used in music and dance performances.

Look closely at this object.

What do you notice about the form of this mask?

What do you think are the symbolic meanings of what you see?

How do you feel about what you see?

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# Asmat Art

New Guinea is an island in the eastern Malay Archipelago. It is comprised of two parts: a western section of Indonesian provinces and the eastern country of Papua New Guinea. The Asmat people live on the western coast, in hundreds of villages ranging in size of 35-2,000 people.



Closely observe the object and pay attention to the overall shape, color, and designs.

Do you think this object has a function in daily life? Why or why not?

How do you think it was made? Is there any evidence of the artist's technique or tools?

Write answers below to share with a partner, or the class.

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## Asmat Art - Additional information/context

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New Guinea is an island in the eastern Malay Archipelago. It is comprised of two parts: a western section of Indonesian provinces and the eastern country of Papua New Guinea. The Asmat people live on the western coast, in hundreds of villages ranging in size of 35-2,000 people.



This is a Vasem or war shield, from the Asmat people. Traditionally, they were used to protect warriors in battle, and the carved and painted images were meant to frighten the enemy. The symbols and patterns also symbolize the power of their ancestors for protection. Designs will vary on the region and village that the shield comes from.

Wood carving is a very important to the Asmat, and wood carvers are highly respected. In their culture, *Fumeripits* is considered to be the first wood carver and all carvers (*wowipits*) are obligated to continue his work. The Asmat people believe that there is a close connection between humans and trees, so wood is seen as the source of life. Hence, most of their art uses wood as the main material.

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# Porcelain Trade Routes

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Look closely at the three objects below.

1.



2.



3.



The first object is a Chinese jar made during the Qing Dynasty (1662-1722). The second vessel (Netherlands) was made in the 17th century, and the third in the 18th century (Mexico). Write down the similarities and differences between the objects. What do you notice about the designs and imagery?

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How and why do you think Chinese designs were replicated in Europe and Mexico?

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1. Chinese, *Jar with birds, rocks, flowers, and bamboos*, Qing Dynasty, porcelain painted with cobalt blue under transparent glaze (Jingdezhen ware), 2024.16  
2. Dutch, *Vase*, late 17th century, tin-glazed earthenware, Museum purchase with funds provided by Wellesley College Friends of Art 2015.67  
3. Mexican, *Apothecary jar*, 18th century, earthenware with tin glaze and cobalt in-glaze decorations, Museum purchase with funds provided by Sidney R. Knafel 2014.161

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## Porcelain Trade Routes - Additional information/context

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1. Chinese, *Jar with birds, rocks, flowers, and bamboos*, Qing Dynasty, porcelain painted with cobalt blue under transparent glaze (Jingdezhen ware), 2024.16
2. Dutch, *Vase*, Late 17th century. Tin-glazed earthenware.
3. Mexican, *Apothecary Jar*, 18th century, Earthenware with tin glaze and cobalt in-glaze decorations.

In the 14th century, Chinese potters successfully applied cobalt to create blue-and-white porcelain through very high firing and underglaze techniques. Through the road and marine trades, Chinese blue-and-white arrived in the Middle East, Europe, and America, where local potters applied their methods to imitate Chinese blue-and-white porcelain. In the seventeenth century, Chinese blue-and-white porcelain arrived in Delft by the Dutch East India Company and potters made thin, light, white-glazed earthenware decorated in blue in a Chinese style. Spanish potters brought the technique of tin-glazed earthenware to Puebla, and Chinese exported porcelain, which remained in New Spain and served as models for the potters in Puebla. The city would then become the Mexican center of pottery production in the 16th century as a trading outpost.

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# Akan Gold Weights

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Akan, *Abrammuo: Geometric*, 19th century or earlier, lost wax process in bronze, Gift of Charles Post 2003.37

The Akan people, living in what is now Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana in West Africa, developed brass weights called *mrammuo* (singular, *abrammuo*) during the 1400s. These weights were used to measure gold powder on delicate scales, and was a measurement system first used in Northern Africa.

The earliest casts, like the first object, were of geometric designs that reflected gold trade links to North African Islam. Later on, the Akan cultural groups created symbols inspired by Akan proverbs. Beginning in the seventeenth century, birds were common subjects for gold weights. The bottom gold weight could possibly reference a proverb that advocated family loyalty: "Birds of the same species roost in the same tree."



Akan, *Abrammuo: Birds perched on tree*, 19th century or earlier, lost wax process in bronze, Gift of John J. and Halina Klejman 1960.50.13

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Look closely at the objects and contemplate the importance of these weights.

How are these ideas connected to what you already know or have experienced? What new ideas have you been presented with that broadens your thinking?