



## **Educational Program: “Children, Teenagers, Young”**

*Material for optional student activities  
before and after a visit to the Acropolis  
Museum.*

During your school group’s visit to the Acropolis Museum, the students will have the opportunity to learn about the significance of age and of coming of age in antiquity and today, as well as the way in which one can become familiar with these concepts using artefacts as a starting point.

Some brief preparation with the students before their visit to the Museum can make the experience of this program even more fruitful.

After observing the below image of one of the Museum’s exhibits and reading about it in the text below intended for the teacher, show the same image to your students. Encourage them to observe it carefully a number of times. Initiate a discussion about it based on the questions for students that follow.

After your visit to the Museum you can suggest to your students that they continue their critical and creative exploration of the same subject using the material below, thus reinforcing the benefits of the experience offered by this program.

## Material for optional preparation in class:

- Look at the image below (or view the exhibit on the Museum's website using the zoom function:

<http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/sites/default/files/38.jpg>)



This work was found in the sanctuary of the goddess Athena on the Acropolis and was produced around 490-480 BC.

- \* Observe the image.
- \* Can you see figures of different ages? If so, how can you recognize them?
- \* Do you think that people of different ages in ancient Athens would have visited the sanctuary of Athena for the same reasons?

Return to your own time.

- \* Do you think that age generally determines way of life today?
- \* How do you perceive and how can you describe the passage from one age to another?

Return to the work given to you in the image.

- \* Can you think if and to what degree, the passage from the “world of children” to the “world of grownups” was significant in Athens in the period that the work was produced?

- Material for the teacher:

***Votive relief, Acropolis Museum inv. no. Acr. 581***

Found: 1883 in the area between the Parthenon and the Old Acropolis Museum.

Material: Marble from Paros, originally painted.

Date: c. 490-480 BC

Description: A family approaches the goddess Athena offering a sow for sacrifice.

Athena, wearing earrings, is dressed in an oblique *himation* and *chiton*, which she is holding up with her left hand. The goddess can be recognized by her helmet. Her greater size distinguishes her from the group of mortals and it is probably she herself who faces the family in an epiphany, rather than a statue of her. She stands closer to the foreground, towards the viewer.

The group of mortals is walking towards the goddess in a ritual procession.

The procession is led by two boys walking on a plane further back from the goddess. Only the boy who is closer to the viewer is depicted in full, with short hair and a *himation* shown in relief (on the left hand) and painted. In his raised hand he holds a circular object, possibly a *phiale*, a ritual vessel for ceremonial libations (bloodless offerings of some liquid substance on the altar, e.g. wine, oil, honey, etc.). If this is the case, then the position of the boy indicates that he is already pouring the libation on the altar, which we should understand to be behind the goddess. The second child, can just be seen behind the first from the outline of his face and his raised hand, which is a gesture of worship. From their similar height they appear to be close in age. Behind them is shown the animal which is to be sacrificed to the goddess.

The father of the family follows, dressed in a *himation*. His wife who is further behind wears a *chiton* and has a *himation* on her shoulders. According to some scholars, she may be pregnant, because of her protruding *chiton* in the area below the waist. In her raised hands she perhaps once held an offering to the goddess. Between the couple, the third child, a girl, wears a tight *chiton* and a diadem and has her right hand raised as a sign of worship.

The children are differentiated from the adults in the family by their size. They are depicted as miniature adults.

Original use: The relief was an offering to the goddess Athena from the family depicted. The position in which it was placed in the sanctuary is unknown.

The presence of children in this work, which is rare in archaic votive reliefs, and the prominence of the boys in the procession, perhaps reflects an instance of an offering associated with the lives of children.

It is likely that the relief depicts a family sacrifice for the festival of Apaturia. The Apaturia in ancient Athens was the celebration during which the boys, at least, of the families were presented and registered in the kin group or phratry, in other words, the local family group. This registration and the customs that accompanied it, which were required to take place by puberty, ensured the legitimacy of children. The celebration took place in the autumn month of Pyanepsion and probably lasted three days, during which were held a libation, sacrifices, a ritual cutting of children's hair, an oath, a symposium and so on. Athena Phratria and Zeus Phratrios accepted sacrifices during the festival.

***Selective bibliography:***

- D. Pandermalis, a.o. *Acropolis Museum, guide* (Athens 2016) 146-169 fig. 176  
O. Palagia, "Akropolis Museum 581: A Family at the Apaturia?", *Hesperia* 64 (1995) 493-501  
R. Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, New York 2005

For archaic votive offerings see also: <http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/content/votives>

## **Optional material to take further advantage of the program experience**

- Suggestion for the students:

After your participation in this program divide into work groups at your school.

Choose and present to your classmates an object from everyday life that you think is related to the stages of transition from infancy to adulthood.

- \* Why do you think that this particular object has something to say about age?
- \* How can you convince your classmates of this using arguments and evidence?

Work all together.

- \* What object (or objects) do you consider to be the most representative of your age?
- \* What does coming of age mean to each of you personally?

We would be very pleased if you shared the results of your activities with us at:

[learning@theacropolismuseum.gr/en](mailto:learning@theacropolismuseum.gr/en)