



Educational Program: in Dialogue with the Artefacts

*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 come into contact with the exciting world of artefacts in ancient times and today, and learn about ways to explore them at the Museum.

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 an exhibit at the Museum and learning about it from the text below which is intended for the teacher, show the image to your students. Encourage them to observe it very 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 exploration with the artefacts that surround us 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 of the exhibit (or view the exhibit on the Museum's website using the zoom function): <http://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/sites/default/files/38.jpg>



- Questions for the students:

Observe the image carefully. You can display it in the classroom for a week, in order to become familiar with it and gradually discover its details.

- * What material was used to create the work in the image?
- * What can you distinguish at first glance?
- * Close your eyes. What can you remember? Do you think something in the work stands out?
- * Imagine that you are also in the scene. Can you describe in detail what the work depicts?
- * What do you think is the narrative of the work?
- * Can you imagine the feelings of the figures?
- * Can you imagine what could be taking place a few minutes before and a few minutes after the moment that is being depicted? What is the moment that the artist has chosen to illustrate?
- * This work was found in the sanctuary of the goddess Athena on the Acropolis and was produced around 490-480 BC.
- * What do you think was its initial purpose there?
- * Observing the work, do you think that you could gather information from it about the period in which it 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 the Greek island of 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 (a bloodless offering 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. 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.

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.

Other information about the period: The relief can provide us with information about the form of the ancient sanctuary, religion and religious habits (offerings, libations, sacrifices), clothing and jewellery, art (construction, materials, iconography, aesthetics), contact between Athens and other areas (the origin of the marble), social organization, the dedicators, etc.

Indicative 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

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:

At the Acropolis Museum you came into contact with ancient and contemporary artefacts as researchers. However, you don't have to stop discovering the world of artefacts. You can maintain your penetrating gaze and methods in the world outside the Museum as well. A desk, a schoolbook, a newspaper, a sign, a spoon, or a bench, can become a new artefact for your personal exploration. With careful observation, thought and research, you can ask yourselves what they can tell you about:

- * yourselves,
- * those around you,
- * your area,
- * your times.

Your subject is limitless!

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

learning@theacropolismuseum.gr/en