

Gods and Heroes: Exploring the Classical Revival

Section 1: Lesson Preparation

Grade Level: 9th - 12th Grade

Unit/Subject: English | Social Studies | World Humanities | Visual Arts

Lesson Summary & Focus

Students will explore how Gilded Age artists reimagined and retold myths of ancient Greece and Rome through painting, sculpture, decorative arts, and design. Students will choose a piece of artwork from the Lightner Museum's collection, research the original myth, and recreate their own visual interpretation. This lesson plan pairs well with the *Gods and Heroes* tour at the Lightner Museum.

National/State Learning Standards

VA.912.H.1.1: Analyze the impact of social, ecological, economic, religious, and/or political issues on the function or meaning of the artwork.

VA.912.H.1.8: Analyze and compare works in context, considering economic, social, cultural, and political issues, to define the significance and purpose of art.

SS.912.A.1.4: Analyze how images, symbols, objects, cartoons, graphs, charts, maps, and artwork may be used to interpret the significance of time periods and events from the past.

SS.912.A.1.7: Describe various socio-cultural aspects of American life, including arts, artifacts, literature, education, and publications.

Specific Learning Target Objectives

- Students will read the corresponding essay to examine the cultural and historical importance of the Classical Revival during the Gilded Age.
- Students will take a closer look at the Classical Revival by researching the mythology of an item from the museum's collection.
- Students will recreate their own visual interpretation of the god/goddess/myth that they researched.

Academic Language

Students will learn key terminology through topic-related reading passages.

- Classical Revival
- Gilded Age

Resources/Materials

- Corresponding reading passages and group discussion questions
- Visual Interpretation Prompt
- Research worksheet
- Exit Ticket Question

All materials are located at the end of this lesson plan.

Section 2: Instructional Planning

Anticipatory Set

- I will begin the lesson by having my students read the *Exploration into Classical Revival* reading passages.
- I will use the provided questions to lead a group discussion on the Classical Revival and how it relates to the Lightner Museum.

Means of Representation

- Students will read passages silently or aloud in small groups.

Means of Engagement

- Students will work independently or collaboratively to read the passages
- I, the educator, will provide a guided discussion regarding the Classical Revival.
- I will introduce students to the hands-on activities and a research project.
- Students will use online resources and books to research their myth and complete the research worksheet.
- Students will use visual representation to create an interpretation of their researched myth.

Means of Expression

Summative assessment:

- Research worksheet.
- Visual interpretation of the researched myth

Formative assessment:

- Exit ticket question

Reading Passage: Exploration into the Classical Revival

Henry Flagler and the Gilded Age

The period between the Civil War and the First World War (1865-1914) was a time of great expansion, rapid economic growth, and technological innovation in the United States. This period is known as the Gilded Age. Historians coined the term from Mark Twain's novel *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*, a satirical portrayal of post-Civil War America that focused on the era's "glittery" facade, while rampant corruption and inequality ran rampant beneath it. New industries, including railroads, steel, and oil, fueled technological innovation and economic growth, often allowing industrialists to amass massive fortunes while workers faced low wages and harsh working conditions.

Henry Flagler capitalized on this era of innovation by forming the Standard Oil of Ohio Company with John D. Rockefeller. The company brought him immense wealth, and he quickly became a leading figure in the American oil industry. While America's attention was focused on westward expansion and the development of railroads, Henry Flagler saw an opportunity in the South. He was inspired to transform St. Augustine and Northeast Florida into a winter destination for wealthy Northerners seeking to escape the cold and improve their health. Flagler used his wealth from his oil company to build luxury hotels, Hotel Ponce de Leon and Hotel Alcazar, in St. Augustine, Florida, and to build the Florida East Coast Railway, which ran along Florida's coast.

Hotel Alcazar and the Classical Revival

To design his hotels, Flagler hired two young architects, John Mervyn Carrère (1858-1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860-1929). Both had studied at the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Carrère and Hastings combined ideas from their European training with the Spanish influence already present in St. Augustine. Their work reflected Beaux-Arts Classicism, an architectural style that combined elements from ancient Greece and Rome with decorative styles from the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

At the Hotel Alcazar, now the Lightner Museum, the architects used classical features such as columns, arches, symmetry, and mosaic floors. They also connected the building to St. Augustine's Spanish heritage by using red terracotta roof tiles, courtyard fountains, and distinctive towers.

The architects also used poured concrete, an innovative building material at the time. Concrete would later become an important material for Modernist architects during the 20th century.

Classical Revival in Paintings, Sculptures, and Decorative Arts

The Classical Revival was not limited to architecture. During the Gilded Age, artists also drew inspiration from the cultures of ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt. Paintings, sculptures, furniture, and other decorative objects often included classical themes, stories, and symbols.

Classical Revival art emphasized ideas such as order, balance, beauty, and reason. Artists often used historical or mythological stories to communicate ideas about courage, morality, and other important values.

As wealthy families gained more money during the Gilded Age, many built and decorated large homes in the Classical Revival style. These homes allowed families to display their wealth and education. They also reflected the growing ability of wealthy Americans to travel and experience European art and architecture.

The Classical Revival therefore reflected an important part of the Gilded Age: wealth, technology, and new opportunities allowed Americans to create impressive buildings and works of art while also revealing the growing differences between wealthy Americans and working-class people.

Discussion Questions

What was happening that allowed for such a discrepancy of wealth during the Gilded Age?

Answer: Technological innovations and the rise of new companies allowed owners/industrialists to amass great fortunes while paying workers low wages. They could pay workers so poorly because of the lack of worker rights/laws.

What ancient civilizations inspired artists during the Classical Revival period?

Answer: Greek, Roman, Egyptian

Why would Americans in the late 19th century want their buildings to look like Greek temples or Roman palaces?

Possible Answers: To show culture, power, and connections to great civilizations of the past, and to showcase their wealth.

What elements found in art, sculpture, and architecture were popular during the Classical Revival of the Gilded Age?

Answer: columns, arches, gods/goddesses, myths, symmetry

Lesson Plan: Research Project and Visual Interpretation

The Gilded Age was a period of rapid economic growth, the rise of millionaires, and major advances in industry and innovation. It was also a time when artists explored the values and ideas of classical antiquity through painting, sculpture, architecture, and decorative arts.

In this lesson, students will select an object from the Classical Revival movement in the Lightner Museum's collection. They will research the object and create a visual interpretation that communicates their findings and demonstrates their understanding of the artwork's historical and cultural context.

Project Steps:

1. Choose one object from the provided list of works in the Lightner Museum's collection.
2. Use your research to create an original visual representation of the god, goddess, myth, or other subject depicted in the artwork. Your interpretation should communicate what you learned using imagery, motifs, symbols, and other visual elements. Visual Representations can include drawings, paintings, sculptures, animation, collage, and much more. AI-produced materials are not permitted.
3. Present your visual interpretation to the class. Explain how your research influenced your artistic choices and discuss the historical and cultural ideas represented in your work.

Visual Interpretation Prompt:

Create an original visual representation inspired by the god, goddess, myth, or subject you researched. Your work should interpret and communicate the information you discovered during your research rather than simply reproduce the original artwork.

Consider incorporating **motifs, symbols, figures, settings, objects, colors, or other visual elements** that communicate the subject's meaning, characteristics, mythology, and cultural significance.

Educators may determine which artistic media and processes are appropriate for their classroom. Options may include drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, animation, digital art, or other teacher-approved formats. **AI-generated artwork and AI-produced visual materials are not accepted for this project.**

Lightner Museum Classical Revival Object List:



The Three Fates
Artist Unknown, Late 19th
Century
Oil on Canvas



Satyrs in Celebration
Late 17th century
Bronze



The Return of Persephone
George Hitchcock, 1906
Oil on Canvas



Cupid and Psyche Lamp
Early 20th century
Marble



Mercury
c. 1880s
Bronze



Hebe with Jupiter's Eagle
Aristide Fontana, 19th Century
Marble

Research Worksheet

Student Name:

Date:

Selected God/Goddess/Myth:

Sources

Use **at least 3 reliable sources**. Wikipedia and ChatGPT may not be used as sources.

Source 1:

Source 2:

Source 3:

1. The Myth

Briefly describe the myth this god/goddess is most associated with or summarize the myth you are researching.

2. Background

Who is this god/goddess? Who are they related to? What is their origin story? How are they traditionally described?

3. Names, Domains & Powers

Other names or titles:

What do they rule over or represent?

What special traits, abilities, or powers do they have?

4. Symbols & Associations

What **objects, animals, plants, colors, or other symbols** are associated with this god/goddess?

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5. Interesting Facts

Write **one or two** interesting facts you discovered.

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6. Planning Your Visual Interpretation

List the **motifs, symbols, and visual elements** you plan to include in your artwork.

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What do these elements communicate about your god/goddess or myth?

Exit Question

Classical Revival was an art movement that revived the ideals and elements of ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt. In the future, if artists were to revive an art movement or a current style, what do you think it would be? Which elements would it embody?

Answer:



The Three Fates
Artist Unknown
Late 19th Century
Oil on Canvas



Satyrs in Celebration
Late 17th century
Bronze

Lightner
MUSEUM



The Return of Persephone
George Hitchcock, 1906
Oil on Canvas



Cupid and Psyche Lamp
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