

**TITLE:** Athenian Agora **LOCATION:** Athens, Greece **DATE:** 600 BCE-150 CE

**ARTIST:** **PERIOD/STYLE:** Archaic through Hellenistic **PATRON:**

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:**

**FORM:**

The Agora is an open-air stadium structure that includes a marketplace and a gathering place.

**FUNCTION:**

Scholars and civilians alike met at the Agora to discuss their political and business concerns. These political meetings usually went down in the Stoa—a covered walkway inside of the Agora. The structure also hosted the main annual religious festival, when a procession of Athenians filed through the Agora and onwards towards the Parthenon. In addition to its political significance, the Agora was also an important marketplace.

**CONTENT:**

The panathenaic way cuts through the agora from the northwest to the southeast corners. Some other structures would have been the peristyle court, the mint, the stoa, a tholos, a temple, and altar, and a bouleuterion (a chamber used by civic leaders)

**CONTEXT:**

Athenians greatly valued the idea of meritocracy—the belief that those in power should earn their position mainly based on merit (general awesomeness) rather than through an election. The art of ancient Greece is grounded in civic ideals and polytheism. The Agora, as the marketplace and civic center of ancient Greece, is a perfect example of how art and politics intersected. Notably, art considered "ancient Greek" includes works from the archaic, classical, and Hellenistic periods. Unlike Roman or Egyptian art, ancient Greek art is defined by artistic style rather than by political units such as governments or dynasties.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

**INTERPRETATION:**

Historians consider the marketplace in ancient Athens to be the birthplace of democracy. In the marketplace, philosophers such as Socrates questioned the meaning of life, and young men gathered to hear their debates.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

The Athenian agora represents one of the earliest known marketplaces. Ancient Athenians went to the Agora to buy and trade produce, poultry, fish, furs, ironwork, clothing, jewelry, and pottery. Athenians usually mistrusted retail traders, as they often weren't considered natural-born citizens of Greece. Still, women shopped while men gathered to discuss business and politics.

**TITLE:** Anyvasos Kouros **LOCATION:** Anyvasos, Greece **DATE:** 530 BCE

**ARTIST:** **PERIOD/STYLE:** Archaic **PATRON:** The family of Kroisos

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Marble with remnants of paint

**FORM:**

This particular male nude has more rounded limbs and a softer appearance than other kouros.

**FUNCTION:**

The statues were meant to please the gods and demonstrate ideal physical attributes: the large eyes, pleasant facial expressions, and particular garments all reveal the criteria for youthful beauty in ancient Athens. While the exact purpose of these statues and why this mode of votive offering was so popular are unknown, it's clear that youthful male figures were important in archaic Greek culture.

**CONTENT:**

The Acropolis kouros show the influences of various artists, changes in style, and the statues' different purposes. In this instance, an aristocratic family commissioned an artist—as was common during this time—to create a grave marker for their son.

**CONTEXT:**

This sculpture was built to commemorate the life of Kroisos a military hero.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

This type of gravemarker replaced the previously popular geometric vases. This pose emulates the KA statuary of Egypt except for the nudity. This sculpture is freestanding instead of attached to the block like Egyptian statues.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Ancient Greeks valued harmony and order; idealized proportions and spatial relationships characterize their art and figural representations. The kouros sculptures exhibit a strict symmetry, as Greek artists used a system of proportion that was relative to the individual parts of the figure.

**INTERPRETATION:**

Art historians know from the description on this kouros that the young man fell in battle. However, the kouros represents the idealized form of the young man's body

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

The archaic smile is meant to give the sculpture life.

**TITLE:** Peplos Kore from the \_\_\_\_\_ **LOCATION:** Acropolis, Athens **DATE:** 530 BCE  
Acropolis

**ARTIST:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Archaic **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Marble, painted details

**FORM:**

Originally, the Peplos Kore was painted in bright pigments, but these have faded over time. The korai's clothing features a distinct ancient Greek style composed of a chiton and a himation. A chiton is an ankle-length sleeveless linen garment pinned at the shoulders, and a himation is a mantle draped from one shoulder to under the opposite arm.

**FUNCTION:**

Korai, or statues of young girls, were predominantly used as offerings to the goddess Athena. These korai functioned as an acknowledgment of the agreement between men and Athena—Athena helped out mortal men in need, and mortal men offered things in return.

**CONTENT:**

**CONTEXT:**

Some think they may represent the goddess Athena or another immortal female. They could also depict the priestesses who serve Athena, imitate natural women, or represent generic renderings of young girls.

This last theory remains the most prevalent among historians because it explains the lack of individuality portrayed—er, not portrayed—in the korai. The korai most likely represent offerings to Athena. In ancient Greece, Athena was known to help men with their endeavors if they presented her with a gift in return.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

Greek culture glorified gods, goddesses, and heroes. Ancient Greek art often represents a rich tradition of epic storytelling in which gods and goddesses are the stars of the show. This Peplos Kore, sweet as she seems, wasn't a goddess herself, but she was dedicated to the goddess Athena. She was one of approximately 14 other korai found at the Acropolis, and she was developed using the same proportional conventions that governed both korai—female—and kouroi—male—statues.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

The Peplos Kore wears this combination—a belted chiton with a short himation draped over it from the right shoulder to just below the left arm. The edges of her garment provide space for decoration, a typical feature of korai fashion. Unfortunately, this is the only fashion statement this girl is making. The ionic garments are heavy and appear to have been carved separately from the body. The elaborate draping almost completely hides the girl's figure. The arm projecting outward breaks the mold of static archaic statues.

**INTERPRETATION:**

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

"Kore" means "young girl" in ancient Greek, and the Peplos Kore is one of the most well-known of the ancient Greek korai (the plural of kore).

**TITLE:** Doryphoros **LOCATION:** Greece **DATE:** 450-440 BCE

**ARTIST:** Polykletos **PERIOD/STYLE:** Classical Greece **PATRON:**

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Roman copy (marble) of Greek original (bronze)

**FORM:**

The shoulders and arms appear to twist off-axis from the hips and legs. The left hand was originally holding a spear balanced across the left shoulder (hence the title of the piece). The body of this doryphoros exemplifies the ideals that ancient Greece valued, including stability, strength, perfection, and power. While his body represents ideal proportions, his face is less detailed. The spear bearer appears expressionless. In fact, many famous ancient Greek sculptures of men and women appear somewhat expressionless.

**FUNCTION:**

Built as an exemplar of male beauty. Referred to as the Canon of Proportion.

**CONTENT:**

In formulating his rule of Proportions, Polykletos developed a set of aesthetic principles based on a simple mathematic formula in which the human body is divided into parts that all relate to one another. This is the perfect expression of what the Greeks referred to as "Symmetria". This work was both a study in symmetry and in contrast. The Doryphoros once held a spear which makes an allusion to him being a warrior.

**CONTEXT:**

The golden age of the Greek city-state is manifested in the idealization of its art. Rulers of the ancient city-state defeated the Persians, marking the onset of a thriving, stable empire. The empire was stable and thriving, and this unbridled political and social optimism can be seen as influencing the art of Polykleitos—his spear bearer isn't merely good-looking; he's basically perfect. He represents a spartan ideal of the male body. It was found in Pompeii in a place meant for exercise.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

This guy represents the intersection and amalgamation (a much more fun way to say "combination") of Greek and Roman art, as Doryphoros is actually a Roman copy of the Greek original.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Artists considered proportions and ratios to create the most idealized human form possible. The creator of this Doryphoros went above and beyond the idealization of the human form, depicting every part of the human body as perfect and also probably a bit larger than it should have been. This guy stands at an impressive (and unlikely) 6 feet 11 inches.

**INTERPRETATION:**

Nakedness was understood as a marker of civilization that separated the Greeks from their barbarian neighbors. The face of the Doryphoros is void of individual features, which suggest that he is meant to represent an ideal version of the everyman, the perfect Greek male citizen. This relates to the notion that humans should strive for perfection while recognizing that perfection is unattainable.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

Here, the Doryphoros demonstrates the contrapposto stance, in which the figure stands with most of its weight on one foot.

**TITLE:**Acropolis **LOCATION:**Athens, Greece **DATE:** 447-410 BCE

**ARTIST:** Iktinos and Kalikrates **PERIOD/STYLE:** Classical Greece **PATRON:** Pericles

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Marble

**FORM:**

The entire monument is a Doric (think squat, smooth columns) structure with some Ionic (think thin columns with a scrolled top, or "capital") elements: The Acropolis features sculpture work in the form of pediments, columns, and friezes.

**FUNCTION:**

The Acropolis is dedicated to the goddess Athena, perhaps because multiple structures dedicated to Athena had stood on the same spot prior to Pericles' construction. According to ancient Greek mythology, Athena became the patron goddess of Athens when she offered the people of the city an olive tree.

**CONTENT:**

It consists of several marble structures, the most important of which are the Parthenon built by Ictinus, the Erechtheon, the Propylaea (the monumental entrance to the Acropolis designed by Mnesicles), and the small temple of Athena Nike.

**CONTEXT:**

During the 5th century B.C.E., Athenians triumphed against the Persians, and their little corner of Greece became one of the most powerful city-states around. Art historians consider this period the High Classical moment in ancient Greece, and the statesman Pericles played a significant role in the ancient Greeks' victory. Following their victory, ancient Athenians established their model of democracy, and ancient Greece became one of the strongest empires of its time. In fact, historians refer to this period as the Golden Age of Greece.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

None of the Parthenon's angles are right angles, each horizontal line rises in its center, and every vertical column is thicker in the middle than on the top and bottom. These distortions are reconciled from a distance, attesting to the idea that perfection is an illusion. The use of Caryatids is a new innovation on the Erechtheon.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Ancient Greek government officials prioritized architecture and art over other projects, and the impressive marble structures at the Acropolis demonstrate the Greeks' prowess and commitment to design and civic buildings. The ancient Athenians created a perfect architectural form with the Acropolis. The structure, not unlike the statues of idealized human forms, demonstrates the use of idealized proportions and ratios.

**INTERPRETATION:**

The sculptural program at the Parthenon includes the Amazonomachy, the Centauromachy, the Panathenaic Procession, The Birth of Athena, and the Competition of Athena and Poseidon. Overall the theme of the Parthenon and the Acropolis as a whole echoes the sentiment of Athenian superiority over the Barbarians of Persia.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

The Acropolis is an ancient citadel located in Athens, Greece, and was a major center of ancient Greek civilization. The words acropolis and polis mean "edge" and "city" respectively, and they define the buildings' geographic location as being, well, at the edge of the city.

**TITLE:** Plaque of the Ergestines      **LOCATION:** Athens, Greece      **DATE:** 447-438 BCE

**ARTIST:** Phidias      **PERIOD/STYLE:** Classical Greece      **PATRON:** Pericles

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Marble

**FORM:**

On the Parthenon frieze, the procession begins on the west (rear) of the temple and moves in parallel lines down the long length of the north and south sides of the building and ends at the center of the east frieze over the doorway of the cella housing Phidias' statue.

**FUNCTION:**

To celebrate the greatness of Athens. An illustration of the panathenaic procession.

**CONTENT:**

The Panathenaic Festival Procession took place every 4 years in Athens. The Athenian people are accompanied by musicians, jar carriers, and animals destined for sacrifice. On the east, seated gods and goddesses, the invited guests, watch the procession slow almost to a halt as it nears its goal at the shrine of the ancient wood idol. The deities are mere spectators. Aphrodite points out something to her son Eros just as a parent might do at a parade. In this scene, six Ergestines, young women in charge of the peplos are greeted by priests.

**CONTEXT:**

The procession began at the Dipylon Gate, passed through the Athenian Agora, and ended at the Acropolis, where the Athenians placed a new peplos on an ancient wooden statue of Athena. The statue had originally been housed in an archaic temple that had been ruined by the Persians. It was rescued before the attack and taken to the Erechtheon.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

This piece is remarkable because it is the first time that Greeks depicted humans in any temple setting. This perspective implies that the Athenians believed themselves to be important enough to be included in this context. This is an extraordinary example of an Athenians self worth.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

The upper part of the frieze is a higher relief than the lower one, so that the more distant and more shaded upper zone is as legible from the ground as the lower part of the frieze.

**INTERPRETATION:**

A brand new theory: not the panathenaic procession but the story of the legendary Athenian king, Erechtheus, who sacrificed one of his daughters to save the city of Athens. Told to do so by the Oracle of Delphi.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

**TITLE:** Temple of Athena Nike      **LOCATION:** Athens, Greece      **DATE:** 447-410 BCE

**ARTIST:** Kallikrates      **PERIOD/STYLE:** Classical Greece      **PATRON:** Pericles

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:**

**FORM:**

A small amphiprostyle ionic temple, rebuilt in 2012 after being dismantled for restoration. It is amphiprostyle with 4 columns on both the east and west facades. It stands on what used to be a Mycenaean bastion near the Propylaea and greets all visitors entering Athena's great sanctuary.

**FUNCTION:**

It commemorates the victory of the Athenians over the Persians in the battle of Marathon.

**CONTENT:**

Part of the frieze is a representation of the decisive battle of Marathon, which turned the tide against the Persians--a human event, as in the Parthenon's Panathenaic Procession frieze. (only this time, it is the commemoration of a single event, not a recurring one.) The theme of the balustrade echoes that of the frieze, Victory.

**CONTEXT:**

The parapet balustrade illustrates Nike in different attitudes. Sometimes she erects trophies bedecked with Persian spoils, other times she brings sacrificial bulls for Athena. One relief shows her adjusting her sandal.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

**INTERPRETATION:**

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

**TITLE:** Victory (Nike) Adjusting her Sandal **LOCATION:** Athens, Greece **DATE:** 447-410 BCE  
**ARTIST:** Phidias **PERIOD/STYLE:** Hellenistic **PATRON:** Pericles

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:**

**FORM:**

From the south side of the Temple of Athena Nike. 3'6". A graceful winged figure modeled in high relief. Deeply incised drapery lines reveal the body in wet drapery.

**FUNCTION:**

**CONTENT:**

**CONTEXT:**

The parapet balustrade of the temple of Athena Nike, illustrates Nike in different attitudes. Sometimes she erects trophies bedecked with Persian spoils, other times she brings sacrificial bulls for Athena. One relief shows her adjusting her sandal.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

The artist chose to represent Nike in the same style as the Partheon pediment sculptures, with garments that cling to the body and seem almost transparent. The sculptor was more interested in revealing the supple beauty of the female body. The drapery folds form intricate linear patterns unrelated to the body's anatomical structure and have a life of their own as abstract designs.

**INTERPRETATION:**

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**



**TITLE:** Grave Stele of Hegeso      **LOCATION:** Dipylon cemetery, Athens, Greece      **DATE:** 410 BCE

**ARTIST:** Kallimachos      **PERIOD/STYLE:** Classical Greek      **PATRON:** Hegeso's family, Proxenos

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Marble and paint

**FORM:**

The stele of Hegeso depicts a seated woman with her feet resting on a stool, with what is likely her maid standing to her right. The artist shaped the stele as a small temple with a pediment (the triangular part on top) and two columns on either side. Kallimachos portrayed Hegeso, the woman, wearing a refined Athenian dress and opening a jewelry box presented by her servant. Her expression shows a touch of sadness, though that might be a direct consequence of this being a mortuary, or burial, stele.

**FUNCTION:**

It is a grave marker.

**CONTENT:**

The artist captures Hegeso in a domestic setting, the most common location for an Athenian woman at the time. In Athens, women were not considered citizens and rarely left their homes. Their lives were always defined in relation to men, either their husbands or their fathers. The bodies of both women are illustrated through the cloth.

**CONTEXT:**

An inscription on the top of this grave stele states that Hegeso was the daughter of Proxenos. Hegeso's family commissioned the artwork and paid for it themselves, which makes it different from other public Athenian artworks and monuments, which were predominantly state-funded.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

The stele is remarkable as it is one of the best, not to mention only, examples of surviving Attic grave stele. It is nearly complete on its own, and what little imperfections it did have were restored. The trends have changed from geometric vases and grave markers, to Korai to stele.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Ancient Greek artworks include those made during the archaic, classical, and Hellenistic periods. The different periods are defined according to artistic style. The Grave stele of Hegeso was created during the classical period and is marked with classical elements such as a close attention to anatomy—the poses of the women are very natural.

**INTERPRETATION:**

Both slave and jewelry attest to the wealth of Hegeso's father, unseen but prominently cited in the epitaph. There is no mention of the mother's name. the jewelry box probably represents the dowry that Proxynos would have provided. In the patriarchal world of the ancient Greeks, the dominant position of men is still visible even when the men are not.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

Pilasters are flat engaged columns that can be seen at the left and right of the stele.

**TITLE:** Great Altar of Zeus and Athena **LOCATION:** Pergamon. Asia Minor **DATE:** 175 B.C.E.  
(present-day Turkey)

**ARTIST:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Hellenistic **PATRON:** Emperor Philetaerus

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Marble  
**FORM:**

**FUNCTION:**

### CONTENT:

The altar features a vast relief littered with battle scenes. Athena is a central figure of the Gigantomachy frieze, an oft-rendered scene which depicts one of the biggest cosmic battles that took place between giants and the Greek gods. Here she is portrayed lifting Alkyoneos by the hair to lift his feet off the earth to render him mortal. The Nike on the right crowns Athena in victory. Gaia, the earth goddess, watches in horror as her son is defeated.

### CONTEXT:

The Pergamon altar represents a major milestone in Hellenistic Art, but it also carries on the Athenian tradition by incorporating the theme of war with art. The giants wanted to overthrow the Greek gods, begin a new religion, and establish themselves as the cosmic authorities. However, Athena saved the day and triumphed over the giants. In the relief, she's about to kill a giant and the giant's mother is begging for him to be spared; the artist emphasized the pained and panicked expression of the giant. The Athenians consistently used this battle motif in their artwork.

### INNOVATION/CONVENTION:

Greek Hellenistic art can be distinguished from classic and archaic styles art by its depiction of excitement, movement, and strong feelings of passion. If you look at the details of the giants, gods, and goddesses depicted in the Great Altar, the figures contain scrupulous detail—their marble faces aren't lacking in emotion. This detailing is attributed to the pursuit of "real" portraiture—these figures are made to look as emotionally-filled (anguish-filled, to be specific) as possible.

### ARTISTIC DECISIONS:

Emperor Philetaerus used a hill on his portion of land to build the Pergamon temple. The altar of Zeus and Athena is an important (and ancient) sacred structure: the frieze speaks to the series of violent outbursts in ancient Greece. Athena battles against the giants, revealing violence, anxiety, panic, and suffering, mirroring—on a symbolic level—the Pergamon defeat of the Gauls, and Alexander's defeat of the Persians.

### INTERPRETATION:

The frieze of the Great Altar represents not only the mythological defeat of the giants, but also the very real defeat of the Gauls, who lived in what is now France and Belgium. Not only that, but it also represents this defeat in heart-rending detail—the faces are vivid and anguished. Parallels can be drawn to King Attalos I's victory over the Gauls in recent years and Alexander the Great's defeat of the Persians and the myth of the gods and giants.

### DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:

Alexander the Great conquered and Hellenized (which is the term used for the spread of ancient Greek culture during the Hellenistic period) the area from Egypt to the border between Persia and India. After the death of Alexander the Great, four generals divided the empire, and the Hellenistic style of art emerged. Art historians consider Hellenistic art the last great period of ancient Greek Art.

**TITLE:** Winged Victory of Samothrace **LOCATION:** Greece **DATE:** 190 BCE

**ARTIST:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Hellenistic **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Marble

**FORM:**

The Winged Victory of Samothrace depicts Nike, the goddess of victory—standing on the prow of a ship, her right leg bent forward slightly. The wind appears to be blowing against the goddess, pushing back her garments and her wings, as she struggles to remain steady. She stands in a dramatic, monumental, contrapposto.

**FUNCTION:**

She was probably built to commemorate a naval victory in 190 BCE.

**CONTENT:**

**CONTEXT:**

Meant to stand in or above a fountain cascading water around rocks below, similar to a figurehead of a boat. She was located in Samothrace in situ in 1863.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

The Winged Victory of Samothrace has been described as the greatest masterpiece of Hellenistic sculpture and is one of the Louvre's most cherished treasures. Check out the detail in Nike's dress and you'll see why. During the Hellenistic period, meticulous artistic attention to detail was all the rage in sculptures.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

The statue, when it was all in one piece, would've looked fairly intimidating as it was meant to convey the goddess' beauty and strength. It measures eight feet high, nine feet if you include the wings, and it and the base underneath it (which looks like a ship's prow) are carved from grey and white Thasian and Parian marble. The wet drapery look imitates the water playing on the wet body. Her missing right arm may have raised a victory crown or held an open hand in greeting.

**INTERPRETATION:**

This particular depiction of Nike is likely commemorating a victory in a naval battle. The monumentality and strength the artist impresses on Nike's body, as well as the rich texture of her dress, exemplifies Hellenistic sculpture. Although doubts remain as to the exact time of this sculpture's creation, there are strong similarities to the style of the Pergamon Altar—the Nike was either a forerunner or a contemporary of that piece.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

The sports brand Nike was on to something when they chose their name: In ancient Greek, "Nike" means "victory."

**TITLE:** Seated Boxer **LOCATION:** Greece **DATE:** 100 B.C.E

**ARTIST:** **PERIOD/STYLE:** Hellenistic **PATRON:**

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Bronze

**FORM:**

The stature of the seated boxer depicts a boxer, well, sitting with his arm resting on his legs, wearing only a pair of boxing gloves, called caestus. Based on the straining muscles on the athlete's naked body, the artist likely depicts the boxer as if he had just finished a match. The bruises on the boxer's face and what appears to be a broken nose display the violence that occurs during the fight, while his expression reflects the exhaustion that follows. The statue reminds viewers of the toll boxing takes on the fighters.

**FUNCTION:**

**CONTENT:**

**CONTEXT:**

Boxing has been practiced for centuries, but Hellenistic and Roman boxing was particularly violent, as boxers wore leather knuckledusters with metal(!) inserted into them, as shown in the statue, instead of regular leather straps. The fighters were often slaves, and it wasn't infrequent that the loser would die. Despite appearing fatigued, our boxer was likely a winner, as he's still in one piece.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

His blood was contrasted in copper. So were his lips, nipples, and the straps on his gloves.

**INTERPRETATION:**

Ancient Greek society was very much distinguished by class. Classes ranged from the powerful political elites to the lowly slaves. The seated boxer was most likely a slave who fought for the entertainment of the higher classes. He may have been a good luck charm for other athletes because the toes have been polished by touching.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

This piece was one of two recovered in 1885 by archaeologist Rondolfo Lanciani and his team. The manner in which it was buried implied that it was buried purposefully and carefully.

**TITLE:** The Niobides Crater      **LOCATION:** Orvieto, Italy      **DATE:** 460-450 bce

**ARTIST:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PERIOD/STYLE:** Classical      **PATRON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:**  
**FORM:**

**FUNCTION:**

**CONTENT:**

depicts the killing of Niobids children, after she brags about her fertility to the god Leto, who had only two children. Letos children, Apollo and Artemis seek revenge by killing Niobid's 12 kids. Niobid is punished for her hubris. The other side of the vase is some cause of debate. One theory is that it represents Hercules surrounded by heroes in arms and Athena. Another theory is that the warriors of Marathon place themselves under the protection of Hercules.

**CONTEXT:**

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

This is the first time in vase painting that isocephalism (the tradition of depicting heads of figures on the same level) has been jettisoned. May have been the influence of wall paintings.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

**INTERPRETATION:**

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

**TITLE:** Alexander Mosaic      **LOCATION:** Pompeii, The house of Faun      **DATE:** original 310 BCE-  
possibly copied from      copy 100 BCE  
**ARTIST:** Philoxenos of Eretria      **PERIOD/STYLE:** Republican Roman      **PATRON:** Possible King Cas-  
sander originally

**MATERIAL/TECHNIQUE:** Mosaic

**FORM:**

The Alexander Mosaic depicts a scene from the Battle of Issus and, upon closer inspection, reveals one of the most important moments in the battle against the Persians. The artist depicts the Persian king Darius seceding from battle against Alexander the Great and the ancient Athenians. The Persian guards aim their spears towards the ancient Greeks.

**FUNCTION:**

**CONTENT:**

The Persian King, however, is halfway through turning around, creating the central point of tension within the mosaic. Casualties of battle lay on the ground. The Persian king looks at his own fearful reflection as he turns, pleading to Alexander over his shoulders. Alexander looks on confidently with his troops in tow as his domination of the Mediterranean world continues.

**CONTEXT:**

Art historians unearthed this mosaic, which features 1.5 million pieces, in Pompeii at a place called—charmingly enough—the Faun House. The Alexander Mosaic demonstrates the overlapping of two great empires. It shows that the ancient Romans had certainly studied up on ancient Greek sculpture, as the figures in the mosaic represent idealized forms and the artist rendered the anatomy of the bodies naturalistically.

**INNOVATION/CONVENTION:**

The Alexander Mosaic features three-dimensionality that is not present in 5th-century Greek art and more closely associated with Roman art. The artist also rendered the battle scene using colorful pigments and mosaic tiles, another non-standard in Greek art and a rather progressive Roman technique.

**ARTISTIC DECISIONS:**

Roman artists consistently borrowed from their immediate predecessors, the Greeks and Etruscans. However, Roman art is also characterized by technical innovation: The Alexander Mosaic integrates tile and color in an amalgamation of pigments and stone in style that had never before been seen.

**INTERPRETATION:**

While the Alexander Mosaic is noteworthy for showing the intersection of ancient Greek and ancient Roman art, there are several ways in which this mosaic utilizes specifically Roman techniques, such as the use of three-dimensionality on a flat surface. Alternate theory: made by Helen of Egypt, one of the few female Greek artists that are known to us.

**DETAILS/TERMS/DEFINITIONS:**

When you look at the whole work from a great distance (as in the picture above), the mosaic is so detailed that it actually looks like a painting. For those in the know, this isn't really a surprise since historians believe that the Alexander Mosaic was a copy of a painting that was completed hundred of years earlier and has since been lost.