

Activity Guide

ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

ANGKOR

EMPIRE OF CAMBODIA



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Curators of this exhibit note that Angkor was not always the reddish-brown or gray stone we now see. Some parts of the temples were brightly colored and decorated. “Archaeologists can see remnants of decorated plaster covering some temples. Traces of gold and colorful pigmentation remain. These would have depicted floral designs and scenes from mythology, just as in the carved stones that endure.”

Students can illustrate a scene in color, or draw and color a statue.

A similar detection of color has been revealed in the classical statues of Greco-Roman origin. The following articles discuss the beauty and controversy of attempting to reintroduce color to ancient art works.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/17/arts/design/reproductions-museums-sculpture-met-brinkmann-antiquity-polychromy.html>

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/10/29/the-myth-of-whiteness-in-classical-sculpture>

We have even experienced this controversy in the modern arena as black and white films have been colorized.

The Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies at Cornell University has a wonderful resources for teachers. Use the link below to explore their detailed lesson Maps and Memory: Using Contemporary Art to Learn About Vietnamese and Cambodian History <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/69855>



LANGUAGE ARTS

Compare and contrast Portia's speech from the Merchant of Venice to Rabbit's speech from the Cambodian folk tale, "Rabbit, the Judge".

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE ACT 4 SCENE 1

Portia

A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine:
The court awards it, and the law doth give it.

Shylock

Most rightful judge!

Portia

And you must cut this flesh from off his breast:
The law allows it, and the court awards it.

Shylock

Most learned judge! A sentence! Come,
prepare!

Portia

Tarry a little; there is something else.
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;
The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh:'
Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound
of flesh;
But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands
and goods
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate
Unto the state of Venice.

Portia

Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.
Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more
But just a pound of flesh: if thou cut'st more
Or less than a just pound, be it but so much
As makes it light or heavy in the substance,
Or the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple, nay, if the scale do turn
But in the estimation of a hair,
Thou diest and all thy goods are confiscate.

EXCERPT FROM FOLKTALE, "RABBIT, THE JUDGE"

"Oh Great Judge, you sure have won the bet. As a result, you can chop his head off," Sophea Tonsay (respectful title for Rabbit as a lawyer) replied.

The farmer was very upset and angry. He yelled at the rabbit: "I put my life in your hands, and now look at what you are doing to me! You've just invited the judge to chop off my head. What kind of help is that?"

The farmer, trembling uncontrollably from head to toe, did not dare to oppose the verdict. He bent down on all fours, read to have his head chopped off by the judge. The latter lifted the sword, but the rabbit stopped him short.

"Great Judge, pay attention to what you are going to do." Pointing to the farmer's hair, the rabbit asked:

"What is this?"

"It's the hair," said the judge.

"And this? What do you call it?"

"The skin," the judge replied.

"And what are you going to chop?"

"The head" the judge said suspiciously.

"Ah, Great Judge, when you made your bet, you saw everything but the oxcart. Now look at this object, I do not see the head either. I see the hair, the skin, and the flesh. If you can convince me that this is the head, I'll show you the oxcart."

It was decided that the judge and the farmer were even. Once again, Sophea Tonsay had resolved a dispute.



HOW THE SNAILS OUTWITTED THE HARE

(From "Tales of the Hare: 27 Classic Folktales from Cambodia")

One early morning, Suphea Rabbit was very thirsty so he headed towards a big pond full of water lilies, lotuses and many snails. Once he reached the pond, Suphea Rabbit lowered himself to a good drink of the water.

At the very minute he opened his mouth, a snail on top of a lotus leaf shouted at him, "Brother Rabbit! Why do you drink my water?" Rabbit answered, "This water does not belong to anyone nor to your snail ancestors. I have been drinking this water for years and nobody has ever stopped me. Why do you slow, gnarled snails dare to stop me today?"

The snail was furious at the rabbit for calling his kind slow and gnarled, so he shouted back, "How dare you call us slow and gnarled! Would you dare bet on a race with me for rights to the pond water?"

Hearing this proposal amused Suphea Rabbit. How can a crawling snail beat the racing hops of a rabbit? He replied, "Brother Snail, why are you asking for this bet? Don't you see our long legs?" The snail became even more daring and shouted back, "Come back tomorrow to start the race!" Rabbit responded, "Yes, Brother Snail."

After Rabbit left, Snail thought to himself, "I sure got myself into deep trouble. How can I win a race with a rabbit when I can hardly crawl a few feet at a time?" The snail thought and thought, then he came up with a brilliant idea.

Snail called all his snail brothers and snail sisters to a meeting and told them about the upcoming race with the rabbit in the morning. Then he said to them, "I need you all to place yourselves around the pond but stay invisible. When Rabbit calls out to find my location, the one of you ahead of him should answer his call." All the snails answered, "Yes, Brother Snail".

The next morning, Suphea Rabbit came to the contest walking slowly and lazily because he thought he could easily beat the snail and win the race. When he reached the pond, he yelled, "Brother Snail, are you ready to race?" Snail replied, "Yep, let's go!"

So the two started the race. About one minute later, Suphea Rabbit called out, "Brother snail!" The snail ahead answered "Yep!" Another minute later, Suphea Rabbit called out again, "Brother snail!" Yet another snail ahead of him answered, "Yep!" Rabbit was confused. How can this slow poke beat me?!

So Suphea Rabbit lost this race to the snail and also lost his bet to drink water from the pond.

This is why rabbits never drink water from lakes or ponds. Rabbits only drink morning dew.

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MATH

The concept for zero may have developed in the Cambodian area as a placeholder long before it was developed in other areas of the world. Talk about the importance of having a zero placeholder. Students can recreate the symbols that were found meaning the number 605.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/origin-number-zero-180953392/>

<https://www.maa.org/press/periodicals/convergence/mathematical-treasure-the-cambodian-zero>

MUSIC AND DANCE

This is 3:41 long clip of the Cambodian Royal Ballet performing an apsara dance at Angkor Wat. Apsaras were female spirits of the water and clouds in both the Hindu and Buddhist cosmology. They were known for their graceful dancing and beauty. Their representation is an oft repeated motif in the bas-reliefs decorating Angkor Wat. In fact, there are roughly 600 meters of narrative bas-reliefs at Angkor Wat and these feature approximately 2000 female dancing figures. The Royal Ballet of Cambodia wears costuming modeled after the reliefs and perform dances whose gestures narrate Khmer mythology. Intricate and precise hand movements are a hallmark of Khmer dance tradition which require training from childhood to properly execute.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Erbp1Isk96M>

The Instagram account of the Cambodian Royal Ballet is a stunningly beautiful visual resource. It has modern performance and rehearsal photographs, videos, and historical photos of the company. UNESCO has declared the company to be part of the "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity". The ballet company was subjected to a program of systematic destruction under the rule of the Khmer Rouge who eliminated almost all of the master dancers. However, a small number remained and following Pol Pot's defeat in 1979 dance troupes reemerged to save the art form.

<https://www.instagram.com/cambodianroyalballet/?hl=en>



SCIENCE

This is an academic article on mapping ancient cities with remotely sensed data. Although the information in this article is advanced for most students, there are some good photographs and maps that teachers may wish to use with students, especially the photographs that show different time periods of the same view. Angkor was a city where water was highly controlled. This article talks about mapping water. Ask students why water is a vital commodity.

<https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1721509115>

[Here is more information on Lidar: https://velodynelidar.com/what-is-lidar/](https://velodynelidar.com/what-is-lidar/)

SPORTS AND GAMES

The Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies at Cornell University has wonderful resources for teachers. Use the link below to explore their lesson on Traditional Games of Cambodia.

<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/69883>

SOCIAL STUDIES AND HISTORY

Compare medieval European sumptuary laws to customs/laws of dress in Angkor. According to Chinese envoy Zhou Daguan men and women of the 13th century Khmer Empire wore minimal clothing being “naked to the waist” and a piece of cloth wrapped below. When they ventured into public they wrapped a second, larger piece of cloth over the smaller one worn below. However, despite wearing minimal clothing due to living in a warmer climate than much of medieval Europe, the Khmer Empire still created customs and laws regarding who was able to wear specific types of adornment. Compare Khmer rules to English sumptuary laws.

Khmer Laws

1. Only the king was allowed to wear fabric that had a full pattern of flowers. Much of the most extravagant and finest cloth came from Siam, Cham (what is modern day Vietnam) and the Western Seas (India or the Malayan Peninsula) which was widely regarded as the highest quality. Some of the cloth pieces for the king could cost several ounces of gold each.
2. The king's relative and senior officials of the court can wear fabric that have a scattered floral design.
3. Junior officials only can wear a two-flower pattern cloth. However, women of “ordinary” or comparable to peasant class, were able to wear a two-flower design. Among men, only the king was allowed to dye his palms, and the soles of his feet red. Women were allowed to dye their palms and soles red.

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English Laws

1. 1337 No one except the king, queen and their children to wear imported cloth. Import of all foreign cloths forbidden.
2. 1363 Grooms and their wives, daughters and children are to wear no suits of clothing worth more than two marks for the cloth, nor anything of gold or silver, embroidered, enameled or of silk. Craftsmen and yeomen, and their wives, daughters and children are to wear no suits of clothing worth more than 40s. (shillings), nor precious stones, silk, silver, nor items made of gold or silver, embroidered, enameled, or of silk, and the wives and daughters to wear no silk veils but only of thread made within the realm, and no fur or budge (lamb skin with the wool dressed outward) but only lamb, coney (rabbit), cat and fox.
3. Esquires and gentlemen under the rank of knight, with incomes below £100 p.a. (pounds annually), and their wives, daughters and children, are to wear no suits of clothes worth more than 4½ marks, nor cloth of gold, silk, silver or embroidered cloth, rings, buttons, items made of gold or silver, precious stones, or any furs. Wives and daughters the same, and with no turnings-up or purples (ruffles), no excess trimmings, or any apparel of gold, silver or precious stones.

Questions

1. What similarities do you see among Khmer clothing rules and English clothing rules?
2. What differences are there?
3. In Khmer society women, even of the “ordinary” class can wear fabric reserved for male junior officials and adorn themselves with red dyed soles and palms. Why do you think lower class women were allowed to have these privileges, but not men of the same social standing?