

National Museum of Asian Art

Museum Information

[Information For Educators](#)

- Teaching posters available for printing
- Interdisciplinary lesson plans for ELA, Visual Arts, and Social Studies
- [Teaching China](#)
 - China-specific lesson plans, activities, and videos

[Virtual Field Trips for K-12](#)

Request a virtual trip at least 4 weeks in advance

[In-Person Field Trips](#)

Check the website for the current schedule and reservation process. Teachers interested in medieval history in particular should consider which exhibitions are most relevant and can make special requests, but the museum will not guarantee that specific objects will be on display at any given time.

[Professional Development for Teachers](#)

Regular free virtual workshops held for K-12 teachers

Introduction

The National Museum of Asian Art is a smaller museum with fewer crowds right next to the Smithsonian Castle. Permanent exhibitions include artifacts from [medieval China](#), [medieval Korea](#), [the medieval Islamic world](#), [biblical manuscripts from Armenia and Egypt](#), and [medieval South Asia](#), and teachers should also check out [current exhibitions](#) for additional options that may relate to the medieval world in Asia. The museum does field trips for students in grades K-12 and has extensive resources for using the museum's art collections to teach about Asian culture past and present.

Museum collection objects to explore with students (see video for more information)

[Seljuq beaker with a scene from the Shahnama](#)

Students could do an analysis of the beaker before visiting the museum virtually or in person by studying the [Shahnama in more depth](#). Students could draw connections between the beaker and the story it tells and ideas of divine kingship, legitimacy, and literature/art in the medieval Middle East. A Seljuq example of the Shahanama is a wonderful example of the continued

importance of pre-Islamic Persian culture in the Islamic era and allows us to better understand the mixing of Turkish, Persian, and Arab cultures.

DC Standards: 9.1.2, 9.5.6

[Ayyubid basin with a Christian scene](#)

This object demonstrates the religious tolerance of many medieval Muslim societies. The [Ayyubid dynasty is best known for emerging from the Crusades \(its founder was the famous Saladin\)](#), but even with its history of religious conflict Christian culture flourished during its rule. Students might analyze this object as part of a unit or lesson on the Crusades or tolerance in the medieval Mediterranean.

DC Standards: 6.3.6, 9.1.3, 9.5.6, 12.9.3

Additional recommended resources for DC teachers

Primary:

[Mosque Lamps: The Beauty of Light \(complete lesson plan\)](#)

Lesson is primarily visual arts, but could be turned into a social studies lesson by focusing more on the extension activities.

DC Standards: 3-5.Geo5, 3-5.His3

[Understanding Chinese Characters \(complete lesson plan\)](#)

DC Standards: 3-5.His3

Secondary:

[Reading a Qur'an \(Resource for teachers with guiding questions, historical context, and further resources\)](#)

DC Standards: 9.9.1

[Exploring Visual Narratives through Thangkas](#) (complete lesson plan)

DC Standards: 7.10.4, 9.2.2

[Understanding Chinese Characters \(complete lesson plan\)](#)

DC Standards: 7.5.5

[Cultural Exchange in the Tang Dynasty – The Journey of a Tomb Figure](#) (complete lesson plan)

DC Standards: 9.2.2

[Connecting China and the Near East – Cross-Cultural Influences in Art](#) (complete lesson plan)

DC Standards: 9.2.5, 9.8.3