

Hanuman

Sculpted elegantly in the south of India more than 800 years ago.



Hanuman | India, Tamil Nadu, Late Chola period, around 1200, Bronze

Background information

Hanuman is the powerful monkey god in the Hindu pantheon and also a loyal devotee of Lord Rama. Hanuman is the son of Vayu, the Lord of Winds and Arjana, a female monkey that Vayu had seduced. He is said to be a god of strength and power. He plays an important role in the Hindu epic, Ramayana. His body is human while his head and body proportion (long arms and short legs) are simian. Hanuman's gesture of palm facing the mouth and the other in lola hasta (dangling with ease) is characteristic of Hanuman's Chola images. This gesture implies his adoration, humility and ever readiness to serve his master, Rama.

This sculpture of Hanuman was created during the reign of the Cholas. The Cholas (in power late 9th to late 13th century), were great patrons of performing and visual arts. They commissioned for many important temple complexes to be built like the Tanjore Big temple. Although bronze casting techniques were already present in South India, the Cholas commissioned for more of these bronzes to be made using the lost-wax technique. The bronze sculptures that were made were made to be carried on a procession.

The monkey is an important animal in various cultures. In India, the monkey is seen as 'divine protector' especially of farmers. The monkey plays an important role in the Chinese art and folklore because of its links with intelligence and reproduction. The stories of the Monkey King (Sun Wukong) can resonate with the young and old.

Hanuman

Proposed Activities

STUDENTS WILL LEARN ABOUT

- The qualities of Hanuman and why Hindus revere him
- The development of bronze during the rule of the Cholas in India
- The importance of Hanuman in the Hindu epic Ramayana and why it has influenced Southeast Asia

GLOSSARY

Hinduism is a religion or way of life originating in India.

Ramayana is a Sanskrit poem said to be one of the two most significant works in Hinduism.

Lost-wax technique is an art technique where a duplicate metal sculpture is cast from an original sculpture.

REFERENCES

Chinese art – A guide to motifs and visual imagery

http://www.asiasocietymuseum.org/region_results.asp?RegionID=1&CountryID=1&ChapterID=7

The book of Hindu imagery – The gods and their symbols

<http://sitasingstheblues.com/>



LOOKING ACTIVITIES

1. Watch Hanuman, the monkey god. Focus on his eyes and his posture.
2. Discuss what emotions are going through him.
3. Describe what Hanuman is wearing. What might those tell us about him? Is he an important person?
4. What makes Hanuman different from a human?
5. Imitate Hanuman's pose. Estimate how long you could hold this pose. Guess why Hanuman is standing like this. What does this pose tell us about someone?



MAKING ACTIVITIES

1. Make collages of creatures that are half human and half animal.
2. Use recyclable materials and create your creature in 3D.
3. Create an animal mask using the papier mache technique.



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

English

Getting to know the epic Ramayana: Divide the class into groups and get them to read different episodes from the Ramayana.

National Education

Hanuman was a loyal supporter and friend of Rama. What characteristics would you like in a friend? (National Education) What values does Hanuman exude that focuses on building relationships?

Social Studies

Legacies and Achievements: Why has the Ramayana remained an important legacy today? Why do people give importance to certain animals? (Social Studies, History, English)