

Standing Ganesha

More than 300 years old.
Sculpted in India.



Ganesha | India, Tamil Nadu, 18th or 19th century, Bronze

Background information

Ganesha is an important deity and the most popular god in Hinduism. At the temple, Hindus pray to him first, as he is known to be the remover of obstacles. His chubby tummy, representing the universe, holds all the wisdom that anyone could possibly have. His big ears ensure that he is able to listen to the woes of all his devotees. Other attributes you can see on him are the snake as a belt, the axe (capture evil), the lasso (remove ignorance), the broken tusk (used to write the Mahabharata) and the bowl of sweetmeats.

Sculptures of Ganesha are made in clay, bronze and other materials. Bronzes like these were brought out of the temples around the village for daily ritual and processions. There are holes found at the base of the sculpture for poles to be attached that tell us this.

Here is a story about Ganesha. While Shiva, an important god in the Hindu trinity, was away performing important duties, Parvati, his consort was feeling lonely. She created a boy. She requested him to guard the door as she went to take her daily bath. When Shiva came, the little boy didn't let him through, infuriating the god. They started fighting. Shiva chopped off the head of the boy. Parvati was distraught when she saw what had happened and tearfully ordered Shiva to undo what he had done. Shiva fixed the head of the first animal he encountered and gave him life. He said that all Hindus should pray to Ganesha first upon entering the temple.

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Proposed Activities

STUDENTS WILL LEARN ABOUT

- The symbolism of Ganesha
- His role in Hinduism

GLOSSARY

Pantheon refers to all the gods of a collective of people.

REFERENCE:

PROCESSIONAL IMAGES FROM THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

<http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/indianart/processional.asp>



LOOKING ACTIVITIES

1. Meet Ganesha. Find and count the following: arms, ears, jewellery, lotus petals.
2. Name all the parts you can see which are human.
3. Identify which of his features come from an animal.
4. Notice what he is standing on. Why would he be standing on it? What does that tell us about him? What other features tell us that he is a god?
5. Look closely at his hands. What is he holding in them? What might these tell us about him?
6. Examine the surface of the sculpture. What material is it made of?



MAKING ACTIVITIES

1. Ganesha, the Hindu god, is usually seen with a rat, his helper or his vehicle. But the rat is missing here. Draw it where you think it could be.
2. Create a self-portrait of yourself using Ganesha as an inspiration. Use the following pointers to guide you.
 - Use three words to describe your personality.
 - Which animal would fit the description the most?
 - Make a self-portrait of yourself as the animal. (With the head of the animal and your own body.)



CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

English

Research on the Internet and find tales about Ganesha.

Science

Elephants in Asia:

1. Research the importance of elephants in Asia.
2. Discuss how elephants are used by different cultures in Asia.
3. Where can you find elephants today?

Social Studies

Research the spread of the worship of Ganesha outside India. How did that happen? (Social Studies)

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