

Intermediate-Level Activity

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- analyze the use of Greek figures on a seventeenth-century cabinet and discuss the long-lasting influence of Greek and Roman **symbols** and attributes on art;
- draw **portraits** of rulers based on written descriptions;
- research the use of **propaganda** in a portrait of **Caligula**;
- create a campaign poster for a classroom candidate that uses Greek or Roman **iconography**.

Materials

- Reproduction of *Cabinet on Stand* by André-Charles Boulle
- Reproduction of *Head of Emperor Caligula* by Unknown Artist
- Background Information and Questions for Teaching about the cabinet and **bust**
- Student Handout: *Herakles and Hippolyta*
- Student Handout: *Description of an Emperor*
- Pencils
- Paper

Lesson Steps

1. Ask students to write down on a piece of paper the names of five individuals who they admire from history, sports, music, television, or film (Barack Obama, David Beckham, Rihanna, Miley Cyrus, Zac Efron, etc.). Next, have them write down the characteristics they admire in these individuals. Ask students to share these characteristics with the class. If students could choose any deed accomplished by one of the individuals or have any physical characteristic in common with a person they admire, what would it be? Have students write this deed or characteristic on their piece of paper. Tell students that they will be discussing figures from ancient Greece and Rome who were admired by kings and rulers for many years afterward.
2. Display a reproduction of *Cabinet on Stand* and discuss the questions listed in step 1 of the Beginning-Level Activity. Next, examine the sculptures of the two large figures on the stand. Ask students what they notice about these figures. By examining the figures' poses, what do they appear to be doing? Tell students that the figure on the right is Herakles and the figure on the left is Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. Ask students what they know about Herakles (known as Hercules to the Romans) and the Amazons. Pass out the *Herakles and Hippolyta* handout so students have more information about these mythological figures. Ask students to speculate why these figures from ancient Greek mythology were chosen to decorate a cabinet made in the seventeenth century. Refer to step 4 in the Beginning-Level Activity to share information about symbols used on the cabinet. Ask students why Louis XIV included Greek heroes on a cabinet that is also decorated with the symbol of the French aristocracy (the **fleur-de-lis**), his own portrait, and animals representing his military victories.

3. Explain to students that western Europe saw a renewed interest in the **classical** world during the Renaissance, a cultural movement roughly spanning the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. New translations of ancient Greek texts of philosophy, science, mathematics, and poetry had become more readily available to western Europeans—particularly after 1453, when Byzantine Greek scholars headed west after the **Ottoman Empire** captured Constantinople, the capital of the **Byzantine Empire**. Based on students' prior knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome, ask them why the classical world intrigued and influenced western Europeans hundreds of years later. Can students think of any recent movies inspired by the classical world (i.e., *Troy*, *300*, *Gladiator*)? Which Greek or Roman stories or figures are compelling to students today? Explain that many rulers related to mythological figures. For example, **Alexander the Great** was so fascinated by Achilles—the hero of Homer's *Iliad*—that he slept with a copy of the text under his pillow.
4. Pass out the *Description of an Emperor* handout. Pass out pencils and paper. Instruct students to draw the emperor that the Roman writer **Suetonius** describes. After students complete their drawings, display a reproduction of *Head of Emperor Caligula*, a fragment of an ancient Roman statue. Allow students time to look closely at the work and have them share their initial observations. Explain that this head would have been inserted into a life-size portrait statue. Tell students that this is a portrait of the same man described by Suetonius. Have students compare and contrast Suetonius's description with the portrait. Ask students to speculate why the description of Caligula's physical appearance is so different from the portrait.
5. Point out that Suetonius's description was written after Caligula's death. Have students speculate why Suetonius would want to portray Caligula the way he did. Lead a discussion about how bias can be present in both written and visual representations of historical events and people. (You may also wish to show students the ancient Roman *Head of Emperor Augustus* [see Related Works of Art] and compare the head to Suetonius's description of **Augustus**. Access Suetonius's writings about Augustus on Fordam University's Web site *Ancient History Sourcebook* [www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/suetonius-augustus.html].)
6. Ask students to return to the list of individuals they admire. Have they tried to act, dress, or look like these individuals in any way? How can a person's clothing or hairstyle reveal something about him or her? Point out that Caligula's hairstyle copies that of Emperor Augustus. For homework, have students research Caligula and Augustus online or in the library to determine why Caligula would want to be linked to Augustus. The following resources may be helpful:
 - "Caligula (AD 12–41)" on the BBC Web site *History* (www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/caligula.shtml)
 - "Augustus (63 BC–AD 14)" on the BBC Web site *History* (www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/augustus.shtml)

Students should write down five facts they learned about each individual's rule.



7. Now that students are familiar with Caligula and Augustus, discuss again why the description of Caligula's physical appearance differs from the portrait. Why would Caligula choose to be portrayed with Augustus's hairstyle? Explain to students that portraits of Augustus were modeled after idealizing Greek sculptures, which depicted ageless, godlike individuals with features that were perfectly shaped and balanced. Augustus set the trend for emperors who followed him, including Caligula, whose portrait depicts a young man with a deep, penetrating gaze. Explain that Roman portraits of emperors had a specific propaganda function beyond that of ordinary portraits, such as bolstering the legitimacy of an emperor's power. Official portraits would be distributed throughout the empire—either as statues or busts, or on coins—as only a few people would have been able to see the emperor in person. (You may wish to show students the coin *Apollo Sitting on an Omphalos* [see Related Works of Art].) Point out that the Caligula head could have been inserted into different bodies—of a statesman, priest, or general, for example—depending on the location of the statue and the intended audience.
8. Ask students how governments convey manipulated, biased, or propagandistic messages today. What is the twenty-first century's equivalent of the classical world's imperial portrait sculpture or coin? For example, what messages are being conveyed on U.S. currency today? Do students notice any similarities or differences between U.S. currency and the kinds of symbols used on *Cabinet on Stand*?
9. Tell students they will work in small groups to create a campaign poster for a classmate running for a school office. If no student is currently campaigning, then students can pick a person in their small groups and pretend that he or she is running for class president. Have students discuss the qualities that would be important for a class president to have, then find Greek or Roman symbols or attributes that could represent these qualities. Students must include at least two Greek or Roman symbols or attributes in their campaign posters, as well as two symbols of their own choosing.

Assessment

Assess students on their completion of the following: drawing based on the *Description of an Emperor* handout, five facts each about Caligula and Augustus, and the incorporation of at least two Greek or Roman symbols or attributes and two of students' choice in a campaign poster for a classroom candidate.