

Statuette of a Lyre Player and His Companion, Unknown Artist

Statuette of a Lyre Player and His Companion

Unknown artist
Greek, 690–670 B.C.

Bronze

4 1/2 x 3 1/3 x 1 3/5 in.
90.AB.6

Background Information

Cast in solid bronze, this statuette of a standing **lyre** player and a smaller companion dates to the early 600s B.C. The statuette was probably dedicated to the **gods** and was originally attached to another object, as indicated by the holes in the base. The figures' style and proportions indicate an origin on the island of Crete.

The statuette's composition and subject matter are unusual. Groups of figures are not common in Greek small bronzes, nor are lyre players, although they are often found in other media. The unusual subject of the Getty Museum's bronze has led some scholars to speculate that it may represent a poet.



In ancient times, **bards** (traveling poets) would recite stories in the form of **epic poems** to audiences throughout Greece. They would accompany their stories by playing a type of lyre called a **kithara**. By the time this statuette was made, poems that told of heroes, battles, and mythical gods were very popular. Many of these poems were thought to have been composed and recited by a poet named **Homer**. A number of bards who recited epic poetry in ancient times, including Homer, were described as blind. The statuette can be interpreted as depicting an older, blind poet being assisted by a young companion.

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Questions for Teaching

Take the time to look closely at this work of art. What do you notice?

What do you notice about the difference in size of each individual depicted in the statuette? (*The figure on the right is larger than the figure on the left.*)

What do you notice about the pose of each individual? (*The smaller figure is holding onto the larger figure; the larger figure is holding something.*)

What do you think is the relationship between the two figures? (*The figures could be a teacher and student or a musician and fan.*)

What do you think they are doing? (*The larger figure could be playing an instrument while the smaller figure is listening.*)