

Stirrup Bottle



Stirrup Bottle, 500 AD
Peru, Moche or Mochica culture
Ceramic, buff clay with brown, red, and cream slips, 11½ in. high
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sandford G. Etherington, 82.193

Object and Artist Information

This stirrup-shaped bottle was created by the Moche (pronounced moh'-chay) people who lived in South America on the north coast of Peru along the Moche River between 50 and 800 CE. They were a warlike culture that spoke a language called Mochica (pronounced mo-chee'-kah). They made terra-cotta pottery vessels in interesting shapes, such as this stirrup bottle. This particular shape was also practical. Most of the land where the Moche lived was dry desert, and the shape of this vessel slowed the evaporation of the liquid inside the bottle. A bottle could be carried, usually over the shoulder, by a strap threaded through the opening beneath the stirrup. The Moche made thousands of stirrup-spout bottles from clay that contained iron oxide, which produces a reddish-brown color. They were decorated with brown and cream slips, or underglazes, which are mixtures of water and clay that result in fine-line painting. The Moche used these three-dimensional bottles as painting surfaces.

The image on this vessel is of bean warriors, a common subject in Moche pottery. There are sixteen seated warriors, shown in profile and holding weapons such as spears and clubs. They wear crescent-shaped headdresses with fan-shaped ornaments. War themes appear throughout Moche art, showing men in fierce combat and capturing enemies. Warriors are depicted running or seated, as on this piece. The bodies of the warriors are probably shaped like lima beans—beans appear often on Moche works, and it is possible that they were used in a writing system, as game pieces, as medicines, and as food. Beans were the first crop planted in ancient Peru. Lima beans were cultivated as early as 2000 BCE in the Andes and were a common staple in ancient Peru. Potatoes, peanuts, corn, and squash were also grown using the irrigation canals that the Moche developed.

Concept

Students will explore the Moche culture and be introduced to its ceramic traditions of stirrup bottles and fine-line painting.

Map

On a map of North and South America, review the cardinal directions and locate Richmond, Virginia, and Peru in South America. Point to the Andes Mountains and the area where the Moche lived.

Resources for Grades K–2

Observation and Discussion

Use the following questions and discussion points while looking at the *Moche Stirrup Bottle*.

- Have you ever eaten beans? How would you describe their taste: salty, sweet, tangy, tart?
- Close your eyes and imagine that you are a bean. What sounds do you think beans would make? How would you move?
- Beans were important to the Moche. If you were to paint this vessel, what food shape would you show for American warriors?
- What else can you see on this vessel?

Activities

ACTIVITY 1

Have the students draw a bottle or vase shape on a piece of paper. Then ask them to decorate this bottle with images of North American warriors who were made of food plants. What kind of clothes would they wear? Use red and peach or cream-colored markers to resemble the slip colors used on the Moche bottle.

ACTIVITY 2

Students can supplement the warrior subjects with decorations that identify this piece as North American—include technologies that we use today, specific landmarks, etc. Have students imagine that this bottle would be found thousands of years in the future. Will archeologists know just by looking that this is an American object from the early twenty-first century?

Closure

Have the students show their works of art and point out an important detail or landmark that would help future historians identify this piece.

SOLs

English 1.1, 1.2, 2.2 a, 2.2 b, 2.2 c, 2.3 c

History K.2, K.3, K.4 b, K.4 c, K.5 c, K.7 b, 1.1, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.11

Science 1.8, 2.6

Visual Arts K.1, K.2, K.3, K.4, K.7.5, K.8, K.9, K.11, K.12, K.14, K.16, K.18, 1.1, 1.5, 1.7, 1.11, 1.13, 1.14, 1.16, 1.20, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.11, 2.21

Observation and Discussion

Use the following suggested questions and discussion points while looking at the *Moche Stirrup Bottle*.

- Which members of the Moche society created these pots? Why?
- (Third grade) What are some similarities between this vessel and those produced by West African and Greek and Roman societies? What are the differences?
- (Fifth grade) What are some similarities between the *Moche Stirrup Bottle* and ceramic vessels created by other Pre-Colombian, Early American, and Colonial American societies?
- What types of shapes and lines are used in the *Moche Stirrup Bottle*? What other elements of art can you find?
- What objects are similar to the *Moche Stirrup Bottle*? What are some differences between the Moche bottle and objects in your kitchen?

Resources for Grades 3–5

Activity

Invent a new, practical vessel for use today. Have the students create a new shape for a ceramic vessel by drawing a design. What kind of practical details would it have? (For example, the spout on the stirrup vessel would have helped to slow evaporation.) What would it hold? After they have drawn a design, have students construct a new vessel out of recycled materials using cardboard boxes, magazine cutouts, construction paper, cardboard tubes, etc.

Closure

Have the students share their new design with the class and explain the practical applications.

Writing Activity

Have students write a short story about the life of the VMFA's Moche bottle. What were the people like who used it? What did they wear? What kind of places did the bottle travel to? What experiences did the bottle have during its life with the Moche? Who was the last owner of the bottle before it came to VMFA?

Closure

Have the students share their short stories with the class, incorporating visual aids in the presentation.

SOLs

English 3.1, 3.5 e, 3.5 g, 3.5 i, 3.11, 4.1, 4.4 a, 4.4 b, 4.4 c, 4.4 f, 4.5 c, 4.8, 5.1, 5.5 e, 5.9

History 3.12

Visual Arts 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10, 3.13, 3.14, 3.15, 3.17, 3.19, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.11, 4.18, 4.20, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.10, 5.11, 5.13

Educational Media Resources

Recommended Films, Videos, and DVDs

Ancient Civilizations for Children series

ACC 7–11

9 parts; 23 min ea | 1998 | AK | VHS | DVD

Third through seventh grades

Join archeologist Arizona Smith and his young detective-in-training as they delve into clues of the past and unlock mysteries of the world's ancient civilizations.

Ancient Inca for Children

ACC-7

23 minutes | color | 1998 | DVD

Elementary through middle school

The Ancient Inca were a powerful people who created a civilization that rivaled the Roman Empire. Join archeologist Arizona Smith and his young detectives-in-training as they investigate the Inca society and its traditions, food, and inventions. Students will gain an understanding of other civilizations, such as the Moche who influenced the Inca, and see how the arrival of the Spaniards led to the fall of the empire.

Ancient Maya for Children

ACC-8

23 minutes | color | 1998 | DVD

Elementary through middle school

The Maya were an advanced society who created great cities deep in the jungle of Mexico and Central America. Join Arizona Smith and his young detectives-in-training as they explore the tomb of the king of Palenque to learn his role as ruler and god. Location footage, archeological artifacts, art, and human remains show where historians look for clues to the past. Students will gain an understanding and appreciation of the Maya system of writing, astronomy, and sacred rituals.

Recommended Films, Videos, and DVDs

Ancient Aztec Empire for Children**ACC-10**

19 min. | color | 1996 | DVD

Elementary through middle school

About five hundred years ago no one in Europe had heard of the Aztec Empire. Viewers will travel between present-day Mexico City and the past to discover how these individuals lived. Discover what happened to them and what they left behind. Through excavations in Mexico City and graphic illustrations, students will learn about the Aztec's warlike nature, religion, traditions, and highly organized society.

Ancient Aztec: Fall of the Empire**ACC-11**

19 min. | color | 1996 | DVD

Elementary through middle school

The Aztecs were a wealthy, powerful, and highly organized society who kept tribes in order through war and force. How did this incredible civilization virtually disappear? Through recreations and 3-D models, learn about the arrival of the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés and understand the fall of the empire due to disease and enslavement. Witness the Aztec traditions and stories that prevail today, despite the conquering of the empire by the Spaniards.

Note: These and other audiovisual resources related to VMFA's collection may be accessed through our website:

http://www.vmfa.museum/Learn/Statewide_Programs/Films,_Videos,_and_DVDs.aspx

Educational Media Resources

Recommended Websites

<http://archaeology.about.com/od/mterms/qt/moche.htm>

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/386887/Moche>

<http://enloehs.wcpss.net/projects/candc/merg/rbmwrnmerg7/rdnmawrebmerg7.htm>

Recommended Reading

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Inca, Aztec, Maya Activity Book: [art, crafts, cooking, and historical aids]

Keller, Mary Jo.

Link to Related Works of Art at VMFA

<http://www.vmfa.museum/Collections/American/>

Links to Related Programs

Teen classes

<http://www.vmfa.museum/Learn/Teens/Teens.aspx>

Families and kids

http://www.vmfa.museum/Learn/Kids+_Families/Kids+_Families.aspx

Tours

<http://www.vmfa.museum/Learn/Educators/educators.aspx>

Teacher workshops

http://www.vmfa.museum/Learn/Educators/Teacher_Workshops/Teacher_Workshops.aspx

Please check <http://www.vmfa.museum/Learn/> regularly to learn about new tours and other educational opportunities.



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