



EARLY CHILDHOOD LESSON CONCEPT: ANIMALS!

Find animals in VMFA's galleries and then create your own animal sculpture!

INTRODUCTION

Animals are an important part of our world. They make us laugh, they help us learn to care for others, they live all over the world and in different environments— and you can find many of them at VMFA!

To begin, ask your child what they know about animals— their coverings (fur, scales, feathers), their features (eyes, ears, noses, tongues, tails), what sounds they make and other important aspects that make them unique (what they eat, drink, or like to play with).

Did you know that phrasing your questions a certain way can make children think and strengthen their cognitive development and observational skills? Try asking open-ended questions that spark creative responses rather than questions that result in Yes or No answers.



GALLERY GUIDELINES

One of the tools we use to engage our students is enrichment activities – songs, games and materials that invite children to explore the objects in a deeper capacity. We invite you to do the same! Here are some guidelines to keep in mind:

- Only bring soft, dry, materials with you, and something to easily contain them (a small bag or basket).
- Do not bring wet, hard, or sticky objects like rocks, markers or stickers.
- Suggested materials – pipe cleaners, feathers, silk leaves, pom poms, etc.
- We usually incorporate items that connect with the objects we are looking at or with the songs we sing (silk leaves for jungle animal songs, large doll straw hats that resemble a hat in a portrait).
- **Remember to keep the art work safe by using museum hands** (holding hands together like they're giving each other a hug) and walking like slow moving turtles while in the galleries.

OBJECT 1



Seated Ganesha, early 12th century, Indian, gray chloritic schist, Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Gift of Paul Mellon, 68.8.18

Seated Ganesha

Enter the museum through the main entrance and travel up the glass elevator to the third floor. Turn right out of the elevator and then left into the [South Asian Art Gallery](#). You all will enter a room filled with stone sculptures that once lived in temples throughout India.

At the [center of the room](#) you will find *Ganesha* seated on a throne. Ganesha is an elephant headed deity and one that children love to visit! As you all observe Ganesha, invite your child to tell you what they notice about him.

Discussion Questions

- What do you notice about this animal?
- What do you see on his head, wrists, and ankles?
- Can you find his trunk? (Ganesha's trunk is reaching into a bowl of treats because he loves sweets!)
- What is wrapped around his belly? (A snake is wrapped around him like a belt to hold his full belly together).
- Do you notice his belly button? Do you have a belly button?

Gallery Action Rhyme: We often sing songs and rhymes in the galleries and you are welcome to do so as well! This is a wonderful action rhyme that we love to sing when we talk about this sculpture: [Five Elephants in the Bathtub](#).

When you are ready to continue on your tour, head through the South Asian Gallery making your way past the [Garden Pavilion](#) and the [Howdah](#) (you all may enjoy looking at how the *Howdah* would sit on the elephant and the decadent textures and mythical animals on the object). In the last room of the South Asian Galleries you will see an [exit](#). This will lead into the [South Asian Lounge](#) with sculptures like [Padmasambhava](#) and a wonderful view of Boulevard.

When you walk to the right of the room, you will be able to look down upon the *Large Leaping Hare* –and you will have spotted our second work of art! Before you head down the elevator to see it up close take a moment to gaze at it from above. In [the corner of the room](#) the glass runs down to the floor so your child should be able to stand on his/her own to see him and then you are welcome to lift your child up to view his nose, ears and back from directly above as you walk closer to the elevator.

Take the elevator down to the 2nd level to get a closer look at the hare!



OBJECT 2



Large Leaping Hare, Barry Flanagan, 1982, gilded bronze, cast iron stand, Gift of Sydney and Frances Lewis, 85.385a-b

Large Leaping Hare

The artist, Barry Flanagan, loved to watch hares run through the chalk hills of England. He was inspired to use this subject to make many different sculptures.

Discussion Questions

- Can you spot his facial features (eyes, ears, nose, and mouth)? What about the other parts of his body? (Back, tail, legs, belly)
- What do you notice about the texture of his coat? Is it rough, bumpy, shiny or dull?
- What is the hare doing? Is he moving fast or slow? Is he touching the ground or in flight?
- How is he being held up in the air? (The base of the sculpture holds the sculpture up.)
- How does the base look different from the textures, colors, and shapes of the hare?
- Can you tell what materials he is made out of?

Gallery Action Song: This is a wonderful song to play and act out at home or in the Sculpture Garden: [See the Little Bunnies Sleeping.](#)

Interesting Fact!

Hares are in the same family as rabbits but have different traits and characteristics – learn more about their differences [here!](#)



OBJECT 3



Bactrian Camel, Unknown, 7th century, China, Earthenware with white glaze, Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 51.12.2

Bactrian Camel

Head through the [Works on Paper Gallery](#) and turn left into the Ancient Chinese room in the [East Asian Art Gallery](#). Immediately you should spot our next object – the *Bactrian Camel*!

This sculpture depicts an important animal in Ancient China. Camels are very special, unique animals. They store fat in their humps and can live without water for 6-10 days! They have a third, clear eyelid and they have two rows of long lashes that protect their eyes from blowing sand. Sand up the nose can be a problem, but not for camels- they can shut their nostrils during sand storms.

Discussion Questions

- Look at the camel from all sides, can you find his humps? How many does he have?
- Can you tell why camels were important to people long ago?
- What do you see on the camel's back?
- Where is the camel's nose? Do you notice his nostrils?
- What do you think this sculpture is made out of? (It is made out of clay and if you look underneath you can see that it is hollow inside.)

Gallery Action Song: Here is an exciting song to go along with this desert animal: [Alice the Camel](#).

Exit the Ancient Chinese gallery and enter the [Cochrane Court](#) (the large echoing room with the [The Four Seasons](#) mosaic in it.) Find [the doorway that is protected by a pair of Guardian Lions](#) and inside this gallery you will find the last animals we are featuring!



OBJECT 4



Monju (Bodhisattva Manjusri) on Lion, 14th century, Japan, Wood with polychrome, lacquer, copper, crystal, glass, Adolph D. and Wilkins C. Williams Fund, 66.73.1a-e

Monju (Bodhisattva Manjusri) on Lion, and Fugen (Bodhisattva Samantabhadra) on Elephant

Monju (Bodhisattva Manjusri) on Lion (pictured on the left), and *Fugen (Bodhisattva Samantabhadra) on Elephant* (nearby in the gallery) are the most important bodhisattvas of East Asian Buddhism in the Heian period. Monju represents wisdom as he sits upon a lotus blossom which rides on the saddle of a lion. Fugen rides an elegant elephant which embodies sensory perception and royal power.

Discussion Questions

- What animals do you see?
- What do you notice about them? (allow children to independently point out the colors, features, and person seated on top of the animal)
- Previously we saw animals made of stone, metal and clay. What do you think these animals are made of?
- Did you know that different animals live in different parts of the world?
- Do lions and elephants live around us or do they live in a different part of the world?
- Some lions and elephants live in the continent of Asia, in the jungle. The jungle is a lush green environment with lots of trees and vines.

Gallery Action Song: Here's a song to sing with fabric leaves!

Lions and Tigers

(Sung to the tune of London Bridge is Falling Down)

Lions and tigers go peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo,
Lions and tigers go peek-a-boo, lions and tigers
Lions and tigers come out to play, out to play, out to play,
Lions and tigers come out to play, lions and tigers
Lions stand up and tigers sit down, tigers sit down, tigers sit down,
Lions stand up and tigers sit down, lions and tigers!

Interesting Fact!

Forest elephants are found in jungles and rain forests! They are smaller than the elephants that live in Africa. Learn more [here](#).



ART PROJECT



After your visit to the museum, create your own animal artwork! Remember that some children may create a recognizable animal, but others may create a creature that is unique to themselves. They may press the clay in many different ways and enjoy the process of manipulating the material. The process is more important than the outcome. Allowing children to create their art with the freedom to make their own choices builds confidence and independence. We encourage this and hope that you will too! Learn more about the benefits of process based art [here](#).

Materials:

- Clay, dough or Model Magic ([recipe for homemade dough](#)).
- Wooden spools, blocks, assorted shapes, etc.
- Pieces of fabric
- Foam core or cardboard for base
- Adhesive medium – craft glue, Elmer’s glue or adhesive backed foam
- White and black paint and any other colors children would like– tempera, homemade or food grade depending on the age of your child

Directions:

- Before working with your child, shape the clay or dough into shapes– a large oval and a circle, and for young children a cylinder shape (2.5-5 year olds can pinch out the trunk while young children will attach theirs)
- Before children start working with the clay or dough ask them to practice with their “pinching fingers” and to turn their hands into beaks and open and close them “like a hungry bird”– this will warm their hands up to work with the clay.
- Assemble sculptures pressing head (circle) onto body (oval), they may pinch out ears and either pull out a nose, or attach it if you are using the cylinder shape.
- Add feet (if desired) from the wooden blocks, shapes, spools – or even more clay. Set the body of the animal onto the feet.
- Give children white and black paint and watch them mix the colors turning them into grey. Paint creatures with the mixed paint or any other color they choose.
- Create base – attach fabric to foam core or cardboard base using drops of liquid glue or glue dots. Add creature to the base.



BOOK LIST

Here are some suggested books that relate to this resource:

Seven Blind Mice by Ed Young

Hare and Tortoise by Alison Murray

Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney

Camels Have Humps (Tell Me Why?) by Susan Heinrichs Gray

Jazzy in the Jungle by Lucy Cousins

If You're Happy and You Know It (Jungle Edition) by James Warhola

The Lion and the Mouse by Jerry Pinkney