

# Archaic and Classical Style

*Shelby Brown*

THE ARCHER SCHOOL FOR GIRLS  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

## GOALS/GRADE LEVELS

Students in sixth to tenth grades will learn how to identify representations of people executed in the Greek Archaic and Classical art styles and will then create their own identifiably Archaic or Classical image. They will learn how archaeologists and art historians identify characteristics of artworks from particular cultures and periods to help categorize them, place them in chronological order, recognize individual artists, compare art across cultures, and more.

## CULTURAL/HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*The Archaic Period: Stylistic Markers*  
(ca. 600-500 B.C.E.)

- Figures are flat (they resemble paper dolls; torso and limbs are in one plane, as if squeezed between two panes of glass).
- Frontal eyes are shown on profile faces.
- Bodies twist (head and legs are shown sideways in profile, sometimes facing in opposite directions, while the torso is frontal).
- Folds of clothing form zigzags and drapery appears ironed flat.
- Objects, limbs, & drapery behind the main figure(s) are shown as higher or lower (the hem of a dress may sag on the side of the figure away from the viewer; a person in the back ground may be raised slightly above someone in the foreground).
- Bodies are held in rigid positions (some poses are borrowed from Egypt).
- Body proportions and limb positions are awkward (elbows jut out at 45 degree angles; shoulders are hunched; limb connections are unclear).
- Gravity and motion may seem to have no effect, an illogical effect, or different effects within the same scene.

*The Classical Period: Stylistic Markers*  
(ca. 500-400 B.C.E.)

- Bodies and faces are depicted in three-quarter views.
- Eyes are depicted realistically in profile and three-quarter views.
- Successful three-dimensionality is achieved through foreshortening, perspective, and overlapping.
- Bodies, drapery, and hair react appropriately to gravity and motion (hang properly, flow, and billow).
- Bodies are in proportion, while limbs and connections between body parts look realistic.

- Figures are posed elegantly, although often unrealistically, against a backdrop in positions human bodies can actually achieve.
- Clothing looks wet and clings to the realistic (although unnaturally perfect) body in graceful curves.

## TIME NEEDED

The teacher will need to take the time to familiarize him/herself with two-dimensional Greek representational art and to prepare photocopied models from coloring books, if desired. Presentation and class discussion of the assignment should take about 45 minutes to an hour. If students create their artwork in class rather than at home, this should take them another hour.

## REQUIRED MATERIALS, TOOLS, AND PREPARATION

The necessary materials are examples of Greek art, especially vase paintings, paper, pencils, pens, and colored pencils or fine markers. The teacher may choose to make models or a template by photocopying images from Greek coloring books (see *Resources*).

## Sample Images

*\*The ancient artist's name is in parentheses before the description of the subject, and the city in which the artwork is located is in parentheses after.*

*Archaic images*

### Trojan War: The Iliad. Vol. I

- (Painter of Acropolis 606) soldiers and chariots (Athens)
- (Exekias) Achilles and Ajax playing dice (Vatican)
- (Amasis Painter) two warriors (Boston)

### A Coloring Book of Amazons

- (Berlin Painter) Hercules and the Amazons
- (Hypsis) Amazons arming themselves
- (Exekias) Achilles and Penthesilea

*Classical (and later, related) images*

### Trojan War: The Iliad. Vol. I

- Paris and Helen (St. Petersburg)
- Thetis bringing armor to Achilles (Ruvo)

### A Coloring Book of Amazons

- Amazon leaping from Mars Hill (Piraeus – from copy of shield of Athena Parthenos)

## THE CLASSROOM PROCESS

The teacher will discuss Archaic and Classical Greek images with the students and show them Greek sculpture

and vase paintings to illustrate and reinforce the difference between the two styles. Since students will be drawing in two dimensions on paper, it will be easier for them to identify style characteristics relevant to a flat medium if they focus on vase painting and low-relief sculpture (such as that on temple friezes and metopes, for example) rather than three-dimensional sculpture.

The change from one style to the other was gradual, and transitional art, especially between about 510-490 BCE, can be confusing. The images shown to students should be clearly awkward-Archaic or graceful-Classical. Students may benefit from trying to position their own bodies the way a person does in an Archaic and then a Classical artwork. They will see that in Archaic art, people's bodies and poses are not true to life, and that in classical art, people's bodies are realistic, but their hair, clothing, and poses are perfected and often theatrical and unlikely.

**Discuss relevant artistic terms, simplified.**

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Style             | A way of showing the visible world in art that changes with time and place   |
| Composition       | The organization of an artwork's elements to create a pattern and to lead or hold the eye  |
| Setting           | Indicators of time and place   |
| Main character(s) | The most important person or people in the image   |
| Pose              | The way a body is positioned   |
| Background        | What lies behind the main character or scene   |
| Foreground        | What lies in the main area of the picture or in front of the main character  |
| Depth             | Ways of showing three-dimensionality in a flat image. In ancient art depth may be shown by overlapping or stacking; in classical art, early forms of perspective drawing make elements seem to recede. |
| Symbolism         | A symbol that stands for something and provides clues to understanding the setting, character, and story. For example, the attribute a god holds may identify him (Poseidon holds a trident).          |

**Students choose:**

I am an Archaic artist living in the sixth century BCE  
 OR

I am a Classical artist living in the fifth century BCE

AND:

I will represent a scene from my favorite myth  
 OR

I will represent a scene of modern life or from a modern story

Students will complete an artistic and a written component. They should not simply copy an ancient image or aspects of it, but show that they are able to design a new image in the ancient style.

**Artistic Component**

- Students decide on an Archaic or Classical style and, with the help of their teacher, examine vase paintings and low-relief sculptures in that style to observe characteristic elements.
- They choose a story they want to tell, which can be a modern tale, a myth, a part of a story they are reading in English class -- anything they like. They pick the moment they want to tell. They may depict one, two, or three main characters. Students trying to recreate the classical style should avoid cartoon characters, since these may already appear somewhat Archaic or Classical and make it harder for the teacher to tell if the student understands the styles.
- Students first design their image in draft form and sketch it roughly, making the characters clear, including building in any necessary symbolism to identify them. They should incorporate at least 3 Archaic or Classical elements.
- To make the lesson more complex, the teacher may ask students to create an arresting composition through their placement of figures, objects, or symbols and their use of pattern and color. (Instead of just describing the composition, they can photocopy their final artwork and draw and label it to show the pattern they created, the direction they intend the viewers' eyes to follow, and so on.)
- Students finalize the design. It may be black and white, or in color.

**Written Component**

- Students briefly tell the story and the moment they are depicting in their drawing and explain what any symbols represent.
- They explain what they did to make the image fit the chosen style.
- If composition is relevant to the assignment and they have not included a labeled photocopy, students should describe their composition.

**ASSESSMENT**

The teacher should adapt this rubric as s/he sees fit:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Archaic and Classical Style Project Rubric**  
(50 points)

The **image** is in this style:

Archaic \_\_\_\_\_

classical \_\_\_\_\_

The story/myth/modern scene shown is:

The specific moment shown is:

The composition/pattern is:

Your **grade** is based on the following:

- The image is careful and detailed (10 points)
- It represents the style accurately, illustrating at least 3 characteristics (20 points)
- The narrative (story) moment is clear (10 points)
- The image reflects intentional composition (there is an attempt to create a pattern, draw the eye through size or placement or color, or otherwise clarify, through the design of the scene, who and what are important (10 points)

TOTAL POINTS \_\_\_\_/50

Comments:

**RESOURCES**

**Style resources**

- Hodge, Susie. 1998. *Ancient Greek Art*. Heinemann Publishing.
- Osborne, R. 1998. *Archaic and Classical Greek Art*. Oxford University Press.
- Pedley, John G. 2007. *Greek Art and Archaeology*. Prentice Hall.

**Sample coloring books with images from Greek vase painting**

- Bellerophon Books: Miscellaneous
- *Amazons* (ISBN 0-88388-201-9)

- *Ancient Greece* (ISBN 0-88388-000-8)
  - *Gorgons* (ISBN 0-88388-109-8)
  - *Greek Goddesses* (ISBN 0-88388-253-1)
- Bellerophon Books: Homer
- *Odyssey* (ISBN 0-88388-207-8)
  - *Trojan War: The Iliad. Vol. 1* (ISBN 0-88388-179-9)
  - *Trojan War: The Iliad. Vol. 2* (ISBN 0-88388-214-0)
- British Museum. *Ancient Greece* (ISBN 0-7141-2132-0)
- British Museum. *Greek Designs* (ISBN 0-7141-2239-4)

**NATIONAL STANDARDS**

*National Standards for History and Social Science*

**National Center for History in the Schools**

Historical Thinking Standards for Grades 5-12:  
[http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/thinking5-12\\_toc.html](http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/thinking5-12_toc.html)

- A. Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative and assess its credibility.
- E. Read historical narratives imaginatively.
- F. Appreciate historical perspectives.
- H. Utilize visual, mathematical, and quantitative data.

**National Council for the Social Studies Standards**  
<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands>

Theme I: Culture and Cultural Diversity  
Theme II: Time, Continuity, and Change  
Theme IV. Individual Development and Identity

**National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Standards Grades 6-8**  
<http://www.ncte.org/standards>

**NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts**

- Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience
- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information)
- Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes

*National Standards for Arts Education*

**Consortium of National Arts Education Associations**

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards/>

**NA-VA.5-8.3 CHOOSING AND EVALUATING A RANGE OF SUBJECT MATTER, SYMBOLS, AND IDEAS**

Achievement Standard:

- Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks
- Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks

**NA-VA.5-8.4 UNDERSTANDING THE VISUAL ARTS IN RELATION TO HISTORY AND CULTURES**

Achievement Standard:

- Students know and compare the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures
- Students describe and place a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts
- Students analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas, and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art

**NA-VA.5-8.5 REFLECTING UPON AND ASSESSING THE CHARACTERISTICS AND MERITS OF THEIR WORK AND THE WORK OF OTHERS**

Achievement Standard:

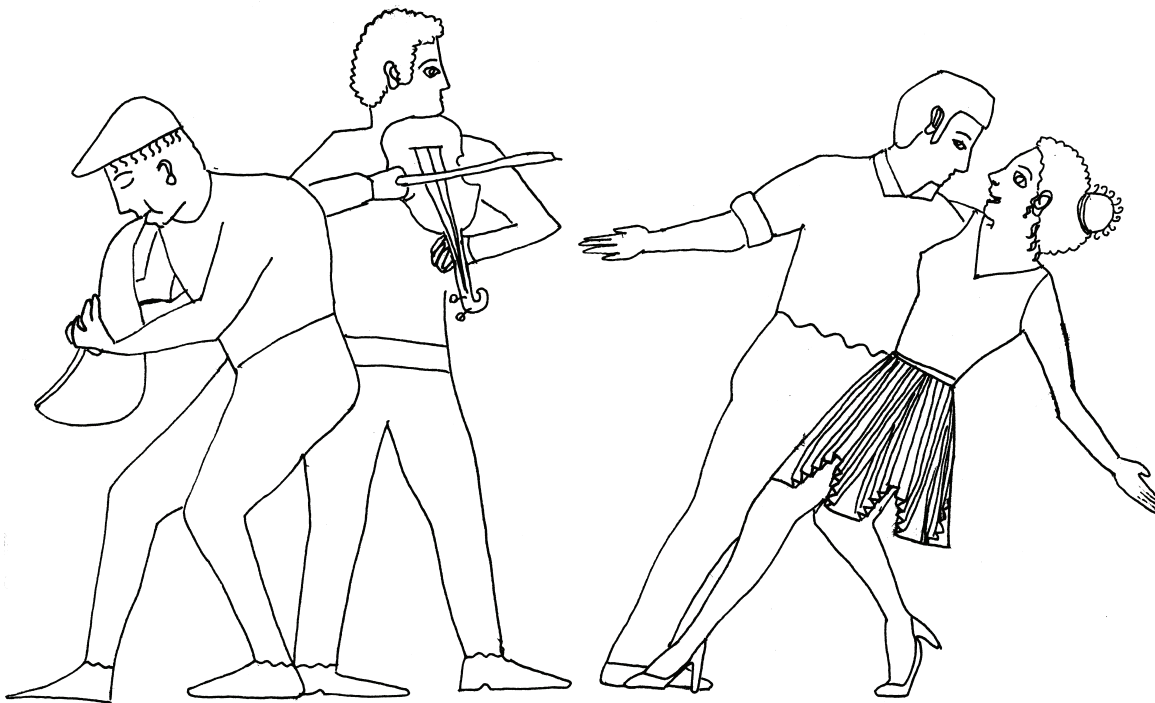
- Students compare multiple purposes for creating works of art
- Students analyze contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry
- Students describe and compare a variety of individual responses to their own artworks and to artworks from various eras and cultures

**NA-VA.5-8.6 MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VISUAL ARTS AND OTHER DISCIPLINES**

Achievement Standard:

- Students compare the characteristics of works in two or more art forms that share similar subject matter, historical periods, or cultural context
- Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.

SAMPLE LESSON IMAGE: ARCHAIC



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Archaic image by Journie Kirdain. Musicians play (saxophone and fiddle) as a couple dances. Note the frontal eyes in profile faces, the flat bodies, and the zigzag folds of the woman's skirt.