
*Commercial and Spiritual Routes*

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| **Introduction**  |
| This reliquary casket, and others like it, were made to contain the relics of saints. These relics were either small pieces of the saint’s body or objects that were associated with the saint and believed to have holy power that could perform miracles. Reliquaries came in many different forms, but this specific reliquary casket was produced in the city of Limoges, France, which in the 13th century was a center of manufacturing and exporting reliquaries. The shape of the reliquary casket was meant to echo that of a tomb or a cathedral, and it was decorated with images of saints and other holy figures on the outside. Reliquaries like this served as the center of a saint’s shrine in a church or abbey. Going to a specific shrine to see a relic was an important part of pilgrimages, which were journeys that medieval Christians undertook as a form of religious practice. Pilgrimages were dangerous and expensive, but they offered many spiritual benefits. Those who completed a pilgrimage might receive miracles or indulgences, and their previous sins were forgiven. Those who died during pilgrimage—a common occurrence—were guaranteed spiritual security. The city of Limoges, where this reliquary casket was made, was an important stop for French pilgrims on the Way of St. James, a pilgrimage route that led them to the shrine of St. James the Great in Spain. Some pilgrims took pilgrimages all the way overseas, as the crusaders to Jerusalem did. The first Crusades were not understood to be wars as we understand them now but were instead considered by those who joined them as simply a continuation of a long pilgrimage tradition. These crusaders were given the same blessings and other spiritual benefits that had always been given to pilgrims; the only apparent difference was that they were also armed. |
| **Indiana Standards Connections:** 6.1.4 Identify and explain the development and organization of political, cultural, social and economic systems in Europe and the Americas.6.1.5 Analyze the diverse points of view and interests of those involved in the Crusades and give examples of the changes brought about by the Crusades.7.1.2 Describe, compare, and contrast the historical origins, central beliefs and spread of major religions. GHW.2.2 Differentiate among selected countries in terms of how their identities, cultural and physical environments, and functions and forms of government are affected by world religions.WH.3.6 Explain the role of Christianity as a unifying force in medieval Europe.WH.3.9 Explain the cultural, political, economic, and religious causes of the Crusades and their consequences for Europe and Southwest Asia, including the growth in power of the monarchies in Europe. | **Compelling Question(s):** Why were reliquaries important to medieval Christians?How did pilgrimages shape medieval society?How does art reflect religious beliefs and cultural practices? |
| **Lesson Objectives:** Students will:* Learn about the Crusades in Medieval Europe through closely observing a French reliquary casket.
* Understand the role of reliquaries in medieval Christianity and how they were used to house relics.
* Learn about the significance of pilgrimages during the medieval period, including their spiritual and cultural importance.
* Explore the connection between art, religion, and culture through the study of a 13th century French reliquary casket.
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| **Materials**  |
| Reliquary Caskets in Museum Collections* Reliquary Casket- W2W
* [Reliquary Casket- Art Institute Chicago](https://www.artic.edu/artworks/46253/reliquary-casket)

Historical Background* [The Crusades- Pilgrimage or Holy War- Crash Course YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X0zudTQelzI)
* [The Medieval Black Market for Christian Relics- Side Quest animated History](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_UHGAHiLa4)
* [12th and 13th century pilgrimage map in Europe](https://walkinginfrance.info/pilgrimages/)
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| **Learning Plan**  |
| **Activities** 1. Ask students to observe the casket. What do they notice? What do they think has inside it? Who would have used this casket and for what purpose? Ask them to describe the figures represented, the shape of the casket, and the adornments.

Note the winged figures, and the other figures holding books. These represent angels and apostles in Christianism. Students might be familiar with this representation, and they might indicate it is a religious Christian object. The casket’s non-specific iconography made it appropriate for any church and allowed it to house any saint’s remains.1. Students might describe the casket to be house-shaped, however, to 13th century Christians, this casket represented a tomb or a cathedral. Reliquaries are a type of vessel that protected and exhibited relics of a holy person such as hair, bone fragments, skin or hair. Not only were the relics inside the reliquary valued, but caskets were also frequently adorned and highly regarded as they protected the relics inside. Christians considered that these relics granted miracles because of their association to the holiness of the saints they represented.
2. Watch both YouTube videos to introduce students to Medieval Christian pilgrimage routes. Discuss how believers embarked on journeys to places they believed to be sanctified by the physical presence of Christ or saints. Religious structures were edified to house relics where believers would go to pray, seeking protection and intercession from the saints.
3. Using the [pilgrimage map](https://walkinginfrance.info/pilgrimages/), ask students to mark on the map the town where this casket was made and invite them to trace the pilgrimage route to Saint James Cathedral in Spain. Explain the Way of St. James as a major pilgrimage route leading to shrine of St. James in Spain, with Limoges being a significant stop along the way. Emphasize the role of relics in major pilgrimage sites versus relics in places Christians could venerate locally.
4. Explain the importance of Crusades in pilgrimages during the Middle Ages. What was the purpose of these expeditions? What did Crusaders gain from the pilgrimage?
5. Ask students how pilgrimages influenced the economy. Center the discussion around the Limoges, France. Note that this town was one of the manufacturing and exporting centers of reliquaries, particularly during the Middle Ages as Christians went to the Way of Saint James. Students can mention economic revenue in different towns because of pilgrimage routes as pilgrims needed shelter and food on their travel. Additional vital economic factors were the production of relics as portable commodities (including counterfeits and smuggling), and the competition to establish churches as key pilgrimage centers.

Discussion:1. In small groups, students will discuss the questions:
* How might the belief in miracles and indulgences influence someone’s decision to undertake a pilgrimage?
* What significance do you think people placed on seeing a relic or visiting a shrine?
1. Students will present summarizing key points: reliquaries and its sacredness, the importance of the Way of St. James as a key pilgrimage route that crossed Limoges, how religious practices like pilgrimages and the veneration of relics shaped medieval society.
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| **Assessment Suggestions**  Students’ participation will be assessed through in-class discussion and group presentations. |
| **Extensions** Students can research other pilgrimage routes in different religions and/ or regions (**Kumano Kodō**, *Japan,* **Adam’s Peak**, *Sri Lanka, etc.),* tracing its historical importance, the motivations to undertake the journey, and the people who went on it. |

Reliquary Casket Activity Possibilities

Some of the best opportunities for education are *integrative*—meaning that students are able to make connections across disciplines to reinforce the knowledge that they are developing. For example, they may be learning about Renaissance Italy in World Studies at the same time that they read Dante’s *Inferno* in English class while also studying Botticelli in Art. Feel free to combine and adapt some of the ideas across disciplines and standards to best suit your particular context. You can also collaborate with other teachers at your school or supplement the resources provided by contacting your librarian.

**Note: The following ideas are meant to give general guidance for teachers to include artifacts and other material culture in their classrooms. They are not meant to be treated as comprehensive activities or lessons that are one-size-fits-all for any classroom. They should be personalized to best fit the needs of a teacher’s individual context in accordance with prior student learning, student abilities, available resources, and any curricular guidance.**

**Art**

**Visual Arts – Responding:**

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| **Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work****Enduring Understanding: Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed throughout engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.** **Essential Question(s): How do life experiences influence the way you relate to art? How does learning about art impact how we perceive the world? What can we learn from our responses to art?**  |
| **VA:Re7.1.1a** | Select and describe works of art that illustrate daily life experiences. |
| **VA:Re7.1.6a** | Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value. |
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| **VA:Re9.1.5a** | Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society |
| **VA:Re7.1.Ia** | Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences. |
| **VA:Re7.1.IIa** | Recognize and describe personal aesthetic and empathetic responses to the natural world and constructed environments |
| **VA:Re7.1.IIIa** | Analyze how responses to art develop over time based on knowledge of and experience with art and life |

**Visual Arts – Connecting:**

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| **Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.** **Enduring Understanding: People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.** **Essential Question(s): How does art help us understanding the lives of people of different times, places, and cultures? How is art used to impact the videos of a society> How does art preserve aspects of life?**  |
| **VA:Cn11.1.1a** | Understand that people from different places and times have made art for a variety of reasons. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.2a** | Compare and contrast cultural uses of artwork from different times and places. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.3a** | Recognize that responses to art change depending on knowledge of the time and place in which it was made |
| **VA:Cn11.1.4a** | Through observation, infer information about time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.6a** | Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.7a** | Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses |
| **VA:Cn11.1.8a** | Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity |
| **VA:Cn11.1.IIa** | Compare uses of art in a variety of social, cultural, and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.IIIa** | Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society. |

*Students can be asked to consider how art reflects time periods, beliefs, cultures, traditions, etc. In exploring the reliquary casket, students are examining how items such as this reflected religious practices in Medieval European society and why such items were seen as sacred. Students could also explore how the iconography of the reliquaries indexed their intended purpose; how different cultures use art, artifacts, and props to demonstrate their interests, beliefs, and stature; how such items demonstrate social capital; etc. Students can discuss why reliquaries and relics were important in the Middle Ages among Christians, and how these artifacts were sourced and for what purpose.*

**Social Studies**

**Grade 6: History, Places, and Cultures in Europe and Americas**

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| **6.1.3** | ***Explain the impact of humans on the physical environment in Europe and the Americas.*** |
| **6.3.10** | *Explain the ways cultural diffusion, invention, and innovation change culture.*  |
| **6.3.11** | *Differentiate between the terms anthropology, archaeology, and artifacts while explaining how these contribute to our understanding of societies in the present and the past.*  |

**Ethnic Studies**

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| **ES.4.1** | *Students examine historical and contemporary economic, intellectual, social, cultural and political contributions to society by ethnic or racial group(s) or an individual within a group.*  |

**Geography and History of the World**

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| **GHW.4.2** | *Use a variety of text (writing, maps, timelines and/or other graphic representations) to show the movement, spread and changes in the worldwide exchange of flora, fauna and pathogens that resulted from transoceanic voyages of exploration and exchanges between peoples in different regions. Assess the consequences of these encounters for the people and environments involved.*  |
| **GHW.4.3** | *Identify and compare the main causes, players, and events of imperialism during different time periods. Examine the global extent of imperialism using a series of political maps.*  |
| **GHW.4.4** | *Analyze and assess how the physical and human environments (including languages used) of places and regions changed as the result of differing imperialist and colonial policies.* |

**World History and Civilization**

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| **WH.7.3** | *Investigate and interpret multiple causation in analyzing historical actions and analyze cause-and-effect relationships.* |
| **WH.7.6** | *Formulate and present a position or course of action on an issue by examining the underlying factors contributing to that issue and support that position.*  |

*Outside of the 6th and 7th grade Indiana standards, the exploration regarding how imperialism has led to an impact on other cultures and environments. Students should be able to examine the role of human environment interaction involved in the development of commercial and spiritual routes as reflected in the reliquary casket. Students can also discuss the differences between colonialism and Crusades, in what ways did both missions had similar purposes and how they differed. There’s room for them to make connections to contemporary issues that are similar to and a consequence of pilgrimages and crusades.*

**Language Arts**

**Writing Skills:**

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| **4.W.5**  | **Conduct short research on a topic.** * **Identify a specific question to address (e.g., What is the history of the Indy 500?).**
* **Use organizational features of print and digital sources to efficiently locate further information.**
* **Determine the reliability of the sources.**
* **Summarize and organize information in their own words, giving credit to the source**
* **Present the research information, choosing from a variety of formats.**
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| **5.W.5** | Conduct short research assignments and tasks on a topic.* With support, formulate a research question (e.g., What were John Wooden’s greatest contributions to college basketball?).
* Identify and acquire information through reliable primary and secondary sources.
* Summarize and paraphrase important ideas and supporting details, and include direct quotations where appropriate, citing the source of information.
* Avoid plagiarism and follow copyright guidelines for use of images, pictures, etc.
* Present the research information, choosing from a variety of sources.
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*Students could conduct research projects in which they examine examples of other relics sourced from pilgrimages in different countries and cultures. They can analyze the iconography of the reliquaries to understand the significance of the historical character it portrays and its iconographic associations. They can make comparisons to similar cultural items and explain how elements of different cultures influenced the production of the artifact considering the techniques and materials.*