SUPPORT SCIENCE UNDERSTANDING

Torso of Amenpayom, probably 200–100 BC. Egypt. Gift of the Hanna Fund 1948.141

Sedimentary, igneous, and metamorphic rocks are featured throughout the museum. Have students hone their observational skills by comparing and classifying rocks. Students can walk through eons of geological change in just a few steps in the Egyptian gallery.


Artists regularly employ chemical change to produce their artworks. Louis Comfort Tiffany, for example, used gold, mercury, arsenic, and other elements in chemical processes to create vibrant and beautiful effects in glass. Visit the galleries to view other chemical processes such as bronze casting, enameling, and ceramic glazing.

Crossbow, c. 1460–70. Germany. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Severance 1916.1725

While arms and armor are now considered art, many were originally weapons. There designers smartly employed simple machines to create effective and efficient tools for combat. Explore the Armor Court with students to test their understanding of forces and motion.

Tureen, c. 1870. Designed by Félix Bracquemond (French, 1833–1914); made by Creil Factory (French). Gift in memory of Eleanor Goldstein Brody 1997.159.a–b

Just as biologists use observation to help them classify and understand animals, artists employ observation to create faithful depictions of the natural world. The galleries offer visitors a chance to explore biological diversity—and unlike the zoo, the animals stay still long enough for visitors to really observe their characteristics.


Explore light and sound waves in works of art. Using their skills of observation, ask students to analyze how light travels through the oculus of the Pantheon. Images of architecture also allow students to infer the way that sound travels in the space. Ask students to use observations of sound in the classroom or in the museum to extrapolate how the sound travels in the Pantheon. The small visitors in the painting give a reference of scale.

Twilight in the Wilderness, 1860. Frederic Edwin Church (American, 1826–1900). Mr. and Mrs. William H. Marlatt Fund 1965.233

Church, and many other American painters in the 1800s, tried to show how powerful—and how unpredictable—nature can be. Natural elements helped to evoke the political and social climate of the time, but artists also represented realistic weather patterns. Students can explore the galleries to identify depictions of different types of clouds and weather systems.