Museum Zoo: Animals in Art

Penelope Buchanan
3 At a Glance
A summary of major objectives of the presentation

4 Presentation Outline
A description of the lesson

22 List of Objects
Animals in the Museum Zoo

Resources
23 Lesson Plan
Formatted especially for teachers

23 Getting Ready for the Visit
Logistics of the Art To Go visit and suggestions on how to configure your classroom

24 Suggestions for Further Reading
Books for students and teachers

25 Website
How to reach the Cleveland Museum of Art on the Internet

26 “Webbing” the Museum Zoo
How to connect Art To Go lesson concepts to other disciplines and activities

Also in your folder
a. Presentation Evaluation
Please fill out and return to the museum after the presentation. Thank you!

b. Fax Sheet
Use this form for shorter questions or concerns relating to the Art To Go visit.

Cover: Detail of Elephant, 900–950. Vietnam (Champa), Tra-kieu style. Beige sandstone, h. 58 cm. Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1982.10

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Early humans migrated across the earth as members of the vast and varied animal kingdom. Over thousands of years, they developed profound spiritual relationships with other life forms that remain in our lives today. In human eyes, certain animals and insects—such as bears, snakes, stags, hawks, and butterflies—took on special powers and characteristics representing the full range of strengths and weaknesses in human nature. Although many fellow creatures were the human hunter’s prey in the struggle for survival, some became dear companions and others were even worshipped as gods. Using their amazing gift of imagination, humans created dragons, unicorns, and other mythical beasts out of animals they knew, and these magical creatures roamed their dreams and stories. From prehistory to present times, visual artists have celebrated the beauty, power, playfulness, and terrifying aspects of animals, real and imaginary, in art. This Art To Go lesson is designed to introduce younger children (kindergarten to third grade) both to the nature of some of these animals living happily together in the Museum Zoo and to the myths, legends, and folk tales that surround them.
The friendly Dancing Bear Puppet shown in the Art To Go presentation was carved in wood for a Russian child’s delight. It dances in the long shadow of its prehistoric ancestor, the giant cave bear. In those distant times, men and women living near the Arctic Circle were fascinated and frightened by this powerful creature that looked so human when it stood on its hind legs, towering above them. Bears were particularly ferocious and courageous when defending their territory or their young. They seemed to be human in other ways, too, being clever and full of curiosity. The people believed the bear held magical powers. In its cave in late autumn, the bear made a bed of plant materials on which it would curl up and then sink into a death-like sleep. Existing mysteriously without food or water for more than four months, it emerged in early spring, thin and hungry. No wonder the animal was often worshipped and the cult of the bear spread throughout northern lands. Even so, men hunted the bear to survive, using its meat for food and its fur for clothing. Killing a bear was a ritual act—the sacrifice of a god.

Hunters did not call the bear by its real name, but by nicknames that varied according to where people lived. From northern Japan, Siberia, and Finland to Labrador, Hudson Bay, and the Pacific Northwest, the bear might be called the Divine One, Old Man in a Fur Coat, Crooked Tail, or even Grandfather. When hunters brought back a slain bear, it provided meat for a sacred feast. Chants were sung to the bear’s spirit, offering praise and gratitude for its sacrifice in bringing food to the village. Remnants
of those traditions can be found today near the Arctic Circle, and the bear remains a powerful totem and symbol of strength. Human eyes and imagination found bear shapes among the stars. Two constellations, Ursa Major (Great Bear) and Ursa Minor (Little Bear) look down upon the Northern Hemisphere from the night sky. Nowadays, we sometimes call these constellations the Big and Little Dippers. Two stars in Ursa Major point to the North Star.

The largest of the carnivores, bears still inspire fear and awe. Brown bears from Russia’s Kamchatka Peninsula or Alaska’s Kodiak Island may stand five feet tall on all four legs and reach nine feet in length from nose to stubby tail. Imagine the spectacle of one standing up on its hind legs, not as imposing as the giant cave bear, but quite tall enough. Yet mother bears care tenderly for their beguiling cubs. Perhaps that is why, in our times, Smokey the Bear protects the forests, while cuddly teddy bears and dancing bear puppets are young children’s special friends.

- **The Haida artist who carved the wooden Beaver in the Form of a Bowl was inspired by this unusual animal.** The artist created a beaver’s head with its prominent front teeth at one end of the oval bowl and its broad, flat, scaly tail at the other. For hundreds of years humans have watched in wonder as beavers worked out complex engineering tasks, using land, water, and trees to create a satisfactory living environment. They still amaze us. Let’s find out why.

  Beavers, being rodents, are related to squirrels although their looks and habits are very different indeed. They are the second largest rodents that exist
(the largest are the South American capybara). Unlike their swift, lithe squirrel cousins, beavers have strong, heavy bodies, just right for the work they do. They grow to be three feet or so from the tip of their nose to base of their tail, and that appendage adds another twelve to fourteen inches. Legs are short and strong to hold the beaver’s weight of around fifty to sixty pounds. They dig burrows to make their homes along the banks of streams and ponds, and have to be superb swimmers because the long, sloping tunnel to their living space always has its entrance under water. The flat tail acts as a rudder, webbed back paws give them speed, and a beautiful, thick, soft coat helps keep them warm in cold water. Humans admire that coat too, and many beavers have been killed for their fur.

Beavers are vegetarians and have plenty of food in summer, but in winter they eat the bark of trees. The nourishing thin bark and the buds on upper branches are what they need. Too heavy to climb, beavers simply fell a tree by gnawing around its base. Fortunately, they have a pair of huge, sharp, and constantly growing incisors on both upper and lower jaws and strong jaw muscles to do the job. As they gnaw, they sit or stand upright balanced by that curious tail. Beavers have another reason for felling trees. When a stream’s water level falls below the burrow entrance, they build a dam by dragging branches to make a high, thick barrier across the stream and then pack it with mud. Sometimes they build a new beaver lodge in the dam at the same time. A symbol of industriousness and wealth, the beaver appears in many folk tales and legends.
among Native American peoples. No wonder that the beaver became a powerful clan crest (totem) for the Haida and other Native American peoples living in the Pacific Northwest and across the northern tier of the continent. When their artists carve a ceremonial beaver mask or place a beaver as a family symbol on a crest pole, its big front teeth and broad, scaly tail are always shown.

- **The Seated Cat, a symbol of the Egyptian cat-headed goddess Bast, leads us back more than 5,500 years to the beginning of ancient Egypt's great civilization.** Nomadic, hunter-gatherer people settled along the banks of the Nile River and discovered that the grain and other vegetables they planted in the rich soil could provide a stable food supply; thus they need not continue wandering. As fields, storehouses, and civilization grew, so did the rodent population. Fortunately for farmers, the small African wildcat (ancestor of modern domestic cats) lived and hunted in the same region. Perhaps one day a farmer found a hidden litter of wildcat kittens and carried them home to tame them. The idea spread up and down the Nile. These semi-wild cats were not house pets, but were kept to protect the fields and storehouses from rats and mice.

Hundreds of years went by and the relationship of cats and humans in Egypt slowly changed, as cats became sacred animals. Not only were they admired for their agility, strength, and fertility, but their mysterious, solitary ways and complex personalities fascinated the Egyptians. By the Second Dynasty (c. 2800 BCE) the goddess Bast was a local deity in
the Nile Delta where her temple stood in the town of Bubastis. The cat is her attribute. She is usually shown in sculpture and paintings with a woman’s body and a cat’s head. Sometimes there will be a few kittens around her feet. Bast was a kind, compassionate goddess who protected women, quite the opposite of Sekhmet, the lioness-headed goddess of war and pestilence. During ancient Egypt’s Late Period, Bast became a goddess for the whole of Egypt. The cat, as her symbol, was held in such affection and respect that when it died, its owners had it mummi-fied and buried in a cat cemetery. Archaeologists have discovered thousands upon thousands of cat mummies in a cemetery near Bubastis.

Many superstitions about cats have come down through the centuries. They tell us that cats have nine lives, that black cats bring bad luck if they cross your path, and that cats are the familiars of witches. None of these superstitions are true, of course. Cats may seem to have many lives because their strong, limber, stretchable bodies often help them escape tight places. Sometimes if they fall from a high place, such as the branch of a tree, they can twist their bodies around in the air to land on their feet. They can see in the dark much better than we can, too. Black cats crossing your path can only bring bad luck if you manage to trip over them. In earlier times, the people who were often called witches lived alone and were simply wise, outspoken old women who kept a cat for company. The domestic cat today still has all the qualities that fascinated people in ancient Egypt, and we all know what wonderful, yet mysterious, companions they can be.
When you hold the brass Asian Elephant in your hand, close your eyes and imagine the real animals—gigantic, majestic, intelligent, benign—moving freely some 5,500 years ago through highland forests and down into lush, green valleys to drink and bathe in the Indus River. The Indus rises in the Himalayan Mountains and flows in a southwesterly direction through northwest India and Pakistan to reach the Arabian Sea. Nomadic, hunter-gatherer tribes settled in the fertile valleys along the river, and the Indus Valley civilization evolved. It was then that a working connection between elephants and humans began. Wild elephants were captured and trained for many tasks that required great strength and intelligence, such as hauling and lifting heavy loads of stone and wood, as well as providing slow but splendid transportation for goods and people.

A millennium or so later the Aryan peoples of Central Asia made their way past the great barrier of the Himalayas to settle in the Indian subcontinent, where they learned how to work with elephants, too. Kings in those early times used elephants for warfare as well, sending them ahead of an army to knock down the walls around a city and the buildings inside. Several archers rode on the elephants and foot soldiers followed right behind. Elephants were symbols of power, majesty, and wealth, and some kings owned thousands of them.

Even during the early relationship between elephants and humans, the elephant meant something more than a tamed worker or an instrument of war. Their intelligence, huge size, and concern for their own kind awed and fascinated people. Elephants in
herds took care of one another, and particularly their calves. A baby elephant was raised not only by its mother, but also by older siblings and other female elephants. Sick or injured elephants were cared for as well, and if one died, the others seemed to grieve. An elephant’s amazing trunk, with its hand-like tip, had surprising uses other than being a nose for breathing. With it, the elephant could explore strange things through touch and scent, pick up tiny objects, bring food and water to its mouth, or give itself a shower.

Folk tales and legends grew up around the elephant, and it became a sacred symbol in two great religions: Hinduism and Buddhism. Indra, the Hindu god of rain, rides across the heavens on the great elephant Airavata, surrounded by thunderclouds and lightening. Ganesha, the elephant-headed god of good fortune, is beloved as the remover of obstacles. Early Buddhist scriptures told that Queen Maya, mother of Prince Siddhartha (who became the Buddha), dreamed that a six-tusked white elephant pierced her side and entered her body. Nine months later, Siddhartha was born.

In India, living elephants have an important part in religious processions, festivals, and other celebrations. Beautifully caparisoned and garlanded with flowers, they are a noble sight. The incised and colored decoration on the Art to Go brass elephant represents the richly embroidered and tasseled cloth that elephants wear over their backs and heads during important ceremonies. Other many-colored designs are often painted directly on an elephant’s
skin. For thousands of years Indian artists have created wonderful images of elephants in sculpture and painting, and this one, with his trunk raised in a salute, follows that tradition.

* The American artist Milton Williams was fascinated by insects and made imaginative sculptures of several varieties in brass. He captured the strange appearance of the praying mantis in this sculpture. A distant cousin of the cockroach, the mantis is one of the most unusual members of the insect world in its appearance and habits. Both insects were descended from cockroach-like ancestors that lived during earth’s earliest times, but each evolved very differently. While the cockroach hides in dark places and hunts at night, the mantis hunts boldly in daylight. In summertime, a mantis can be found hiding in tall grasses and weeds in gardens or along roadsides waiting to catch its dinner. It is a startling sight to see!

Fifteen hundred species of mantids exist around the world and are found in Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe, and North America. They range in size from under an inch to a little over six inches long. Large ones can be found right here in Ohio, and they are easy to recognize. With its long slender body and wings, long neck and triangular head with enormous eyes, the mantis seems more like an intelligent alien visitor than a predatory insect. It can swivel its head around to see what is coming. It moves slowly and gracefully from one watching post to another. Green or brown in color, the mantis blends into the sur-
rounding vegetation and waits. Standing on its two back pairs of walking legs, the mantis holds up its strong front legs with their toothed edges, folding them close together as if praying. Alas, that is not the case. When an insect wanders by, those forelegs shoot out to catch and hold it fast, giving the mantis a fresh meal.

Among the Bushmen people in Africa, folk tales going back to the Stone Age tell of the creation god Kaggen, whose name means “mantis.” It was Kaggen who created the eland, a large antelope, as food for the Bushmen. The eland became a sacred animal and Bushmen hunters observe certain rites at its death. In a tale from southwest Africa, the mantis stole fire from the ostrich to give to humans, and also invented language. This strange, magical insect has charmed, intrigued, and inspired humans for thousands of years. Milton Williams, working in the 1950s, fell under its spell, too, before creating its image in brass.

- **Stretched out at full length, the Snake appears to be just about ready to move away.** It is a wood-carving made from a branch of a tree. If you put it on a flat surface, you will discover that the head and tail are slightly raised and a subtle curve in its body gives a sense of movement. The unknown artist, a member of one of Australia’s Aboriginal peoples, burned a complicated pattern of semi-circles, dots, and lines on the snake’s back and a series of dots running down either side of its underbelly. The design might be the snake’s natural one, but it could also belong to the rainbow serpent that is probably
the most important of all the snake deities in Aboriginal Australia. The rainbow serpent gives a shaman (a tribal doctor/priest) the power to enter the mystical trance-state needed for prediction and diagnosis; it also guards the ritual ceremonies of healing. In Aboriginal mythology, snake deities are also creation gods.

Descended from an ancient lizard ancestor, snakes evolved over millions of years into the remarkable reptiles we know today. There are 2,500 different species of snakes living around the world, but only about a third are poisonous. They range in size from a blind snake two-and-a-half inches long in New Guinea to a South American anaconda (python) that might reach twenty-five feet or more. To early human eyes, the mysterious looks and behavior of snakes set them apart from other creatures. Their long, flexible bodies slither swiftly and silently over ground, through grasses, up trees, and in water because snakes use their ribs and strong back muscles in a rippling motion. Having no external ears or eardrums, snakes are deaf. However they can feel sound vibrations as tiny as a mouse’s footstep. Quite the opposite of vegetarians, all snakes catch and swallow living prey whole, since they cannot chew. Their lidless eyes, protected by a transparent membrane, seem to hypnotize friend, foe, or lunch while the flickering, forked tongue tests the air for new flavors. Snakes spend their days hunting the next meal or sunning themselves to keep warm as cold slows them down. Poisonous snakes use their venom primarily to stun their prey, but when disturbed or attacked, they strike. All these attributes
plus the amazing act of shedding their skin in one piece, including the eye membrane, catapulted snakes into human myth and legend to become deities for good or evil. Surely an animal that emerges from its old skin looking freshly minted must be immortal. A snake shown curved in a circle with its tail in its mouth represents eternity.

Humans view snakes with a mixture of fear and dislike, curiosity, and awe, but in almost every society and religion, snakes appear in local superstitions and the fabric of belief itself. The Aboriginal rainbow serpent has many peers around the globe, including Wedjet, ancient Egypt’s goddess usually seen on the front of the king’s headdress as an uraeus, a coiled cobra with raised hood that protects the king in battle; the deity Quetzalcoatl, the Aztec symbol of fertility and rain, who appeared as a huge, green-feathered serpent; and Kaliha, a giant, many-headed cobra defeated by the Hindu god Krishna.

- The artist in Thailand who carved the Horse Marionette shown in the lesson captured the feeling of a lively horse ready to gallop over hill and dale. A black mane, tail, and hooves provide a fine contrast to its white body. Its eyes have a wild expression. A crimson bridle and saddle are painted on as well as a delicate green scalloped line showing the edge of the saddlecloth. This must be a magical horse as there are flower designs on its white coat, too. Strings from its legs, head, and back are attached to a handheld rod so that the puppeteer can make the horse dance. The artist might have seen the king of Thailand riding a splendid charger in a pro-
cession for a great festival or perhaps images from the long history of horses and humans entered into his dreams.

Fifty million years ago in the forests of North America, a small animal about fifteen inches high browsed on the leaves of bushes and trees. It had four toes on its front feet, three toes on its rear feet, an arched back, and a vaguely horsey head. This creature was eohippus, “dawn horse,” from whom all the different breeds of horses alive today are descended. Over the millions of years that followed, the eohippus slowly changed in looks and behavior. It moved out of the forests with others of its kind to graze in herds on the lush grasses of the open plains. Because forests offer places to hide from predators but open spaces do not, the eohippus learned to run fast. Over time, its neck and legs grew longer, its back became straighter, and its body more muscular and powerful. Its feet made the most amazing changes as side toes shrank away and the nail of the remaining toe became a hoof.

About a million years ago the first true horse appeared. It was about the size of a big pony, with a stiff, standup mane and a thick, soft, brown coat. Herds of horses moved gradually from North America over the land bridge between Alaska and the Chukchi Peninsula to the vast grassy steppes of Siberia and from there to Europe, the Near East, and Arabia. By 10,000 BCE horses had become extinct in North America, not to return until the Spaniards arrived with their horses to conquer Mexico 500 years ago. For thousands of years humans hunted wild horses on foot for food. Vivid paintings of
horses, deer, and bulls made 16,000 years ago have been found in France and Spain on the rock walls of caves where ceremonies to bring good hunting were held. Perhaps 7,000 years ago some hunter caught a young horse and instead of killing it, tamed it and swinging himself onto its back changed human history. A new form of transportation on land had arrived for humans and for thousands of years afterward, riding or driving horses and carriages remained the fastest way to travel until the invention of the steam locomotive in the early 1800s.

Once the idea of riding horses spread, many wild horses were captured, joining the other animals humans had domesticated earlier: sheep, goats, cattle, and donkeys. Different peoples in different places began breeding horses for special characteristics. Some wanted speed and endurance for pulling war chariots or carrying mounted soldiers into battle; others needed strong, heavy horses for plowing the land or hauling heavy loads. As a result many types of horses exist today, from swift, elegant Arabians and huge Shire draft horses to tiny Shetland ponies. They come in a variety of colors with flowing manes and tails, a far cry from the first true horse. The horse soon entered the realm of myth and legend across the Eurasian landmass. Horses carried gods, heroes, and kings in death-defying adventures, and were sometimes considered divine themselves. Poets and bards sang of their courage and faithfulness while artists brought their beauty and power to life in painting and sculpture. For instance, the Norse god Odin rode his eight-legged horse, Sleipnir, through the air and over land and sea. Alexander the
Great, riding Bucephalus, created an empire that stretched from ancient Greece to the borders of India. From Greek myth comes Zeus’s messenger, the white-winged horse Pegasus, our symbol today for imagination and poetry. The Horse Marionette from Thailand can tell all those stories!

- **Folk art in Japan has a long tradition of superb craftsmanship and imaginative ideas for everyday objects, including dolls and toys.** The cheerful Tiger shown in the Art To Go presentation is clothed in fantasy and part of that tradition. Its head, body, and tail were made of papier-mâché on separate molds and joined together after being painted. The head and neck fit loosely into an opening between the shoulders and are held in place by a cord that allows the head to wobble. The tail fits over a stub on the tiger’s rear end and stands up straight. Free-flowing black stripes and lines of dots decorate the yellow body. The tiger’s face is a mask. The big bat ears, edged with black, are rosy pink inside with a red dot at the center. Above golden eyes, blue, butterfly-winged eyebrows spread to cover its white forehead. Add a red-lipped, open mouth with only five teeth and you have a magical tiger. It may indeed be more than a toy, perhaps holding a charm to protect its owner. Although this toy tiger is mass-produced, its design is ancient and traditional. Tigers are not native to Japan and in earlier times Japanese artists learned what they looked like from images on Chinese scroll paintings.
A different tiger image appears in the real world of eastern Asia. Strong, beautiful, and solitary in its habits, the tiger is the largest and heaviest of the big cats. An adult male tiger usually measures nine feet from its nose to the tip of its three-foot tail and weighs 450 pounds. The female is somewhat smaller and lighter, but almost as powerful. Tiger cubs play happily together, but once they are grown, each lives a separate life except for the mating season. Forests are home for tigers, as they prefer living in shady places and hunting at night. Nature has given them perfect camouflage for gliding along animal trails in the forest through patterns of shadow and light. While black stripes decorate a reddish-brown coat, the fur of the underbelly and the insides of the legs is whitish. Incidentally, a tiger’s stripes are unique to that particular animal, rather like human fingerprints. Deer, antelope, wild cattle, and other large mammals are a favorite prey. Stalking an animal slowly and silently, tigers like to get as close as possible before that final, terrible leap. A swift animal sometimes escapes, for the big cats are slow runners and tire quickly. When humans take over tiger territory, cutting down forests to create farms and villages, wildlife scatters. Then a tiger may prey on cattle, or an old and feeble tiger may choose a human for dinner. Captive tigers are star animals in zoos and circuses, where they are trained to perform. Unfortunately, wild tigers are gradually disappearing from Sumatra to Siberia as human population growth drives them from their habitats. Fortunately, tigers in captivity reproduce well and may in the future help to save the species.
Stories from myth and folklore do not always give the tiger good press. But then, human feelings about the great cat swing between fascination with its beauty, power, and grace and the primeval fear of a hungry predator. Durga, the Hindu goddess of war and pestilence, rides on a splendid tiger. In Chinese mythology the tiger represents the earth, the West, autumn, and yin, the feminine and passive principle (yang is its opposite). In the twelve-year cycle of the Chinese zodiac, the third year is the year of the tiger. Although in many Asian folk tales, the tiger is described as untrustworthy, cruel, or easily fooled, this one, with the wobbly head, has only good vibrations!

- **We are fortunate to have Asian and Western dragons in the Museum Zoo.** The small Chinese Dragon from Hong Kong was probably made for a child to carry on a stick during the Chinese New Year celebrations. Its golden head has red stripes on the forehead and around the mouth, prominent eyes, horns, feelers on its nose, and a silky yellow beard. Seven segments, carved from a hollow bamboo cylinder, make up the flexible body. Each segment, painted gold with a design of red scales and dots, has green, red, and yellow spines on its back. Over time and use, the body paint has worn away in patches, but the dragon still radiates energy and good humor.

In Chinese mythology, the dragon moved freely as a peer with the immortals and played an essential role in the natural world. Every pond, lake, and sea had the protection of a guardian dragon. Hibernating deep in water during wintertime, the dragon rose to the sky in springtime, bringing up moisture and
breathing out rain clouds to nourish the land. Its long, wingless body had a camel head, stag horns, bull ears, demon eyes, snake neck, carp scales and whiskers, clam belly, and tiger paws with eagle claws. This marvelous creature had a kindly attitude toward humans quite unlike its aggressive cousin, the winged flame-breathing Western dragon, whose relationship with humans was decidedly unreliable. Regarded by the Chinese as one of the most important and powerful of beings, the dragon appeared in many legends. It represents the sky and water, the East, spring, and yang, the male and active principle (its opposite is yin). Along with the tiger, the dragon has its place in the Chinese zodiac’s cycle of years, ruling over the seventh year. Artists often pair the dragon and the tiger in paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts to celebrate their complementary powers. The dragon was also the symbol of the emperor of China’s imperial might. Legends tell us that the emperor ruled China from the Dragon Throne.

Around the end of February, Chinese people have a great festival to celebrate their New Year and the coming of spring. A giant man-made dragon with fantastic head and long body in crimson and gold plays an important part in the celebration by dancing through the streets (carried on the backs of a line of dancers). The toy dragon must have seen the great dragon dance along the streets of Hong Kong many times. Oh, one more thing, the Chinese dragon is a shape shifter and enjoys taking human form. So, wish hard with your eyes closed and perhaps one will come your way.
In the textile wall hanging titled *Man at One with Nature* by Marion Tuu'Luuk, human and other animal shapes cut from felt create a riot of bright colors against a brilliant blue background. Each creature moves separately in a dance of shapes. Wearing hooded parkas and fur lined boots, humans hunt and fish through a hole in the ice. One person seems to be working on a skin tent while another stands in front of an igloo. The artist provides texture by using a V-shaped embroidery stitch in contrasting colors over the figures to give the feeling of leather, feathers, fur, and scales. Looking closely you will find three animals from the Museum Zoo (bear, beaver, and snake) along with a whale, a fish, an owl, a ptarmigan, a fox, a wolf, and a seal in a bear's jaws. At the top, a couple of hides are stretched out to dry. Through her use of color and design, the artist shows us that humans are indeed one with the natural world and also provides inspiration for an exciting art project (see “Webbing” the Museum Zoo).
List of Objects

- Dancing Bear Puppet, early 20th century, Russia, carved wood
- Beaver in the Form of a Bowl, 19th century, Haida, Northwest Coast, United States and Canada, carved wood
- Seated Cat (reproduction), Late Period (945–663 BCE), Egypt, cast bronze (original in the Louvre Museum, Paris)
- Asian Elephant, 20th century, India, incised and painted brass
- Praying Mantis, mid 20th century, by Milton Williams, United States, soldered brass
- Snake, 20th century, Western Australia, carved wood
- Horse Marionette, 20th century, Thailand, painted wood
- Tiger, 20th century, Japan, papier-mâché
- Dragon, 20th century, Hong Kong, bamboo
- *Man at One with Nature*, 1979, by Marion Tuu’Luuk, Inuit, Canada, textile wall hanging, felt applique with wool and embroidery floss
Resources

**Lesson Plan**

**Purpose**
Students will learn about the natural behaviors and habitats of animals that inspired myths, legends, and folk tales about those animals as well as the representation of them in art.

**Objectives**
- To become aware of the similarities and differences between animals and humans.
- To foster an appreciation of animals as well as the art that humans create to represent animals.
- To use the arts to create images and stories that celebrate the animals of the world.

**Getting Ready for the Visit**

**General Information**
The Art To Go presentation will be about 40 minutes long.

- Because of the type of objects that are presented, K–3 children will not be required to wear gloves, but we ask that they wash their hands before the presentation.
- We respectfully request that a homeroom teacher or an events coordinator be present and attentive during the presentation.

**Classroom Setup**
- Please have a small table or desk available in the front of the room for the art objects.
- If possible, arrange the students sitting on the floor in a semicircle facing the presentation. This allows the Art To Go teachers to pass objects among the students.
- Please provide student identification so that the Art To Go teachers may call on each child by name.

**Closure**
Students are encouraged to visit the Cleveland Museum of Art where they will learn and find out about other animals in the Museum Zoo.
Suggestions for Further Reading


Buchanan, Penelope. *Looking Together: Introducing Young Children to the Cleveland Museum of Art*. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1996.


**Website**

www.clevelandart.org

We encourage teachers and students to visit the Cleveland Museum of Art in person. We also encourage teachers and students to visit the museum’s website, where information about the permanent collection and educational programs can be found.
“Webbing” the Museum Zoo
Suggestions for classroom activities

Science
In science, the animal world is divided into classes: mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and fish. Even dragons fit in there somewhere, and so do we. Place the Museum Zoo animals in their proper class and then choose other animals to fill the gaps.

Discover similarities and differences between animals such as tiger and horse, mantis and elephant, or Asian dragon and beaver. Compare size, looks, habits, diet, and habitat.

Take a field trip to the Cleveland Zoo. Pay a special visit to elephants, tigers, snakes, and bears before finding other creatures. Observe the animals closely and then share discoveries through writing, drawing, or talking about them. The Cleveland Museum of Natural History is a wonderful resource, too. Study the stars! Humans named many constellations after animals they imagined seeing in the night sky. Have a star hunt in astronomy books, at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History’s Planetarium, and in the sky itself.

Music
Music fills the natural world and animals are caught up in its magical combination of melody, rhythm, harmony, tone, and time. Explore tapes of animal sounds, listening for bird song, a cricket’s chirp, the howling of wolves, and the slow majestic song of whales. Use words and melody to make up a rhythmic chant to sing about the animal sounds they heard.

Animals often inspire composers to write marvelous music. An ancient legend tells that before a swan dies, it sings a beautiful song. The Finnish composer Jan Sibelius wrote a haunting tone poem called The Swan of Tuonela. In France, Camille Saint-Saëns observed how different animals moved before composing his lively Carnival of the Animals. As you listen to each composition, ask the class to let the images and feelings the music brings float through their minds. Afterward you might want to paint, dance, or just dream of animals in the Museum Zoo.

Social Studies
On a world map or globe, locate the countries and continents where each animal, real and imaginary, in the Museum Zoo lives. At each place study the terrain; look for mountains, rivers, forests, grasslands, and deserts. Some animals like it hot and some like it cold. Learn about the climate in different parts of the world and how it affects all forms of life.

Consider the fact that over time humans have domesticated other animals to meet their need for friendship, farming, food, clothing, and transportation. Which animals were chosen for each need and why?

Mathematics
Animals are ideal for sorting and matching in all kinds of ways: size, shape, color, feathered, furred, or scaled to name a few. Introduce a Venn diagram to find which animals from the Museum Zoo, including the zoo keeper, are either vegetarian, carnivorous, or omnivorous.

Have fun creating animal problems, for example: Three beavers started to build a dam. Each one gnawed down a maple tree. Working together they cut down an old oak tree and a tall silver birch. How many trees were cut down? How many trees did each beaver gnaw?

Get a friendly dog or cat that you know well to stand still for a moment. Measure its height at the shoulder, and the length of its body from nose to the tail's root. Then measure the length of its tail. How far is it from nose tip to tail tip? How tall is your friend?

Play with simple geometric shapes cut from construction paper to create a collage of a city or a mountain landscape. Take a look at Ed Emberley’s Drawing Book of Animals (see Suggestions for Further Reading) and have fun drawing animals using only geometric shapes.
Drama
Creative dramatics offer wonderful opportunities to improve story line and action, explore a wide range of emotions, and develop confidence and self-esteem. Animal characters lend themselves well to this activity. To get things started, throw out a few ideas, such as two different animals meeting and talking for the first time, or an exciting rescue of a baby animal caught in a net. Plenty of ideas will flow from the class.

Choose a favorite animal story and use it as a springboard for creating a short play. There are many tasks to be done. There is dialogue to write and learn, characters to be cast, animal masks and simple costumes to make, and a set to be designed. Music might be added for entrances and exits or to create an exciting moment. Your class of playwrights, artists, and builders will all want to act so there may be a large cast.

Language Arts
Plunge into books that explore the roles animals play in myth, legend, folk tales, poetry, and real life. Turn a favorite animal into a god or hero, giving it special powers. Using the magic of words, write or tell about it in an exciting new myth with a triumphant ending, or a poem praising its beauty and power.

Game: Who am I? Find out as much as possible about a particular animal. Turn yourself into that animal. Without giving away your animal name, describe yourself and your habitat to the class. Let them guess who you are.

Strange animals, created by human imagination, live in the world of myth and magic. Some are a mixture of two or more animals whose looks and powers become part of the new animal. Here are a few to look up: hippocampus, basilisk, unicorn, and centaur. What is the animal mix in each one? List the powers each one has. Make up a new, mixed-up, imaginary animal to be your friend. Draw its portrait. Tell why you chose those animals for your mix and what powers they bring to the new animal.

Art
A wall hanging makes an exciting art project for K–3 classes and beyond, developing small-motor skills and an understanding of spatial relationships, color, line, shape, and texture. Here are two suggestions for creating one.

1. For the background use a large sheet of wrapping paper, longer than it is wide. The class decides how the background should look, perhaps plain or perhaps with a landscape. On separate pieces of paper, each child draws and colors an animal, cuts it out, then glues it to its proper place on the background.

2. After a class discussion, select a length from a bolt of brightly colored felt for the background. Choose contrasting colors for the animals. Packages of felt squares in different shades can be found in most fabric shops. First, each child draws an animal on paper, cuts it out for a pattern, pins it to a piece of felt, and then cuts out the animal shape. Fine- and wide-point markers can be used to indicate the texture of fur, hair, feathers, and scales. Before gluing or sewing the finished animals to the background, find the best place for each animal in the overall composition.

Animal masks enrich other arts. From flat paper plate shapes on a stick to three-dimensional forms in papier-mâché, animal masks bring storytelling, creative dramatics, and dance to life.

Earth, air, fire, and water join together when working in clay. Create real and imaginary animals, and, whenever possible, fire them in a kiln, so that the relationship of the four elements in the full process may be observed. If no kiln is available, try some of the new air-drying clay. When dry, the animals may be painted and coated with acrylic.

Dance
Explore the different ways animals move. Try an elephant’s slow, heavy, sustained, majestic walk; a deer’s swift, leaping run; a snake’s sinuous slither; or a tiger’s silent stalk. Choose other animals as well. Let your muscles take on the feel of their muscles. How would they move through their own habitat?

Create a group dance for animals with each one having a brief solo. Dancers wear animal masks and might be accompanied by children playing percussion instruments or by tapes of lively music for dancing.
Museum Zoo: Animals in Art
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Dancing Bear Puppet
Russia, 20th century
Carved wood, string
TR1461/1

Seated Cat
Reproduction of an original from 945-663 BC; Bronze
1932.275

Praying Mantis by Milton Williams, United States
Mid 20th century; Brass
1956.509

Beaver Bowl
America, Haida, 19th century
Carved wood, pigment
1953.378

Dragon
Hong Kong, 20th century
Bamboo, mixed media
TR11536/91

Asian Elephant
India, 20th century
Incised and painted brass
TR16243/32

Horse Marionette
Thailand, 20th century
Wood, pigment, string
TR17459/2

Snake
Western Australia, 20th cent.
Carved wood
TR13925/3

Tiger
Japan, 20th century
Papier-mâché, pigment
1956.785

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