

Learning About Ancient Roman Symbols

The Anthropology Museum at the University of Winnipeg has a collection of hundreds of artefacts from ancient Egypt, Israel, and Palestine (you can learn more about them here: <https://news-centre.uwinnipeg.ca/all-posts/the-adventures-of-the-hetherington-collection/>).

Many of them come from the period when the Romans ruled these areas. Many of these objects are oil lamps, which are decorated with symbols that were meaningful to their ancient users. These are the kinds of objects that people used everyday in the ancient world. In this assignment, you can think about the symbols that surround you in your daily life, and which ones are meaningful to you, while learning about some of the symbols that mattered to the ancient peoples of these areas.

You can find pictures of more of our objects at @uwluxproject on Instagram. If you'd like, you can share your drawings with Dr. Melissa Funke, the director of the Lux Project at the University of Winnipeg, through email (m.funke@uwinnipeg.ca), Instagram (the handle above), or Twitter (@TheLuxProject1). You can also email Dr. Funke with any questions you have, or for further information about the lamps and the ancient Romans.

Symbols Today: List 2-3 examples of each type of symbol that you might encounter in your everyday life or in your home.

- Sports logos _____
- Fast food restaurants _____
- Religious symbols _____
- Clothing brands _____

Now pick 2-3 of the symbols you listed. What does each one communicate about the organization it represents?

Your Symbols: List 2-3 symbols that are especially meaningful to you. What parts of your personality or lifestyle do they represent? (e.g. You might choose a running shoe because you love sports.) Write a few sentences explaining what one of these symbols means to you.

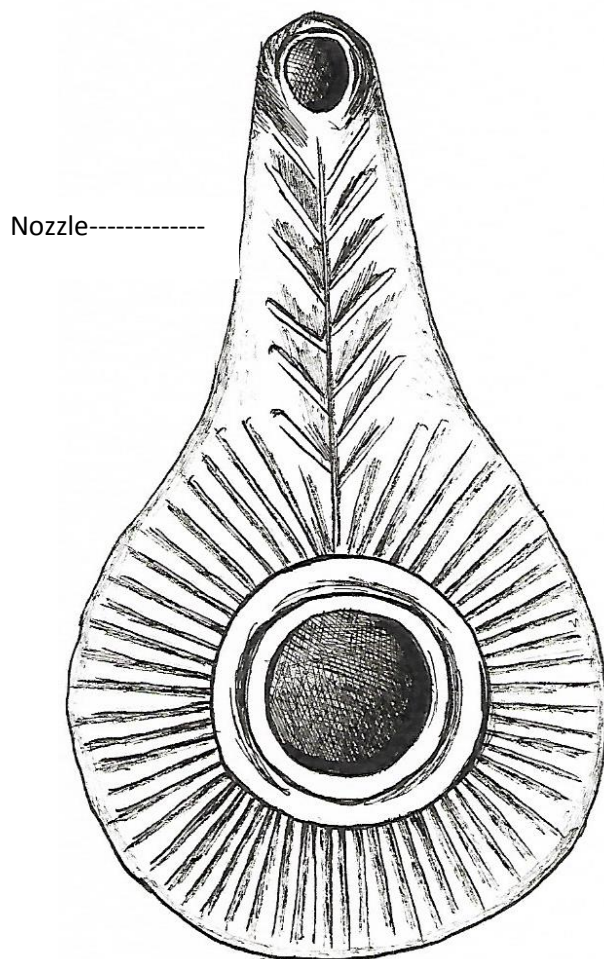
Symbols on Lamps from Ancient Palestine:

Here you can see how people from ancient Palestine incorporated symbols into their everyday objects, like the lamps below.

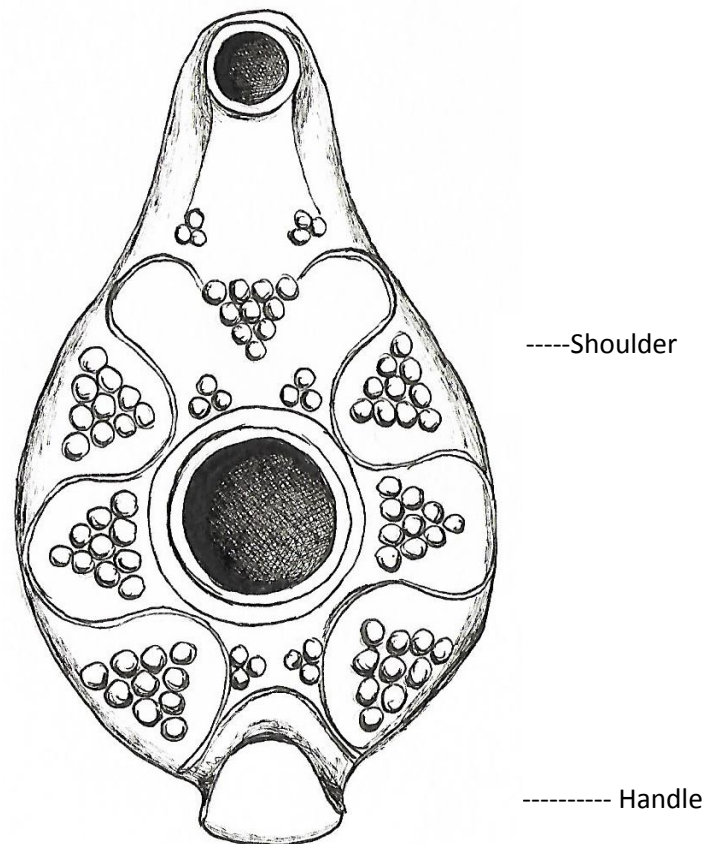
The hole in the middle is to pour in olive oil (the lamp's fuel) and the hole on the nozzle is for the wick (the part that is lit on fire). The lamps here are small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, so you can imagine the amount of light they could throw off.

These lamps come from the areas that are now known as Israel and Palestine. What plants grow there? What did the ancient Romans in those areas use grapes for? Why do you think they chose these images for the lamps they used everyday?

Palm fronds



Grapes and grapevines



Design your own lamp:

Now it is time for you to be your own designer! You are going to design your own lamp based on the ones we have been studying from Roman Palestine. This is your chance to be creative and to add symbols that are meaningful to you in your design. Below is a grid for which you can plan out your design and make sure it is to scale. If you want to see more examples of ancient lamps from our collection for inspiration, check out [@uwluxproject](#) on Instagram. When you're done, send your picture to Dr. Funke!

