

Loud Bones: The Jewelry of Nancy Worden
November 21, 2009 – January 17, 2010
Hallie Ford Museum of Art
Willamette University

This guide is to help teachers prepare students for a visit to the exhibition, *Loud Bones: The Jewelry of Nancy Worden*. Students will focus on two works inspired by stories of the goddess Inanna (Ishtar), from ancient Mesopotamian myth and the epic of the hero-king Gilgamesh, to explore the relevance of myth to modern life and what defines a hero today.

Goals

- To introduce students to the narrative jewelry of Nancy Worden
- To introduce students to the myths of ancient Sumerian culture
- To explore mythologist Joseph Campbell's concept of the hero's journey as it relates to Worden's work

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify and discuss the narrative elements in Worden's jewelry
- Identify and discuss the three main steps of the hero's journey as defined by Joseph Campbell
- Discuss the hero's journey in the myths and legends of ancient Mesopotamian (particularly Sumerian) culture
- Discuss the relevance of myth to modern life
- Discuss what defines a hero today and identify and celebrate their personal heroes

Narrative (narrativity)

n.

1. A narrated account; a story
2. The art, technique, or process of narrating

adj.

1. Consisting of or characterized by the telling of a story
2. Of or relating to narration

Nancy Worden is a storyteller who crafts her narratives with precious and semi-precious metals and gems, commonplace and found objects, and a mastery of traditional techniques. Her jewelry offers visual statements and -- much like **rebuses** -- visual puzzles that delight the viewer. While intensely personal, they explore universal themes and various rites of passage, often from a woman's perspective.

- Discuss the title, *Loud Bones*, as a metaphor for Nancy Worden's work.
- Discuss the use of images rather than words to tell a story and the reasons why one would choose one or the other.

The Hero's Journey

Nancy Worden's jewelry is part of a long history of body adornment. One of the traditional functions of jewelry in every culture has been to identify and reward heroism, a concept that Worden explores in her own creations. She is fascinated by the "hero's journey" identified by American mythologist Joseph Campbell.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell identifies 17 steps a hero makes in his or her journey to illustrate how hero mythology is common to all human culture throughout time.¹ Although most hero stories do not contain all of Campbell's steps, or they may occur in a different order, the hero's journey usually follows a particular pattern:

Departure/separation: The hero, often an ordinary person, receives a call to action or adventure and begins a quest or journey that separates him or her from family or community.

Initiation: The hero is tested by numerous trials and obstacles (aided or hindered by others, including supernatural beings), often culminating in an ordeal that leads to death (usually metaphorical) and rebirth.

Return: The hero then returns to the ordinary world, which completes the cycle.

¹ For a summary of all 17 steps in the hero's journey go to <http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/smc/journey/ref/summary.html>

Worden is also inspired by Ancient Mesopotamian **myths** and the epic tale of Gilgamesh, first recorded by the Sumerians. The Sumerians lived in the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers approximately between 4000 and 2000 BCE in what is now Iraq.² Gilgamesh was a real king who ruled in the great city of Uruk and is thought to have lived in about 2700 BCE. Many stories and myths were created about him by court poets and singers. First written down as narrative poems in **cuneiform** over 4,000 years ago, these stories tell of the ancient gods and goddess as well as Gilgamesh's own hero's journey.

- Find Ancient Mesopotamia /Sumer on the map and compare it to present-day Iraq. Make a list of what we know about Iraq today.
- Read to or have students read the story (in prose or narrative poem format) of the Sumerian hero Gilgamesh and relate it to Joseph Campbell's concept of the hero's journey.
- Discuss the hero's journey in the myths and literature of other times and cultures, as well as some contemporary examples students may have already read or seen (e.g., *Harry Potter*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*).
- Discuss the difference between a hero and a superhero, a hero and a **legend**, or a hero and a role model. What qualities do they share or not share?

The Story of Inanna's Descent into the Underworld³

One of the supernatural beings Gilgamesh encounters on his journey is Inanna (also known as Ishtar), the goddess of fertility and war (in one episode Inanna punishes Gilgamesh after he spurns her offer of marriage). Like Gilgamesh, Inanna also has a hero's journey: a descent into the underworld. As the story goes:

Inanna and her sister Ereshkigal, the goddess of the underworld, darkness and death, both loved Dumuzi (also known as Tammuz). Because Dumuzi chose to live above the ground with Inanna, Ereshkigal had him killed so that he would forever dwell with her in the Land of No Return. Inanna, armed with every charm and **amulet** she had, journeyed to the underworld to rescue Dumuzi.

When Inanna arrived at the gates of the underworld to demand Dumuzi's return, she was commanded by her sister to remove all of her clothing and ornaments, piece by piece, if she wanted to continue her journey. By the time Inanna arrived at Ereshkigal's throne, she was naked of her jewelry and her powers, and was so angry she flew at her sister in a rage. At once she was overcome by Ereshkigal's minions, who murdered Inanna and hung her body on a hook.

While Inanna remained in the underworld, the earth suffered infertility and continuous winter. After intervention by other Sumerian gods, Ereshkigal relented and allowed her sister to return to earth in exchange for sharing Dumuzi for six months of every year. When Dumuzi was with Inanna, spring came to the earth and blossomed into summer; when he returned to Ereshkigal, autumn fell once more, followed by winter.

² About a thousand years after the Sumerians settled in Mesopotamia, the Babylonians took over in the south, and the Assyrians took over in the north, but the Sumerian culture lived on.

³ This version of the myth is from "Tammuz and Ishtar" in *A Book of Myths*, edited and retold by Roger Lancelyn Green, published by J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, London, 1965. Dumuzi and Inanna are the Sumerian counterparts to the Assyrian and Babylonian Tammuz and Ishtar.

Images

Worden explores the myth of Inanna/Ishtar's descent into the underworld in two works, *Ereshkigal's Hook* and *Brigandine for Ishtar*, combining the traditional functions of body adornment to honor heroism and to provide both spiritual and physical protection.



Ereshkigal's Hook, 2004

Silver, electroformed copper, brass, steel, cork, reptile skin, cotton cord, and glass eyes
Collection of Marion Fulk

Ereshkigal's Hook refers grimly to what happened to Inanna at the hands of her sister in the underworld – she was condemned to become a piece of rotting meat hung on a hook. Evil eyes look out from copper settings to form beads that hold **electroformed** chicken bones. Down the back are reptile-skin-covered cork “beads” with tacks pushed into them.



Brigandine for Ishtar, 2005

Copper, brass, nickel, steel, lead and glass eyes
Collection of the artist

A brigandine is a metal undershirt first worn by European foot soldiers in the Middle Ages. Worden conceived of this garment form after listening to stories about American soldiers in Iraq scrounging metal on the street for armor. Just as the goddess of war Ishtar's jewelry endowed her with magical, protective powers, Worden wanted to make a symbolic protective device for female soldiers serving in combat roles.

Brigandine includes American copper pennies and nickels (both of which are worth more in metal than their face value today) as well as Japanese coins attached to a scrap-metal and mesh base that forms a haphazard layer of protection. Attached to the mesh base are also glass fish eyes electroformed into copper that watch out for the wearer and weights that Worden picked up in the street.

- What story (or stories) does Worden illustrate in each piece?
- How do the materials Worden uses help tell the stories?
- What words would you use to describe each piece?
- How do you think it would feel to wear each piece?
- How are the works related to each other?
- How do the works relate to the hero's journey?
- Find similar “descent to the underworld” stories from other cultures. What purpose do such stories serve? Why is it such a popular theme?
- What are some of the other universal themes that Worden explores?
- How does Worden make ancient hero myths relevant to our lives today?

Hero Medal Activity

Ask students to identify a person they know who is a hero to them and write a short story telling why. This cannot be a sports celebrity or movie star or universal hero like Buddha, Mohammed or Jesus Christ. It must be a person in their family, a mentor, teacher or close friend that has experienced something that fits the definition of the heroic adventure or ordeal. **Use the attached interview form** to organize the gathered information into the three main parts of the hero's journey; departure/separation, adventure and return. From the form, ask students to develop a story about the life of their hero (no more than one page).

Once students have completed their personal hero stories they will each create a medal to honor their hero. Instructions are included using Shrinky Dinks, but a less expensive option would be to use card stock and then laminate it or place it in a plastic badge holder.

Begin by researching/showing images of and discussing contemporary hero-related jewelry like the Congressional Medal of Honor www.cmoths.org/ and the Purple Heart www1.va.gov/opa/feature/celebrate/purple-heart.asp

Using the following instructions, have students **draw an image of their hero in action. Because the focus is on the storytelling power of images, do not use words or letters.**

Hero Medal Shrinky Dink Instructions

Materials:

Shrinky Dinks Shrinkable Plastics Frosted Ruff N' Ready
Graphite Pencils (Optional)
Colored Pencils
Scissors
Standard Size Hole Punch (larger than 1/8")
Yarn/String/Cord (for Necklace)
Toaster Oven/Oven (capable of reaching 325 F)
Aluminum Cookie Sheet
6"x 6" squares of brown paper or aluminum foil with one corner folded up

Directions:

1. ***Cut the Shrinky Dink sheets into quarters*** (4" x 5" rectangles)
2. Draw the image of the hero on the rough side of the Shrinky Dink paper (keep in mind the corners will be cut off, as well as a hole punched in the top)
3. Outline the image in pencil, then color in with colored pencils...or you can dive right in with the colored pencils and not have a pencil outline of image
4. Cut off sharp corners with scissors
5. Use the hole punch to make a hole 1/2" down from the top and centered
6. ***Place each individual Shrinky Dink drawing (color side up) on a square of brown paper or aluminum foil with one corner folded up (this allows easy removal of individual Shrinky Dinks from the oven).***
7. ***Place the Shrinky Dinks in a 325 F degree oven.***
8. Watch the Shrinky Dink magic happen.
 - a. The Shrinky Dink will curl up
 - b. It will then shrink down
 - c. And finally flatten out
 - d. ***Once small and flat, each may be removed individually from the oven***
9. Let the Shrinky Dinks cool.
10. ***Cut 3 feet lengths of Yarn/String/Cord***
11. String the Shrinky Dinks onto Yarn/String/Cord
12. Tie the ends together and wear as a medal around neck

****Bold Italic*** steps to be done by teacher.

Hero Interview Form

The full name of your hero is:

Where and when was your hero born?

What do they consider the most challenging experience of their life? (for example, serving in the military, moving a long way from home, starting a new career, divorce, recovering from the death of a loved one, etc.)

When did this experience happen and how old were they at the time?

Where did the experience take place?

Was your hero emotionally or physically separated from their family or community at that time? If so, how?

If the experience was a choice, what made them decide to accept or volunteer for this difficult experience?

What personality traits helped or hindered them in surviving the experience?

Were there previous experiences in their life that helped to prepare them for their journey?

How did they return or recover and what wisdom can they share with us that they learned from their experience?

Why did you choose this person for your hero?

Bibliography

**Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East*, Michael Roaf, Equinox (Oxford) Ltd, Oxford, England, 1990

**The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, by Joseph Campbell, Princeton University Press, 1973 (first edition, 1949)

A Book of Myths, edited and retold by Roger Lancelyn Green, published by J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, London, 1965

**The Epic of Gilgamesh*, translated and edited by Benjamin R. Foster, WW Norton and Company, New York, 2001
In narrative poem format

For Younger Readers:

**The Hero King Gilgamesh*, from *Looking at Mesopotamian Myths and Legends*, Irving Finkel, NTC Publishing Group, Chicago, 1998 (4-8)

**He Who Saw Everything: The Epic of Gilgamesh*, retold by Anita Feagles, Young Scott Books, New York, 1966 (4-8)

**The Sumerians (The Cradle of Civilization)*, Elain Landau, The Millbrook Press, Inc., Brookfield, CT, 1997 (6-9)

**Gods, Goddesses and Monsters: An Encyclopedia of World Mythology*, Sheila Keenan, Scholastic Inc., New York, NY, 2000 (9-12)

**Gilgamesh the Hero*, retold by Geraldine McCaughrean and illustrated by David Parkins, Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, Grand Rapids, MI, 2003 (9-12)

Gilgamesh the King, retold and illustrated by Ludmila Zeman, Tundra Books, Toronto, 1992 (9-12)

The Last Quest of Gilgamesh, retold and illustrated by Ludmila Zeman, Tundra Books, Toronto, 1995 (9-12)

The Medal of Honor (Cornerstones of Freedom), Roger Wachtel, Children's Press, an imprint of Scholastic Inc., 2009 (9-12)

**Gilgamesh: Man's First Story*, retold and illustrated by Bernarda Bryson, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York (12 and up)

* Available through Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Service

Glossary:

amulet: an ornament often inscribed with a magic incantation or symbol to aid the wearer or protect against evil (e.g., disease or witchcraft).

cuneiform: a character or characters formed by the arrangement of small wedge-shaped elements and used in ancient Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian writing.

electroform/electroforming: a technique in which metal is added to a form by using an electric current. Worden uses wax forms which she melts when the process is complete, leaving behind a thin hollow metal form.

legend: a traditional historical tale (or collection of related tales) popularly regarded as true but usually containing a mixture of fact and fiction; One that inspires legends or achieves legendary fame.

myth: a traditional sacred story, typically revolving around the activities of gods and heroes, which purports to explain a natural phenomenon or cultural practice.

rebus: a representation of words in the form of pictures or symbols, often presented as a puzzle.

COMMON CURRICULUM GOALS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Literature

Literary Text: Examine content and structure of grade-level literary text.

EL.04.LI.10 Compare and contrast tales from different cultures, and tell why there are similar tales in diverse cultures.

EL.05.LI.9 Identify and describe the function and effect of common literary devices, such as imagery, metaphor and symbolism.

EL.05.LI.10 Define figurative language, including simile, metaphor, exaggeration and personification, and explain the effects of its use in a particular work.

EL.05.LI.11 Differentiate among the different types of fiction, and apply knowledge of the major characteristics of each (e.g., folklore, mystery, science fiction, adventure, fantasy).

EL.07.LI.10 Explain the effects of common literary devices, such as symbolism, imagery and metaphor in a variety of literary texts.

EL.07.LI.12 Identify and analyze general themes, such as bravery, loyalty, friendship, loss and loneliness that appear in many different works.

EL.08.LI.09 Identify significant literary devices, such as simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, dialect and irony which define a writer's style, and use those elements to analyze and evaluate the work.

EL.08.LI.12 Analyze the importance of the setting (place, time, customs) to the mood, tone and meaning of the text.

Listen to and Read Literary Text: Listen to text and read text to make connections and respond to a wide variety of literature of varying complexity.

EL.06.LI.01

EL.07.LI.01

EL.08.LI.01 Listen to and read text to make connections and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature than enhance the study of other subjects.

EL.06.LI.02

EL.07.LI.02 Demonstrate listening and comprehension of more complex literary text through class and/or small group interpretive discussions.

Literary Text: Develop an Interpretation: Develop an interpretation of grade-level literary text.

EL.05.LI.05 Identify the qualities of the character (e.g., courage, cowardice, ambition), and analyze the effect of these qualities on the plot and the resolution of the conflict.

EL.05.LI.07 Identify the theme, understanding that theme refers to the lesson, moral or meaning of a selection, whether it is implied or stated directly.

EL.08.LI.04 Identify the actions and motives (e.g., loyalty, selfishness, conscientiousness) or characters in a work of fiction, including contrasting motives that advance the plot or promote the theme, and discuss their importance to the plot or theme.

Literary Text: Demonstrate General Understanding: Demonstrate general understanding of grade-level literary text.

EL.06.LI.03 Identify and/or summarize sequence of events, main ideas and supporting details in literary selections.

Writing

Writing Applications: Narrative Writing: Write narrative, expository and persuasive texts, using a variety of written forms – including journals, essays, short stories, poems, research reports, research papers, business and technical writing – to express ideas appropriate to audience and purpose across the subject areas.

EL.04.WR.23 Write personal narratives:
Include ideas, observations, or memories of an event or experience.
Provide a context to allow the reader to imagine the world of the event or experience.
Use concrete sensory details.
Provide insight into why the selected events or experience is memorable.

EL.05.WR.27 Write Persuasive compositions:
State a clear position in support of a proposal.
Support a position with relevant evidence.
Follow a simple organizational pattern.
Address reader concerns.

EL.06.WR.26 Write Persuasive compositions:
State a clear position on a proposition or proposal.
Support the position with organized and relevant evidence.
Anticipate and address reader concerns and counter-arguments.

EL.07.WR.29 Write Persuasive compositions:
State a clear position or perspective in support of a proposition or proposal.
Describe the points in support of the proposition, employing well-articulated evidence.
Anticipate and address reader concerns and counter-arguments.

EL.08.WR.27 Write Persuasive compositions:

Include a well-defined thesis that makes a clear and knowledgeable judgment or appeal.

Present detailed evidence, examples and reasoning to support arguments, differentiating between facts and opinions.

Provide details, reasons and examples, arranging them effectively by anticipating and answering reader concerns and counter-arguments.

EL.08.WR.24 Write biographical or autobiographical narratives or short stories:

Relate a clear, coherent incident, event or situation by using well-chosen details.

Reveal the significance of, or the writer's attitude about, the subject.

Use narrative and descriptive strategies, including relevant dialogue, specific action, physical description, background description, and comparison or contrast of characters.

Writing: Communicate supported ideas across the subject areas, including relevant examples, facts, anecdotes and details appropriate to audience and purpose that engage reader interest; organize information in clear sequence, making connections and transitions among ideas, sentences and paragraphs; and use precise words and fluent sentence structures that support meaning.

EL.07.WR.11 Write multi-paragraph compositions – descriptions, explanations, comparison-and-contrast papers, problem and solution essays – that:

State the thesis or purpose.

Explain the situation.

Organize the composition clearly, following an organizational pattern appropriate to the type of composition – comparison and contrast; organization by categories; and arrangement by spatial order, order of importance or climactic order.

Provide evidence to support arguments and conclusions.

EL.07.WR.12 Support all statements and claims with anecdotes (first-person accounts), descriptions, facts and statistics and/or specific examples.

EL.08.WR.10 Create compositions that engage the reader, have a clear message, a coherent thesis, and end with a clear and well-supported conclusion.

EL.08.WR.11 Support theses or conclusions with quotations, opinions from experts, paraphrases, analogies, and/or similar devices.

Reading

Listen to and Read Informational and Narrative Text across the subject areas at school and on own, applying comprehension strategies as needed.

EL.04.RE.03

EL.05.RE.04

EL.06.RE.03

EL.07.RE.02

EL.08.RE.01 Listen to, read and understand a wide variety of informational and narrative text, including classic and contemporary literature, poetry, magazines, newspapers, reference materials and online information.

EL.08.RE.04 Demonstrate listening comprehension of more complex text through class and/or small group interpretive discussions across the subject areas.

ARTS

Benchmarks 2 and 3, High School

Create, Present and Perform

Aesthetics and Criticism

Historical and Cultural Perspectives



