

**Art of the Americas (1300-1700) and Africa (1000 to 1700) Study Sheet
(Galleries 259, 260, 261 and 250, 254)
(in preparation for class on January 27, 2016)**

Find the Maskette from the Inuit or Yup'ik culture, dated 500 BCE-500 CE, Gallery 261. Looking at it, describe how it would feel to hold it in your hand:

Both *Chalchiuhtlicue*, Mexica (Aztec), 1200-1521 (Gallery 260) and *Shrine Head*, Yoruba (ancient Ife kingdom), 12th-14th century (Gallery 250) were once thought to be focal points within shrines of their respective cultures. In a brief paragraph, compare and contrast these two objects, discussing how each visually conveys the idea of the “sacred”:

Choose to examine the *Ear spoons*, Chimú, 1150-1450, Gallery 260, or the *Equestrian figure*, Malian (Djenné), 13th-15th century, Gallery 250. In what ways are status and wealth visually communicated through the chosen object?

Closely examine the Benin water pitcher (in the shape of a leopard, G250). What is an interpretive question you could ask an audience, in discussion of the object?

African objects were often collected at the time of colonial expansion by Western nations. Concerning Benin objects and their dispersal into Western collections, read about the conquest of the Benin Kingdom (the Edo people) by the British, in a military event known as the Punitive Expedition of 1897:

<http://africa.si.edu/exhibitions/current-exhibitions/alonge/history-of-benin/>

Below is a photo taken after the seizure of the Benin Palace. Be prepared to discuss the following questions in class:

How would you respond to a question on a tour about the history of the Benin artifacts, and how they came to be in museum collections (including our own)?
What information would help you respond to such questions?

