

Apkallu Explorer's Notebook



*A Multisensory Experience
Inspired by an Ancient Near Eastern Relief*

Hello, explorers!

Today, you are going to explore an ancient work of art. It is a carving of an apkallu. You might think of an apkallu as a genie. In the Ancient Near East, it was believed that apkallus were powerful spirits that protected people and things. The apkallu in this carving is helping a tree to grow.



A Kneeling Genie
Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at
Nimrud, Iraq
09.SP.1549

This type of flat carving is called a relief. In a relief, the carving stands out just a little bit from the background. This relief of an apkallu comes from Ancient Assyria, a country that doesn't exist anymore. The land that was Ancient Assyria is now many countries like Iraq, Iran, and Syria.

Look at the map on the next page. Do you see the dark green area? That's Ancient Assyria. Do you see the golden star? That's where the carving of the apkallu was. It was in a palace.



Do you know about any other ancient places?

Have a good adventure!




Exploration 1: Texture Treasure Hunt

By looking at the picture of the apkallu, you can see lots of different things carved and each one has a different texture or kind of feeling.



You can look for these textures around your house and in nature. The relief is made of stone. Can you find a stone? Draw or glue it here.

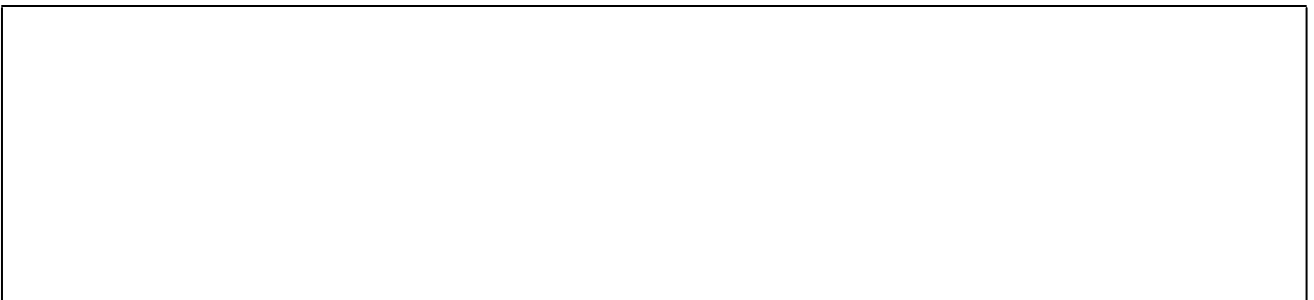
There are flowers growing on the tree in the relief. Can you find a flower? Draw or tape it here.




The apkallu has big wings made of feathers. Can you find a feather? Draw or tape it here.



The apkallu is wearing clothing made from sheepskin. Wool also comes from sheep. Can you find something made of wool? Draw it here.



The apkallu is wearing jewelry made of metal. Can you find any jewelry made of metal? Draw it here.



Exploration 2: Making Simeat

If you lived in Ancient Assyria, you might have eaten simeat. Simeat might remind you of bagels. Many people still eat simeat today in countries like Iraq.

Simeat

Yields 28 rolls

You will need:



For the bread:

- 3 tablespoons dried yeast
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 4 cups warm water
- 10 cups bread or all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1/4 cup oil

For glaze:

- 1 egg-white whisked in 1 tablespoon water
- Sesame seeds, dry toasted, for sprinkling

Directions:

- Ask a grownup for help to preheat the oven to 450°F.
- Combine and stir to dissolve yeast and sugar in 1 cup warm water, and set aside for 5 minutes.
- In a big bowl, combine flour and salt. Make a well (a small hole) in the middle, and then pour in yeast mixture, oil, and 3 cups warm water. Mix liquids into flour in a circular movement using a wooden spoon. With oiled hands, knead for 6 to 7 minutes until you get a smooth dough. Let rise in a warm draft-free place for about 1 hour.
- Punch down dough, and divide it into 28 portions. Let it rest for about 10 minutes, covered.
- On a slightly oiled surface, form into simiat rings as follows. Divide each portion into two parts. Roll each part into a rope about 9 inches long (if dough feels elastic and springs back, let it rest for 5 minutes). Lay 2 ropes next to each other, and wind one rope around the other. Curve and twist into a circle, matching the ends to form a continuous ring. Make sure to join and seal the ends very well to prevent them from opening while rising and baking. Put shaped pieces aside on a flat surface. After making about five, brush them with the glaze, and dip each, face down, in the toasted sesame seeds. Arrange rings on a greased baking sheet. Leave space between them to allow for expansion. Repeat with other batches.
- Let rise in a warm place for 40 to 45 minutes, covered with a kitchen towel.



- Ask a grownup for help with this step. Bake in the middle of the preheated oven. To create a good crust, spray simeat and oven with water. Repeat about 2 to 3 times, for the first 5 minutes. Total time of baking is about 15 minutes or until golden brown. Serve immediately or let pieces cool off in a wicker basket or on a rack. Cooled ones can be kept in plastic bags in the refrigerator or freezer.

What did you smell as the simeat was cooking? You can write about it or draw a picture.

What does the simeat taste like? Have you ever tasted something like it before?



Exploration 3: Making a Harp

A common instrument used to play music in Ancient Assyria was the harp, an instrument with lots of strings that you play by plucking the strings with your fingers.

You can see a person playing the harp in this replica (a copy) of an Ancient Assyrian relief of a royal banquet scene of King Ashurbanipal and his queen.



Reproduction of an
Assyrian Relief showing
a harp player

You will need:

4 popsicle sticks

Liquid glue

A few rubber bands of different thicknesses

Markers, paint, or anything you would like to use to decorate the harp

Directions:

- Glue the popsicle sticks together in a square.
- Once the glue is dry, stretch the rubber bands across the popsicle sticks.
- You can decorate the popsicle sticks however you would like to.

If you strum the rubber bands, what sound do they make?

Can you make the rubber bands make different sounds by pulling them tighter?

What differences do you notice between the sounds of the thicker rubber bands and the sounds of the thinner rubber bands?

Can you compose (make up) a tune?



Exploration 4: Coloring an Apkallu



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Even though this apkallu is all one color now, it was painted bright colors in the past. What colors did you notice on this apkallu from the video?

What shapes do you see on this apkallu?

You can color the apkallu on the next page however you would like!



Exploration 5: Pose Like a Plant

There are two living things shown in this relief: the apkallu and a plant. Plants are all around us in our homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Take a walk outside to see what sort of plants you can find. You can start in your own yard or you can ask a grownup to take a walk with you to a park to look for more plants.

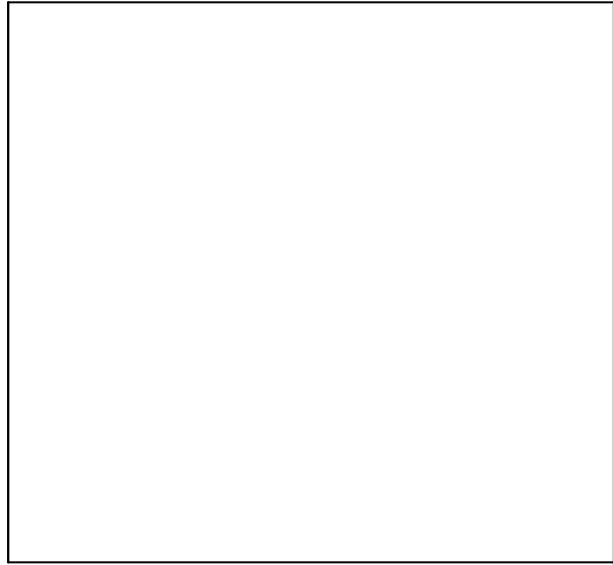
See if you can find a tree. What does it look like? Try making your body into the shape of the tree. Draw a picture of what you looked like as the tree.



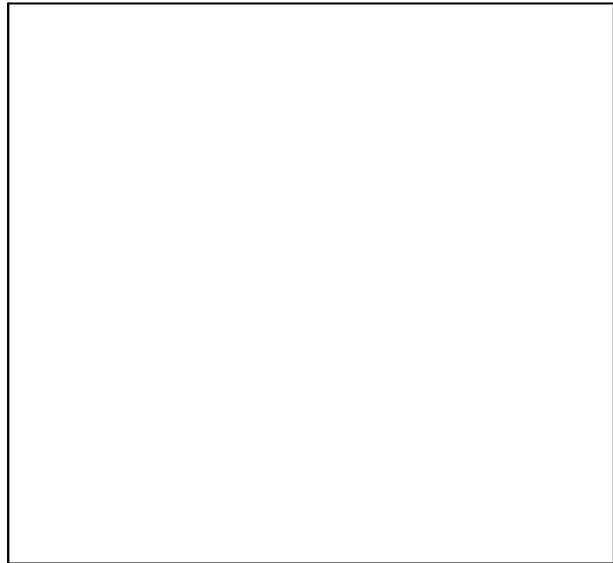
What about a bush? How does it look different from the large tree? How can you show the difference in your body? Draw a picture of what you looked like as the bush.



What does the grass around you look like?
What does your body look like when you act out being grass? Draw a picture of what you looked like as the grass.



Are there any flowers blooming around you?
What does your body look like when you act out being a flower? Draw a picture of what you looked like as the flower.

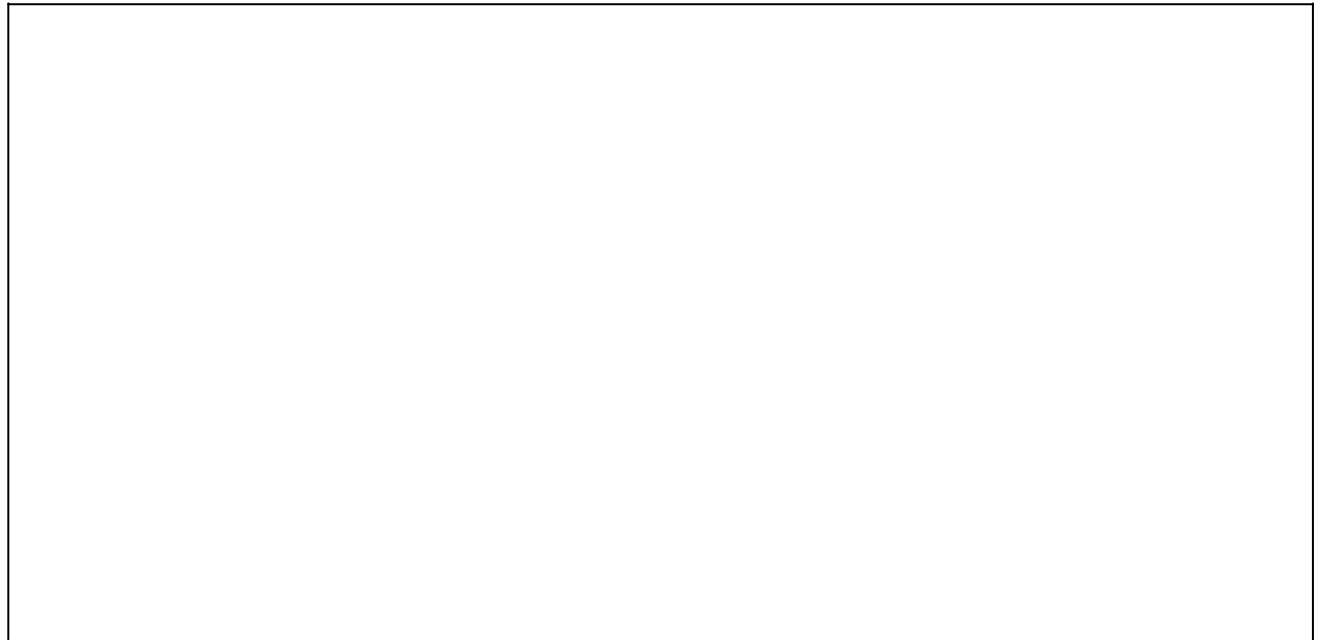


Additional Activity: Plant Protector

The apkallu in the relief is protecting a tree and making sure it can grow.

How do you protect trees?

What plants grow where you live? Draw them here.



Plants need sunshine and water to grow. How can you take care of the plants around your house?

Some people sing to their plants to help them grow! What song would you sing to your plants?



Vocabulary Matching Answer Key

1. and D. 2. and C. 3. and A. 4. and B.

Bingo Question Answers (left to right, top to bottom)

Many gods, two rivers, palace, Iraq, nine, protection, many colors, genie, horned headdress

Sources

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Credits

Developed by Fiona Dwyer for Glencairn Museum
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