

this is one of a
series of resources
looking at different
vessels in the
Sainsbury Centre's
Collections

VESSELS

Turtle Shaped Bottle



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Investigate:

LOOKING

Start by taking a good look at this vessel. Try to think about it before you read the information about it. What do you see?

Maybe use these questions to guide you:



THINKING

- What do you think this is made of?
- How do you think it was made?
- How would you describe the pattern?
- What do you think the pattern represents?
- What do you think this bottle was used for?
- Where in the world do you think it could be from?

DISCUSSING

Perhaps answer the questions above, or ask your own. Do this individually, in pairs or in groups.



How did you find this?
Do you agree with other people?
What are you most interested in?
What else do you need or want to know?

IMAGINE :

Does the shape of the
bottle remind you of
anything?
Could it be
a turtle?



- Can you imagine how this turtle might move?
- What would its family look like?
- Where would it live, and what would it eat?
- If a turtle is patterned like this, what might other animals look like?
- Imagine this bottle is huge, what could it be?



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INFORMATION:

Each object in the gallery has a label with some Facts and Figures. They highlight what we know, and what we do not know.



Turtle-shaped bottle - this is the Title or Description of the object.

China - The Production Place is where the object was made, in as much detail as possible.

Jin/Yuan dynasty (late 12th - 13th century) - this is name of the Historic Period when it was made.

1100 AD - 1300 AD - the date the object was created.

Stoneware* - the Material the object was made from, perhaps suggesting how it was made too.

Acquired 1997 - the date that this vessel was given to, or bought by, the UEA.

UEA 1138 - all of the objects in the Sainsbury Centre's collections are given an **Accession Number**.

The Accession Number allows us to keep records about all the objects, and helps you to find out more about them online:

www.sainsburycentre.ac.uk/art-and-objects

This is another turtle, it's a wrist ornament



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[Each of the objects in this resource have their number near them]

*Find out more about **Stoneware** on the next page.

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ILLUMINATE :



This turtle-shaped bottle was made in China about 800 years ago. All around the world, the turtle is a symbol of longevity, stability and wisdom, because of its slow pace and long lifespan.

In Chinese culture the turtle is one of the four most important sacred creatures, along with the dragon, the phoenix, and the tiger.

The turtle features in several Chinese creation myths:
Its legs were used to hold up the sky
The flat underside of the turtle's body represents the earth
The curved shell is the sky above
The markings on the surface of the shell depict star constellations



For over 3000 years traditional Chinese medicines have been made from turtles, in the belief that these pills and potions will remedy numerous different illnesses.

Turtles are also eaten as food, and - although they are a delicacy - experts estimate that more than 20 million are consumed every year in China.

As well as habitat loss, the illegal trade of sea turtles in China has caused significant decline in their population.

Half of all turtle species are threatened with extinction, making them one of the world's most endangered creatures



Does this extra information change the way you see the Turtle-shaped Bottle?

Here are a few
suggestions for
further exploration:

Sainsbury Centre online catalogue:

<https://www.sainsburycentre.ac.uk/art-and-objects/1138-turtle-shaped-bottle/>

The Myth of the Turtle

<https://www.thelantern.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Myth-of-the-Turtle.pdf>



Cultural depictions of turtles:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_depictions_of_turtles (Threats to turtle populations)

Endangered species...

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2589004221004855>

<https://www.turtleconservancy.org/>

Traditional medicine:

<https://news.mongabay.com/2014/08/the-threat-of-traditional-medicine-chinas-boom-may-mean-doom-for-turtles/>

National Geographic:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/traditional-chinese-medicine>

National Wildlife Federation

<https://www.nwf.org/Magazines/National-Wildlife/2006/Asias-Turtle-Tragedy>

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/sea-turtle>

Photos:
Pete Huggins



- Can you cast a slab of plaster of paris in a slightly curved bowl or plate?



When it's set and dry, take it out and blacken the surface with boot polish or graphite.

- Can you scratch a pattern into this to reveal the white plaster beneath?



- You can use a variety of tools for this to give your scratched lines different qualities.



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ACTIVITIES:

DRAW:



- Can you look very closely and do a drawing of this vessel using white pencils on black paper?

- Can you copy this pattern using white pencil on a circle of black paper? If you can't see it all, copy what you can see and imagine what the rest would look like

PRINT:



- Have a go at press-printing a pattern, similar to the Turtle-shaped Bottle



ROLL

- Can you roll out a slab of clay, about 8mm thick, on a piece of fabric?
- Cut two circles from it (about 15cm diameter)



- Press the clay discs into two identical bowls or plates and leave to harden a little so it takes on the curved form.



- Join them together to make a turtle shape.



JOIN



DECORATE



Draw a pattern into it, maybe copy this bottle or invent your own.

You could add some other bits: a spout, a handle, legs, or more decoration?

Have these activities changed the way you think about the Turtle-shaped Bottle?

