



Family Activity Guide

Recommended for all ages.



OCTOBER 14, 2022 - FEBRUARY 19, 2023

She Who Wrote: Enheduanna and Women of Mesopotamia

ca. 3400-2000 BC



Meet a Mesopotamian

The statues in this gallery represent real Mesopotamian women. The sculptures were offered to temples as votives, which means objects given to a sacred space. Each statue embodies a unique person, so her spirit could always be present in the sanctuary.

Choose a statue and explore closely. Many of the women have their hands folded, right over left, which is a gesture of attentiveness. Try the pose yourself. How does it make you feel? How else does the woman's body language communicate a sense of purpose?



© The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Image source: Art Resource, NY.

Scavenger Hunt: Women at Work



Examine the impression of cylinder seal #5.

Two women are operating a loom, while a third perhaps holds a bundle of wool. They move so fast their hair flies behind them.



Above: Courtesy of the Yale Babylonian Collection.
Photography by Klaus Wagensohnner.

Left: © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Thierry Olivier / Art Resource, NY. Photography by Thierry Olivier.

Discover women at work by finding these objects with their gallery number.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Author , #54, #59, #65, #66, and #67 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron , #39, #40 and #84 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dairy Producer , #3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Potter , #4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Landowner , #37 and #38 | <input type="checkbox"/> Priestess , #6, #7, #41, #52, and #83 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Midwife , #79 | <input type="checkbox"/> Queen , #48, #49, #50, and #51 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mother , #80 | <input type="checkbox"/> Weaver , #5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Musician , #46 and #47 | <input type="checkbox"/> Wet nurse , #82 |

What is your dream job?

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Enheduanna, the First Author, ca. 2300 BC



Enheduanna is the first writer identified by name in human history, and her works are also the earliest known use of first-person perspective. She wrote about the Sumerian goddess of love and war, Inanna, and combined her with the Akkadian Ishtar, the patron deity of Enheduanna’s family.

The goddess Ishtar is often depicted with wings and carrying weapons on her back. Two of her symbols are the lion and the star. In Enheduanna’s voice, Ishtar was unmistakably the most powerful deity. Throughout Mesopotamian history, Ishtar was one of the few figures to be depicted in frontal view, challenging the audience with her gaze.



Courtesy of the Penn Museum.



Design your own family protector.

What are your protector’s powers and how will you demonstrate them?

Inset image and image above: Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

In Your Own Words

Here is an example of how Enheduanna’s writing brought the power of Ishtar to life. “My lady! With your force, a tooth could chip a stone.”

Describe your family protector in your own words.

Cuneiform Code

Write your name or a message with cuneiform characters using our translator.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z