

learning library ONLINE!

September 2022

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT

Welcome back, friends, to 'Art Vids for Kids'. My name's Kate. What can you do with a piece of art? Some art is made to be looked at or enjoyed. Other art might be made to be used. Think about pottery and furniture. Let's explore an artwork together and find out which of these categories it should be in.



Look closely. What materials do you see, meaning, what is it made from? Do you notice the seashells? These seashells come from a clam, an animal that lives in the water. Look again at the shells. Notice their striped pattern—these are growth lines.

The shells' insides are decorated with miniature paintings. What kinds of things do you see in these mini paintings? Right, we see painted people, outdoor scenes, grasses and some flowers.

Does each shell feature something different? Look closely... there are two of each painting, also called a duplicate. Why did the artist make duplicate paintings inside the shells? This is a shell-matching game called *Kai Awase* in Japanese. In ancient Japan, competing in games was a popular pastime for the nobler classes in society.

There are many ways to play *Kai Awase*. One way is like the game Memory. Players take turns turning over two shells. If the paintings on the shells match, the player takes another turn. If they don't match, the shells are flipped back over and now the next person goes. The winner is the player with the most matches.

Another version of *Kai Awase* was played among young women. Being able to make a perfect match was considered an important skill especially when finding a marriage partner. In this version of the game, instead of matching the shells by looking at the decoration on the inside, players examine the natural patterns on the outside. Keeping the inside decorations hidden from view, the player selects two shells. She slides the shells together in her hand. If they are mates, they click together. She can feel without looking she has found the two halves of the same shell. She then holds the shells picture-side out so the other players can see at a glance she has made a perfect pair.

Next time you play a game at home or school, I hope you'll take a moment to study it and think about how it was made. Come by the Dayton Art Institute in-person to see this *Kai Awase* shell-matching game in Galleries 106 and 107 of the Patterson-Kettering Wing of Asian Art. Thanks and check back next month for a new 'Art Vids for Kids'!

DAYTON ART INSTITUTE

END TRANSCRIPT

Click [here](#) for full multimedia presentation.

FEATURED ARTWORKS*

The Dayton Painter (Greek, active 6th century BCE), *Amphora*, about 520 BCE, terracotta with Black-Figure Style decoration. Dayton Art Institute, OH. Museum purchase, 1963.84

Attributed to Christian Shively, Jr. (American 1770–1836), *Wall Cupboard*, about 1810–1820, cherry, walnut, maple, metal and glass. Gift of the Estate of Mr. Elmer R. Webster and Mr. Robert A. Titsch, 1995.48

“Scott Shoemaker holds a legal size Pismo clam, left, and several undersized versions, right.” Spencer Weiner/Los Angeles Times via Getty Image via [chron.com](#)

Miyagawa Shuntei (Japanese, 1873–1914), *Playing Go*, 1898, woodblock printed in color. Private collection.

Suzuki Harunobu (Japanese, 1725–1770), *Playing Battledore and Shuttlecock*, about 1765–1770, color woodblock print. Art Institute of Chicago, IL. Clarence Buckingham Collection, 1925.2140

Artist unidentified (Japanese), *Kai Awase*, 18th century, hanging scroll; ink, color and gold on silk. Private collection. Image via [bonhams.com](#)

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