

The Niō Guardian Figures

Protective Spaces

Partner Pairs – Individual Observation



I See . . .

I Think . . .

I Wonder . . .

Guardian figure

Japan, Kamakura period, 1185–1333

Wood

Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment

National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, F1949.21

I See . . .

I Think . . .

I Wonder . . .

Guardian figure
Japan, Kamakura period, 1185–1333
Wood (Cryptomeria japonica)
Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment
National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer
Collection, F1949.20



Partner Pairs – Discuss

Niō Guardians greet worshipers at the gates of many Buddhist Temples. How would you feel standing in front of them? Between them? How would you feel if you knew they were on your side?



National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1949.21



National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1949.20

Agyō



National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1949.21



Ungyō



National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1949.20

Listen again. What sounds do you hear in the recording? What sounds do the guardians' expressions imply? How might these sounds impact the worshiper at a temple?



Top: National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1949.21



Bottom: National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Collection, Purchase—Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1949.20

Which Key Term is most closely associated with the Niō Guardians?

What other terms might be important to understanding them?

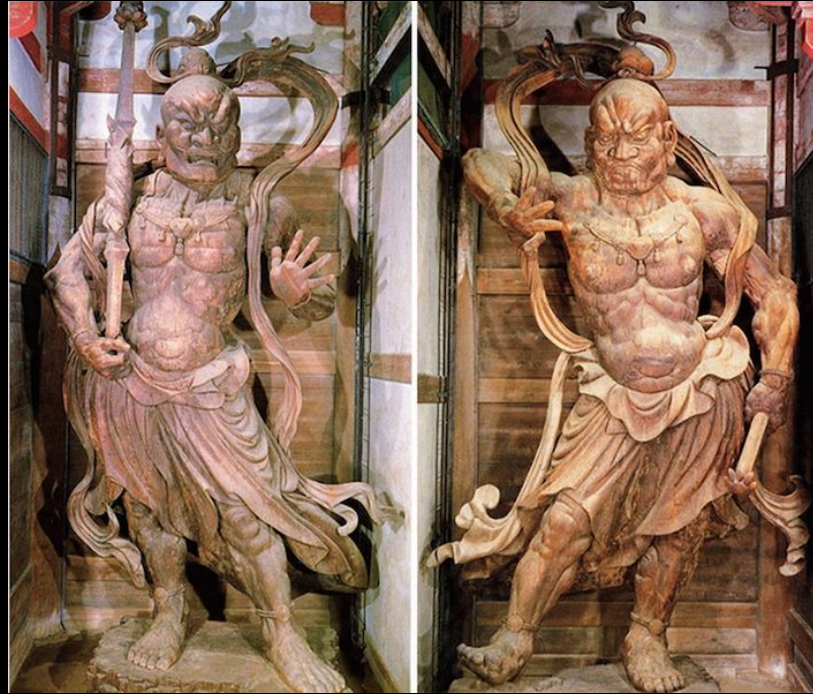
Think, Pair, Share.



Dharmapala Yamaraja and Chamunda, China, Qing dynasty, mid-18th century, Gilt copper with turquoise insets and pigment, 36 × 25.5 × 13 cm (14 3/16 × 10 1/16 × 5 1/8 in), The Alice S. Kandell Collection, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery S2013.23a-e

Legend says these guardians accompanied and protected the Buddha on his travels in India. Their presence is said to ward off negative forces against Buddhist principles.

Niō Guardians (ca. 1203) at Nandaimon (Great South Gate), Tōdai-ji, Nara, Japan



Agyō

Ungyō



The guardians glower at visitors as they enter, towering as high as the temple's doorframe.



The Great South Gate at Tōdaiji Temple (Nara, Japan)



What do the people who made this art care about? Why would they make it? What might have been happening around these artisans at this time?

Summative Activity

Classroom Guardian Activity