



# 15 Examples Of Cultural Artifacts (A To Z List +Pictures)

By Chris Drew (PhD) / November 10, 2022



**Cultural artifacts are man-made objects that are of importance to a cultural group. They are uniquely identified with that cultural group, usually because they are a product of their culture.**

In archaeology, artifacts are objects crafted by humans and found in excavations. A cultural artifact is of particular importance because it can reveal information about the practices of the culture under analysis.

In general discourse, a cultural artifact can be any object – past or present – with which a group is identified.



**Examples of cultural artifacts from the past include arrowheads and weapons dug up during archaeological digs. Examples from the present might include objects with which our culture may be identified in the future such as smartphones and motorcycles.**

## **Examples Of Cultural Artifacts**

### **1. Arrow Heads – North America**

**Culture**

Native American First Nations

**Typical Geographic Region**

North America



**In many areas of North America, archaeological surveys need to be conducted before construction of new sites on virgin land. This is to ensure Native American cultural artifacts are not destroyed.**

During these surveys, the most common artifacts that are extracted are arrowheads. Archaeologists can date the activities on the land by examining the construction of the arrowheads. Generally, over time, arrowheads in North America became smaller, due to technological advancements in arrow production.

Through this analysis, the movements and cultural activities of various tribes can be mapped out to gain a more thorough understanding of the history of the continent.

See more about weapons as artifacts in our article on [examples of artifacts in archeology](#).

## **2. Boomerangs – Aboriginal Australian**



<b>Culture</b>	Aboriginal Australian
<b>Typical Geographic Region</b>	Australia
<b>Era</b>	50,000 BCE to Present

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**Boomerangs are an artifact instantly identifiable with Aboriginal Australian culture. A similar artifact is the boomerang, which is also exclusive to Aboriginal identity.**

Images of boomerangs are depicted in Aboriginal rock art that is believed to be 50,000 years old. The oldest Aboriginal boomerang uncovered is about 10,000 years old, when Aboriginal peoples lived in a pre-industrial [type of society](#).



Interestingly, while boomerangs are almost synonymous with Australian  
Aboriginals, they were used by other cultures as well. Several were found in  
Tutanhamun's tomb, while the oldest remaining boomerang is from Poland and  
dates back 20,000 years.

### 3. Coins

<b>Culture</b>	Various
<b>Typical Geographic Region</b>	Worldwide
<b>Era</b>	600 BCE to Present

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**Coins have been used by many cultures throughout history and are a sign  
of evolution from simple trade to market-based and retail cultures.**



However, coins are excellent examples of cultural artifacts because each culture's coin is different. They are very useful in dating findings in an archaeological dig because most coins only remain in circulation for 10 – 30 years before being lost, retired, or replaced.

Even today, we can tell the difference between an American and British coin with ease. One has the Queen's head on it while the other usually has a republican emblem (which reveals information about each culture).

The first coins were used in the Kingdom of Lydia (modern day Turkey) before spreading to Ancient Greece.

#### **4. Komps (Dutch Clogs)**

**Typical Geographic Region**

Holland (Netherlands)



**Era**

1200 BCE to Present

**Dutch clogs are a traditional dutch shoe made of wood that are instantly identifiable.**

Known as the Klomp, they were a traditional workshoe for Dutch people and are still worn by some Dutch people to this day.

The Dutch clog is a full fitting clog carved from a complete block of wood. They're often painted with bright colors and patterns that are emblematic of Dutch culture.

Today, around 3 million Klompen are made per year, although most of these are sold to tourists as they are not as fashionable today as they were in traditional Dutch society.

## **5. Murtis – Hinduism**



**Culture**

Hinduism

**Typical Geographic Region**

Indian Subcontinent

**Era**

2000 BCE to Present

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**Murtis are statues of Hindu deities that are often placed on shrines in homes and temples. In Hinduism, these statues are often treated as god-like manifestations that are to be cared for as honored guests.**

In some traditions, they are awoken, fed, washed and garlanded daily as an act of devotion to the gods they represent. They are not believed to be gods personally, but are representations wherein the treatment of the Murti is a direct



reflection of the devotees treatment of the God as an honored guest in the home or temple.



These are examples of cultural artifacts because they are unambiguously identified with a specific culture.

## 6. Kippah (Yarmulke) – Judaism

**Culture**

Judaism

**Typical Geographic Region**

Worldwide (Concentration in Israel)

**Era**

2000 BCE to Present

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**A kippah or yarmulke is a Jewish headdress worn by men during worship.**

**It is a disc-like brimless hat that often sits toward the back of the head.**



The kippah is worn to observe the Jewish law that heads should be covered during worship, although the kippah is also worn at all times by some Orthodox Jews.

When a person is seen wearing one, they are instantly identifiable as a Jewish person. As a result, this item is unambiguously a cultural artifact of Judaism.

## **7. Matryoshka Dolls – Russian**

**Culture**

Russian

**Typical Geographic Region**

Russia



**Matryoshka dolls, also known as babushka dolls, are stackable dolls from Russia. They date back to just 1890, but are recognizable as a Russian cultural artifact today.**

The dolls are unique in that the wooden doll breaks apart to reveal a smaller duplicate of it inside. That internal duplicate can also break open to reveal another smaller duplicate inside, and so forth.

## **8. National Flags – Various**

Typical Geographic Region

Worldwide



Era

1606 to Present

**All recognized nations have a national flag. This flag is usually flown outside government buildings and at sporting events.**

The national flag acts as a marker of the [cultural identity](#) and allegiance of its owners. In some nations, such as the United States, it has also come to be flown by laypeople on flagpoles outside their houses as a sign of national pride.

National flags have their origins in naval military flags which were flown on ships to signify their allegiance to passers-by. The Union Jack was flown in 1606 by King James VI when the countries of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales were united under the one king.

Later, in 1777, the United States adopted a unifying national flag, which went through several iterations before the current version was finalized in 1960.

## **9. Rosary Beads – Catholic Cultural Artifact**



**Culture**

Catholicism

**Typical Geographic Region**

Global

**Era**

313 to Present

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**Rosary beads are Catholic prayer beads that make their holder instantly identifiable as a practitioner of the Catholic faith.**

While there are prayer beads of other denominations, the Catholic rosary beads are easily identifiable by the pattern of beads and the Christian cross at the base.

The rosary is a series of prayers, prayed all at once in sequence, and the beads help the devotee to keep track of their progress.

Generally, the devotee will hold one bead at a time, say its associated prayer, then move up to the next bead, until the full cycle of prayers is complete.



Prayers in the cycle include Hail Mary, Glory Be, and the Lord's Prayer (among others).

The rosary was practiced in early Christianity and was endorsed by Pope Pious V in the 16th Century.

## 10. Renaissance Art – European Renaissance Era

**Culture**

European

**Typical Geographic Region**

Europe

**Era**

1350 – 1620 BCE



**Renaissance art is instantly identifiable due to its common themes and techniques. Examples include Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa and Michaelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling.**

The focus of Renaissance art was perspective and depth. Techniques employed to achieve this included proportion, foreshortening, sfumato, and chiaroscuro. Themes in the art were generally reverent to God and Christianity as well as beautiful women or wars.

The artwork is associated with the [humanist](#) and enlightenment periods in Europe that were characterized by bursts in invention and creativity and a turn away from medieval Christian thought.

The greatest collection of Renaissance cultural artifacts is now held in the Louvre museum in Paris.

## **11. Smart Phones – 21st Century Cultural Artifact**



**Culture**

**Typical Geographic Region**

**Era**

21st Century

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**Smartphones will be seen by future historians as the cultural artifacts of our current times. They are handheld items that reveal a great deal about our culture and society.**

The smartphone will be able to place us at a particular moment in history (characterized by [globalization](#) and digitized social communication) and their effects will be debated for decades to come.





Already, we know that the smartphone has had a dramatic impact on our ability to travel (having a personal navigator), communicate, share knowledge, and seek help during an emergency. It's also believed to be having an impact on humans' abilities to concentrate due to its addictive nature.

## 12. Tartans – Scottish

<b>Culture</b>	Scottish
<b>Typical Geographic Region</b>	Scotland
<b>Era</b>	3rd Century AD to Present

**Tartans are a distinctive dress worn by men in Scotland. The pattern on the tartan can identify a man with his traditional clan and their place of origin when Scotland was occupied by disparate clan groups.**

Today, the tartan is still worn throughout the world by people of Scottish heritage. It's a formal item of dress that can be worn at events such as weddings, funerals, and christenings.

The tartan is also associated with another Scottish cultural artifact, the bagpipes, because they're often worn by the players.

## 13. Kirpan – Sikhs

<b>Culture</b>	Sikhism
<b>Typical Geographic Region</b>	India, but also Worldwide



**The kirpan is a culturally significant knife worn by Sikh men. It is one of five items that Sikh guru Gobind Singh Ji decreed should be worn by Khalsa Sikhs in 1699.**

The other four items to be worn at all times are: kesh (a beard), kangha (a wooden comb), kara (an iron bracelet), and kachera (a white undergarment).

The knife was to be worn by Sikhs in order to defend the needy and oppressed. Today, it is worn as an article of faith rather than a fighting weapon. It is a controversial item, however, where it is banned in some countries as a weapon, but given an exception in others because it is worn primarily as a religious item rather than for fighting.

## **14. Viking Helmets – Vikings**



**Culture**

Viking

**Typical Geographic Region**

Scandinavia

**Era**

793 CE – 1066 CE

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**Viking helmets are occasionally found by archeologists in Scandinavia and the British Isles. They are easily identifiable by their style and shape.**

This is an example of a cultural artifact that is of archeological significance. When extracted, the era and culture of the dig site is instantly known.

Vikings would wear these helmets during their many skirmishes in Northern Europe, and especially during raids of the British Isles. They were particularly feared people due to their unforgiving fighting style and ability to conduct fast

raids from sea. The rise of Castles in the 11th Century allowed people to defend themselves more effectively against such raids.



## 15. Quill

<b>Culture</b>	Western
<b>Typical Geographic Region</b>	Europe and North America
<b>Era</b>	6th to 19th Centuries

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**The quill was a pen that was a pen without an ink reservoir and made of a bird feather. It was the primary writing implement in use between the 6th and 19th Centuries.**

The Quill was superseded by the dip pen, which was also a pen without an ink reservoir, and then this was replaced by the fountain pen.



Quills can place a person in a particular place and time. They were the ‘technology of the day’ in Western Europe throughout times of incredible change and intellectual development. They were used to write some of the most important books in history, include great philosophical treatises from the Renaissance era.

## Conclusion

Cultural artifacts are unique human-crafted objects that are of significance to a particular culture. When we come across a cultural artifact, it can be a [compelling primary source](#) that tells us about a culture and the conditions (technological, social, and so forth) at a particular place and time.

Similarly, our knowledge of cultural artifacts can also help us give context to a place that we are trying to learn more about. In archeology, for example, the identification of two artifacts side-by-side can give us information about both artifacts at once. We can make inferences about their association if we know the cultural context of one of those artifacts.

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