Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Section: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**DESCRIPTION**

1. Look at and handle the object for a short time, then write a brief description of the object – what do you think are its most important characteristics?

2. How would you describe this object’s state of preservation? Do you think anything might be missing, or is it whole and intact?

3. (a) Carefully use the calipers to determine the height, width, and thickness of this object in centimeters.

Base Diameter: Rim Diameter: Height:

3. (b) Use your measurements and observations to draw a **rough** sketch of the object here:

**Side/Profile Front**

**PRODUCTION**

4. From which material and how was this object made? Refer to the list of production methods at the end of this worksheet.

5. Do you think this object was expensive or inexpensive? What gives this object its value: is the vessel more important than the writing, or vice versa?

**FUNCTION AND CONTEXT**

6. (a) Look carefully at the inscription in your bowl, which is written in a dialect of Aramaic. Do the letters seem to form different syllables/words, or do they repeat the same syllables/words over and over? Explain what you see.

6. (b) Compare the following two ancient authors’ positions on the function of unintelligible language for prayers and incantations. In the space at the top of the next page, explain why your object may or may not have been understood to be efficacious by people in the ancient world, in light of these two passages.

“We have to mention that those who are skilled in the use of incantations relate that the utterance of the same incantation in its proper language can accomplish what the spell professes to do; but when translated into any other tongue, it is observed to become inefficacious and feeble. And thus it is not the things signified, but the qualities and peculiarities of words, which possess a certain power for this or that purpose.” [Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.25 (third century CE)

“Why, also, are terms preferred that are unintelligible, and of those that are unintelligible why are foreign ones preferred instead of those of our own language? For if the one who hears gives attention to the signification it is enough that the concept remains the same, whatever the term may be. For the divinity that is invoked is possibly not Egyptian in race; and if he is Egyptian, he is far from making use of Egyptian speech, or indeed of any human language at all. These may all be the artful contrivances of jugglers. [Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries* 3.25 (early fourth century CE)]

**SIGNIFICANCE**



7. Horseshoes and crucifixes are just two of the objects commonly used as protective devices for houses and households around the world today. What makes these objects powerful, so that they are understood to provide or communicate the idea of protection? Explain your object in light of these modern parallels.

8. If you took your object out of the museum and put it back in the ancient world, where and with whom would you put it, and why? How were ancient people using this object?

**Production Methods**

Ceramics

* 1. Wheel-made ceramic objects were made on a potter’s wheel: this is a flat disk on which clay was placed that was spun at high speed. The potter used their hands or instruments to shape the clay as it turned. Afterwards hundreds to thousands of objects were placed in a kiln and fired until hard. Because these objects are turned on a potter’s wheel, they are circular on one axis and symmetrical about a center point (think of a plate or bowl). They usually have ridge lines from the vessel spinning in the potter’s hands.
  2. Mould-made ceramics were created by first carving a mould in two pieces of stone (one for the top, one for the bottom). Clay was pressed into each half of the mould, the two halves were pressed together and the whole thing was fired in a kiln until hard. The result was an object of almost any shape (as opposed to the wheel-made ceramics, which must be circular on one axis), often with intricate “carved” designs. You can often see a line where the two mould halves came together.

Metal

* 1. Casting was a technique similar to mould-made ceramics (above), but whereas clay is pressed into a mould, molten metal or glass is poured into a cast.
  2. Lost-wax (or lost-mould) casting was a technique for casting objects in which the artist created an object’s model from hard wax (or another material with a low melting-point temperature). Clay was then shaped around the wax model, forming a soft interior and a hard exterior. A hole was pierced through the hard exterior into the wax and the mould was fired until hard, thereby also melting and draining the wax. Molten metal was poured into the empty exterior mould and allowed to cool, before the mould was broken to reveal the now-hardened metal version of the wax model.

Glass

* 1. Cast glass: see above under “casting”.
  2. Blown glass was created using a technique in which molten glass was placed on the end of a tube that the glassblower would then blow through. The result was any roundish object that was hollow.
  3. Core-formed glass vessels were created by first creating the shape of the intended object out of clay (the core) and then heating it and rolling it in powdered glass, which built up around the core. Bands of colored glass were then applied and pressed into the powdered glass. Designs were then made with tools and handles were attached (if the vessel had handles). The core was then removed, resulting in a glass vessel with geometric designs on the outside.

Lots of Materials

* 1. Carving a negative process, whereby different instruments (blades, chisels, etc.) are used to remove material from a larger block in order to create a desired shape.