

# Exploring Drinking from the Greek Heads

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Head Vase from the Nelson  
-Atikins Museum.  
490 B.C.E. Pottery 6 7/8" x 3 1/2"

For centuries, Greek philosophy has been deeply intertwined with our reality. Before reaching for your next vase, take a moment to ask yourself: “Is my pitcher special enough to drink from?”

During the Greek era, it was common for drinking vessels to tell stories or feature human heads. These vessels played a significant role in everyday social gatherings.

The ancient Greek head vases, also known as “plastic vases” or “figure vases,” were designed to resemble human heads, particularly female ones. These vases gained popularity during the Archaic and Classical periods and were often utilized as wine pitchers (oinochai) or wine cups (kantharoi).

The most prevalent design was the wine pitcher, with the head serving as the body or foot of the vessel. Female heads were the most frequently depicted, but there were also representations of Herakles, satyrs, and various mythological figures.

The primary function of these vases was to facilitate wine drinking during social gatherings centered around conversation and camaraderie.

So, we might wonder: do our modern wine vessels inspire us, or are they simply mundane? With a nod to ancient Greece, we can learn to craft stories that transcend our own time period through a touch of creative design.