For nearly a century, Ohio’s Cleveland Museum of Art has stood as a world-renowned collector of works of art from all corners of the earth, including ones from the European Middle Ages (ca. 500-1500 AD). The CMA has also recently undertaken a massive reinstallation project begun in 2005, which allowed it a rare opportunity to rethink its presentation of the entire collection, to refocus goals of making it more relevant and engaging for visitors, and to implement the use of interpretive technology to provide visitors an opportunity to access more information. Through a museological framework, the basic question this project examines is how the staff at the Cleveland Museum of Art has presented the history and art of the Middle Ages through the new medieval galleries, and through their interpretive and educational tools and techniques.

This study argues that the interpretive and educational practices for the medieval galleries at the Cleveland Museum of Art demonstrate how opportunities for meaning-making are created for visitors. This is done with various elements of interpretation, which includes grouping and arrangement of objects, aesthetics of the galleries, informational labels and panels, and supplemental technology. These all stress a connection to the people of the Middle Ages to help visitors experience what the world was like for people who
saw and used the art in that time. There are also many educational programs that focus on teaching visitors about the Middle Ages specifically, including classroom programs, traditional programs, and programs designed for all ages to make learning fun while also providing context. A study of the educational and interpretive practices at the Cleveland Museum of Art that pertain to the medieval collection demonstrates that they aim to facilitate visitor-object interactions, increase opportunities to make meaning and learn from objects, and to make the art accessible to the public. This has been done through crafting a narrative of the Middle Ages that focused on the stories of the people that lived during that time period, through providing context, and through a variety of classroom and traditional programs.