



Minneapolis Institute of Art

Arts of Africa

K-5

Mia

Dear Educators,

This learning resource provides six lessons with activities designed to integrate the diverse arts of Africa into your classroom to support skills and concepts you are already teaching or may be planning to teach. Each lesson introduces students to artworks from Africa in Mia's galleries and encourages them to think critically, express themselves creatively, and make connections between their own lives and those of people across the African continent. The following guiding principles inform these lessons:

African art is diverse. As one of the largest continents in the world, with over fifty countries, Africa is home to a wide array of art rich in history, tradition, and relevance.

African art is accessible. These lessons focus on themes in African art common to all people: shapes, faces, animals, wonder, community, and history.

African art fits into the curriculum. These lessons are designed to introduce students to the art of Africa while simultaneously covering skills and standards taught in social studies, science, art, and language arts. The lessons are designed to support grade-level standards, though the activities can be adapted to meet the needs of a variety of grade levels.

African art is engaging! Each lesson follows an inquiry-based model: Engage, Explore, Explain, Extend. Complete as many or as few segments as classroom time allows.

The downloadable PDF contains high-resolution images suitable for projecting during classroom discussions. Projecting each image is recommended so students are able to view the details of each artwork and reference it during discussion. You will also find worksheets, organizers, maps, and additional resources for the lesson activities.

We encourage you to follow your classroom lessons and activities with a visit to the museum for a guided tour of the Arts of Africa galleries. For information about booking a tour at Mia for your students and to complete an online request form, visit [Mia's website](#).

A feedback form is [available here](#). Please take a few minutes to let us know what you think.

Finally, thank you to everyone who contributed to this project.

*Sheila McGuire, Head of Student and Teacher Learning
Division of Learning Innovation*



Bwa artist, Burkina Faso, *Plank mask*, c. 1960, wood, pigment, 12 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 98.2

Front: Baga artist, Guinea, *Drum* (detail), early 20th century, wood, animal hide, plant fibers, pigments, 53 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 24 in. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 2011.8

Connecting the Arts of Africa to Your Classroom

Lessons for K–5 Teachers and Students

- K Faces of Africa
- 1 Africa's Awesome Animals
- 2 Containers: Art and Community
- 3 Investigating the Arts of Ancient Egypt
- 4 Problem Solving: Design Thinking
- 5 Developing Historical Thinking Skills with Art



Africa



Arts of Africa Kindergarten Lesson

Faces of Africa

These activities are designed to introduce African art into your classroom while also reinforcing skills students are learning in other areas. Faces are an important element in African art and provide an easy way to talk about Africa and its art in your classroom.

Objectives

Students will engage in close looking at and thinking about African artworks.

Students will understand that studying art is one way people learn about the past.

Students will see that people in many countries and cultures in Africa make a diverse range of artworks.

Standards

SS 0.4.1.2.1 Describe ways people learn about the past. For example: learning from elders, photos, artifacts, buildings, diaries, stories, videos.

SS 0.3.1.1.2 Describe a map and a globe as representations of a space.

S 0.2.1.1.1 Sort objects in terms of color, size, shape, and texture, and communicate reasoning for the sorting system.

Art 0.4.1.5.1 Compare and contrast the characteristics of a variety of works of visual art.

Engage

Making faces

Compare the different ways artists in Africa make faces by looking closely at the eyes, noses, and mouths in works of art from different African countries and cultures.

You will need:

- Images of African artworks included in the lesson (pages 9–12)
- Making Faces activity sheets (pages 15–17)

Introduce activity: Many artworks made in Africa show human and animal faces. These faces help to communicate messages and tell stories important to communities.

Let students know they are going to look at pictures of faces made in three countries in Africa to see different ways artists show eyes, noses, and mouths. Explain that art is a great way to learn about people all over the world.

1. Draw it. Have students draw details of eyes, noses, and mouths from the different artworks on their activity sheets. The goal is for students to look closely, not to create great drawings. Encourage them to give it a try!

2. Talk about it. What different shapes can be used for eyes? What about noses? How do you know it's a face even when some of the details are not very real looking? What can you learn about people in real life by looking at their faces? How can you tell when someone is happy? Sad?

3. Draw a new face using the worksheet. Pick the eyes, nose, and mouth you like best to create a totally new face. (Option: cut and glue shapes onto the worksheet).

Share a fun fact about each of the African faces. Information about each is included on pages 7 and 8.

Explore

Sort them this way and that!

Encourage students to think about what they observe in each of the African artworks.

You will need:

- Groups of two to four students
- A set of the ten African-artwork face images for each group (print out images included in the lesson on pages 18–20)

1. Model. Explain that all the African artwork faces show a human, animal, or a combination (we could call these “humanimals” for fun!). Discuss one or two examples as a class. Explore the kinds of facial features they might look for in each to decide if it is a human, animal, or humanimal.

2. Sort. Have students work together to sort the artworks into different groups according to which are humans, which are animals, and which are combinations of these (humanimals!).

3. Share. Review the decisions made by each group. Depending on the decision the students made, ask them: What do you see that made you say this is an animal, human, or combination (humanimal)? Invite students to explain which faces were most tricky to put in a category and why.

4. Sort again according to colors or shapes or another visual element they have been learning about. For example: Which ones have one or two colors? Which ones have two to four colors? Which ones have five or more colors? Which ones have circles in them? Which ones do not have any circles? Which ones have triangles? Which ones do not have triangles? (Option: sorting can be done as a class by taping faces to a hand-drawn organizer on the board).

5. Give each group four additional faces from around the world (included in lesson on page 21). Tell them where they are from to introduce the idea that people around the world have a common interest in making art about faces. Discuss. Ask them to add these to the groups they have already sorted.

Explain

Tell the stories and discuss the artworks to demonstrate how information can add to what we learn from looking closely. Give students an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the artworks.

1. Tell stories. As time permits, tell the stories of one to four faces using the information provided at the end of the lesson. Post the picture of the face as you tell the story. Name the country in Africa from which each comes and point it out on a map (page 22). Explain that artworks help us learn about people from all around the world.

2. Discuss. Ask students what clues in the artwork help us know what it is: Why is this an animal or a person? Debate which ones are masks: How can you tell it is a mask? If it is possible for them to see details of beads, feathers, and other materials they recognize, ask: What does this artwork seem to be made of?

Extend

Use these ideas to integrate the African artworks into basic skill practice.

Where in the world?

Show students a world map. Point out Africa’s location in relation to the United States. Introduce the idea that Africa is a continent with many countries.

Show the map of Africa with country names (page 22). Explain that countries (land areas) are often home to multiple cultural groups. Point out the countries from which the artworks in this lesson come. Introduce or reinforce the idea that people all over Africa have their own unique artworks.

Math in motion

To wrap up or begin any of the previous activities, look at the three masks and crown together. Invite students to divide into three groups based on which of the artworks they like best. Count the number of students in each group. Count the difference between groups to represent subtraction. Count the total among groups to represent addition. For fun, ask them to imagine moving while wearing the crown or masks.

Artworks Information



Yoruba artist, Nigeria, *Crown*, c. 1920, glass beads, leather, canvas, wicker, L. 15 in. (crown), L. 15 in. (fringe). The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund 76.29

Some kings among the Yoruba (YO-roo-buh) people wear beaded crowns like this one, with a veil to protect people from seeing the king's face. He is that powerful! The tall part of the crown above the yellow face holds medicines that help the king connect to ancestors in the spirit world. Even the king must not look inside his own crown. This crown is also decorated with birds. The birds are important messengers between the king, the spirit world, and the people in the community.

Tabwa artist, Zambia or Democratic Republic of Congo, *Mask*, second quarter of the 20th century, glass beads, feathers, raffia, cloth, animal skin, 16 x 12 x 3½ in. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 89.14

In the past, a religious man in a Tabwa (TAH-bwah) community in Zambia or the Democratic Republic of Congo wore this mask. During very dark nights when there was no moon, this man wore the mask to help protect the people around him. The colorful feathers and triangles were one way that the artist showed how the Tabwa people enjoyed the comfort of daylight. The feathers come from a bird that crows in the morning when the sun shines. The Tabwa people call the design made up of triangles at the top of the face "the rising of the new moon" to celebrate this special time when light appears after nights of darkness.





Yoruba artist, Ife Kingdom, Nigeria, *Shrine head*, 12th–14th century, terra-cotta, 12¼ x 5¾ x 7¼ in. The John R. Van Derlip Fund 95.84

This clay sculpture of a royal woman comes from a kingdom from a long time ago called Ife (EE-fay). Ife was a very important city to the Yoruba (YO-roo-buh) people. The royal woman's face looks calm and peaceful, qualities valued by the Yoruba. Her headdress shows us that this is a royal portrait head. This head was probably part of a larger figure now lost. The lines of fat on her neck are a sign of wealth and good health in Yoruba art. The lines covering her face might show scar patterns or a veil worn by the royal family.



Senufo artist, Burkina Faso or Côte d'Ivoire, *Mask*, first half of the 20th century, wood, pigment, metal, 30½ x 11¼ x 20½ in. Gift of Walker Art Center and the T.B. Walker Foundation 2006.36.3

This large mask is called a “firespitter.” Senofo (seh-NOO-foh) men who wore this type of mask usually danced in it at night. They placed dried grasses and burning chips of wood or coals in the mouth and blew on them to make fire. The wide jaws, big tusks, and many horns add to its scary appearance. The mask combines features of many animals, including the warthog, crocodile, and antelope. The mask was made to keep danger away from the Senofo people who use it.



Yoruba artist, Nigeria,
Crown, c. 1920, glass beads,
leather, canvas, wicker,
L. 15 in. (crown), L. 15 in. (fringe).
The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund
76.29



Tabwa artist, Zambia or Democratic Republic of Congo, *Mask*, second quarter of the 20th century, glass beads, feathers, raffia, cloth, animal skin, 16 x 12 x 3½ in. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 89.14



Yoruba artist, Ife Kingdom, Nigeria, *Shrine head*, 12th–14th century, terra-cotta, 12¼ x 5¾ x 7¼ in. The John R. Van Derlip Fund 95.84



Senufo artist, Burkina Faso or Côte d'Ivoire, *Mask*, first half of the 20th century, wood, pigment, metal, 30½ x 11¼ x 20½ in.
Gift of Walker Art Center and the T.B. Walker Foundation 2006.36.3

Additional Artworks Information



Yoruba artist, Nigeria, *Crown*, c. 1920, glass beads, leather, canvas, wicker, L. 15 in. (crown), L. 15 in. (fringe).
The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund 76.29



Senufo artist, Burkina Faso or Côte d'Ivoire, *Mask*, first half of the 20th century, wood, pigment, metal, 30½ x 11¼ x 20½ in. Gift of Walker Art Center and the T.B. Walker Foundation 2006.36.3



Wee artist, Côte d'Ivoire, *Mask*, 1940s, wood, metal, hair, fur, pigments, plant fibers, leopard teeth, 20 x 17½ x 9 in. The Mary Ruth Weisel Endowment for Africa, Oceania, and the Americas and gift of Kate and Ken Anderson 2014.7



Tabwa artist, Zambia or Democratic Republic of Congo, *Mask*, second quarter of the 20th century, glass beads, feathers, raffia, cloth, animal skin, 16 x 12 x 3½ in. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 89.14



Egypt, *Portrait of Pharaoh Amenhotep III*, 1391-1353 BCE, granodiorite, 10¾ x 6 x 5 in. Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton 99.84.2



Yoruba artist, Ife Kingdom, Nigeria, *Shrine head*, 12th-14th century, terra-cotta, 12¼ x 5¾ x 7¼ in. The John R. Van Derlip Fund 95.84



Lumbo artist, Gabon, *Mask*, 19th century, wood, pigments, 10¼ x 7 x 5 in. The Putnam Dana McMillan Fund 2014.5



Yoruba artist, Benin, *Gelede mask*, mid-20th century, wood, pigment, 10¼ x 12 x 8¾ in. Funds from an anonymous endowment 2011.30.1



Indonesia, *Ganesha*, 10th–11th century, volcanic stone (andesite), 34¾ x 20½ x 15¹⁵/₁₆ in. Purchase through Art Quest 2003 and The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 2003.198



Bwa artist, Burkina Faso, *Plank mask*, c. 1960, wood, pigment, 12⁷/₈ x 10¼ in. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 98.2



Yamaguchi Bidou (Japanese, b. 1970), *Mask of Shichiguchi*, 2004, wood, pigments, lacquer, *gofun*, gilt metal, 8⁵/₁₆ x 6¹⁵/₁₆ x 3¾ in. Gift of Target 2004.206.2



Songye artist, Democratic Republic of Congo, *Power figure*, 19th century, wood, horn, brass tacks, metalwork, glass beads, fiber, 37 x 10¾ x 11¼ in. The John R. Van Derlip Fund 89.59a–d



Greece, *Head of Aphrodite*, 3rd century BCE, marble, 9¾ x 6½ in. The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund 32.15

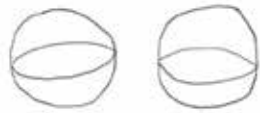


China, *Funerary Mask of a Young Woman*, 916–1125, gilt bronze, 4⁵/₈ x 13½ x 8¼ in. Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton 2002.220.1

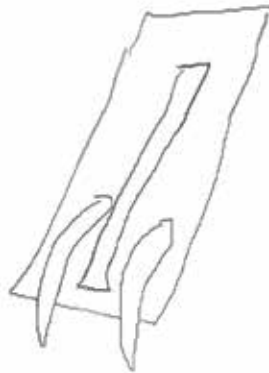
Draw it!



Eyes



Nose



Mouth



Draw it!



Eyes

Nose

Mouth



Draw a New Face









Map It!



Arts of Africa First Grade Lesson

Africa's Awesome Animals

These activities are designed to introduce African art into your classroom while also reinforcing skills students are learning in other areas. Animals are an important element in African art and provide an easy way to talk about African art in your classroom.

Objectives

Students will understand that studying artworks is one way people learn about the past.

Students will understand that some African artworks look very real and others are a mix of real and imaginary.

Students will understand that people in many countries and cultures in Africa make a diverse range of artworks.

Standards

SS 1.3.1.1.2 Use relative location words and absolute location words to identify the location of a specific place; explain why or when it is important to use absolute versus relative location.

SS 1.4.1.2.2 Describe how people lived in the past, based on information found in historical records and artifacts.

S 1.1.1.1.1 When asked “How do you know?” students support their answers with observations.

Art 0.1.1.5.1 Identify the elements of visual art including color, line, shape, texture, and space.

Art 0.1.3.5.1.1 Identify the characteristics of visual artworks from a variety of cultures including the contributions of Minnesota American Indian tribes and communities.

Art 0.2.1.5.1 Create original two- and three-dimensional artworks to express ideas, experiences, or stories.

Art 0.3.1.5.1 Share and describe a personal artwork.

Engage

Figure it out!

Warm up your students' observational skills with a hands-on activity.

Take a close look at the Tyiwara (chee-WAH-rah) headcrest (an artwork made to be worn on the head) from Mali in Africa to unravel the mystery of what kinds of animals the artist combined.

You will need:

- Outlined Tyiwara headcrest handout (page 30)
- Pictures of animals combined in the headcrest and other animal pictures (pages 33-37)

Introduce the activity by explaining that you will be looking at a work of art from the country of Mali in Africa to see how an African artist used shapes and imagination to create something for the people in his community. The headcrest was originally attached to a straw cap.

Begin by having students use their fingers to trace shapes drawn on the Tyiwara headcrest handout. Invite them to describe the different types of shapes they see. Ask them to describe what else they see.

Ask students to put their hands together and move their arms to see what kinds of shapes they can make in the space between their arms. Then, have them put their feet together and bend their legs to see what kinds of shapes they can create. Explain that in sculpture, this space in between different parts of the body is called “negative space.”

Next, ask them: What parts of this artwork tell you it is an animal? Show them the pictures of African animals the artist referred to in the artwork, including an antelope, aardvark, and pangolin (a mammal that looks like an anteater covered in scales) (pages 33-35). Ask: Which parts of these real African animals do you think the artist combined here? What do you see that makes you say that? Encourage them to explain their responses based on what they see. (Information is available on page 26. It's OK, however, to accept all responses backed with evidence.)

Explore

Real or imaginary? A looking and thinking activity.

Encourage the students to extend what they learned from the Tyiwara headcrest by looking at and thinking about other artworks from Africa. Introduce the idea that many artworks in Africa show animals to help communicate messages and tell stories important to communities. Invite students to share examples of stories or campaigns (e.g., Smokey the Bear) that use animals to help give messages or explain something important to communities.

Let students know they are going to look at pictures of animals in artworks from all over Africa to see different ways artists show animals—some look very real and others do not. Explain that looking at and talking about art are great ways to learn about people all over the world.

You will need:

- Groups of two to four students
- A set of twelve African-artwork animal images for each group (pages 40–41)
- Worksheet (page 31)

1. Model. Explain that some of the animals in the African artworks look real and some look imaginary. Discuss one or two examples as a class to explore the kinds of features they might look for to decide if the animal in the artwork looks more real or more imaginary. Invite them to think about how the visual elements of color, line, and shape in each artwork could influence their decisions. It is OK for students to have different opinions. What is important is that they are looking closely at the artworks to make their decisions. You could show photos of the actual animals to help students make their decisions.

2. Make decisions. Have students work together to decide if each of the twelve animals is more real or more imaginary. Use the worksheet to sort the animals.

3. Share. Review the decisions made by each group. Ask them, “What do you see that made you put them in the categories the way you did?” to help them explain their decisions. Invite students to explain which artworks were most tricky to put into a single category and why. It is likely that students will see the artworks differently. You could invite them to change their minds after hearing each other, if they would like to.

Explain

Tyiwara’s story

Introduce the idea that looking at art and talking about it are great ways to learn about how people lived in the past (and today!). Explain that stories help us understand artworks in Africa and other parts of the world. Tell them the story of Tyiwara, which explains why he is so important to the Bamana people in Mali.

1. Review. Review the animals depicted in the headcrest using the pictures of the aardvark, antelope, and pangolin on pages 33–35. The artist was creative—he put together the curving horns of an antelope, the rounded, humped body of an aardvark, and the long body of a pangolin.

2. Tell the story. Tell Tyiwara’s story using the information on page 26.

3. Discuss. Ask students, “How might the animals we talked about honor farmers?” Ask them to imagine watching the Tyiwara headcrest moving against the bright blue sky when dancers wore it on their heads.

4. Conclude. Wrap up the activity by reviewing what they learned by looking so closely at and talking about the Tyiwara headcrest. Reinforce the idea that looking at art and talking about it are great ways to learn about how people lived in the past (and today!).

Extend

Another awesome animal!

Time permitting, introduce the firespitter mask (page 27) to reinforce and build on what they learned from looking at and learning about Tyiwara.

Invite students to look closely at the firespitter mask from Burkina Faso. Ask them to come up with as many words as possible to describe it. What do you see? What else? What kinds of animals might be combined in this mask?

Show them pictures of a warthog, crocodile, and antelope on pages 33, 36, and 37, and ask them to find something that reminds them of each animal. What shapes do you see? What colors? What kinds of lines? What kinds of patterns?

Using information provided, explain how the object is used. Ask them to imagine how the firespitter mask might have looked being worn at night with hot wood chips burning in its mouth! How successful do you think this mask was when it was used to protect people in a Senufo community? What do you see that makes you say so?

Compare and contrast the firespitter mask and Tyiwara headcrest.

Map it!

Show students a world map. Point out Africa's location in relation to the United States. Introduce the idea that Africa is a continent made up of over 50 countries, each of which is home to multiple cultural groups. The United States is part of the continent called North America. Show a map of Africa with country names (page 42) and point out Mali to show where the Tyiwara headcrest was made.

Ask students to describe the location of the country of Mali on the map in relation to at least one other country. Begin by showing an example, such as, "Ghana is near Nigeria on the map." Use the attached worksheet (page 32) to review relative-location words. If you also discuss the firespitter, ask students to describe the location of Burkina Faso relative to Mali.

Create your own combo animal!

Have students select pictures of various animals from magazines. Help them cut out different animal parts. Then have them create a collage by combining these parts into a new animal. Have students try out different combinations before deciding on a final composite animal for their collage. Discuss why they combined the animals they chose and what their animals would be good at.

Artworks Information

The Tiywara (chee-WAH-rah) headcrest was worn attached to a straw cap. It was worn by a Bamana (BAH-mah-nah) man in a lively performance that celebrated farmers who worked the land to grow plants for food. The dance also honored a special being whose name was Tiywara. Tiywara taught the Bamana to farm long, long ago. Tyi means “work” and wara means “wild animal.” Tiywara, who some people believed was half antelope and half human, came down from the skies to teach humans how to plant seeds, tend crops, and harvest. After a few years, however, the people began to forget about Tiywara and what he taught them. Tiywara died, and humans began to have difficulties with their crops. The people decided to honor him every year.

Today, in some Bamana communities, performers continue to wear Tiywara headcrests. Imagine that you are looking at this headcrest with the blue sky behind it. It was the artist’s job to make an artwork that everyone in a crowd could see on top of the dancer’s head.

To honor farmers the artist creatively put together the long horns of an antelope, the rounded, humped body of an aardvark, and the long body of a pangolin. Each of these animals has features that were also valued in Bamana farmers. Farmers had to be strong and energetic like antelopes. They had to be able to dig deep into the earth like the pangolin and aardvark.

The artist who made this headdress had to carve the animal from a solid piece of wood. He had to have sharp knives and a cutting tool called an adze, which is similar to an ax, to cut away the wood to make this animal appear.

Bamana artist, Mali, *Tiywara headcrest*, first half of the 20th century, wood, cowrie shells, thread, 24 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 3 in. (including base).
The Marguerite S. McNally Endowment for Art Acquisition 2012.25

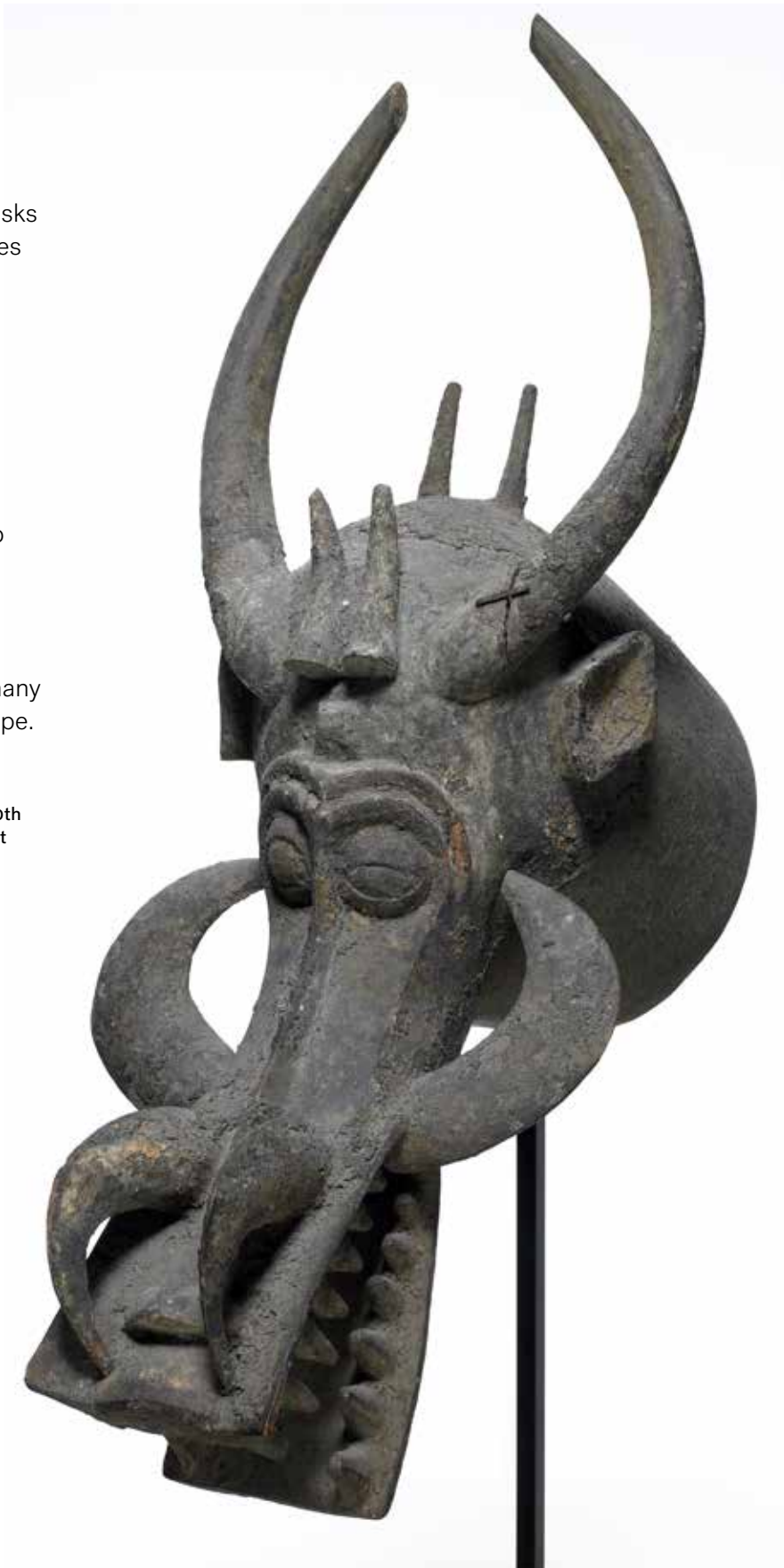


This large mask is called a “firespitter.” Firespitter masks are used by some Senufo (seh-NOO-foh) communities to keep away danger when people are performing at night. The Senufo man who wore this placed dried grasses and glowing (burning) chips of wood in the mouth and blew on them to create the appearance of hot fire in the beast’s mouth!

The artist who carved this had to imagine the “firespitter” in the big piece of wood before he began carving. He likely used different-sized cutting tools to carve the mask, including knives and an adze (a tool similar to an ax).

The wide jaws, big tusks, and many horns add to its scary appearance. The mask combines features of many animals, including the warthog, crocodile, and antelope.

Senufo artist, Burkina Faso or Côte d’Ivoire, *Mask*, first half of the 20th century, wood, pigment, metal, 30½ x 11¼ x 20½ in. Gift of Walker Art Center and the T.B. Walker Foundation 2006.36.3





Bamana artist, Mali, *Tyiwara headcrest*, first half of the 20th century, wood, cowrie shells, thread, 24 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 3 in. (including base). The Marguerite S. McNally Endowment for Art Acquisition 2012.25



Senoufo artist, Burkina Faso or Côte d'Ivoire, *Mask*, first half of the 20th century, wood, pigment, metal, 30½ x 11¼ x 20½ in. Gift of Walker Art Center and the T.B. Walker Foundation 2006.36.3



Real or Imaginary?

These animals look **real**:

These animals look **imaginary**:

Map It!

Use the map to fit the correct location words into each blank.

Word Bank:

near

next to

far away from

1. Mali is _____ Burkina Faso.
2. Zimbabwe is _____ Algeria.
3. Somalia is _____ Sudan.





Antelope



Aardvark



Pangolin



Crocodile



Warthog

Sorting Artworks





Artworks Information



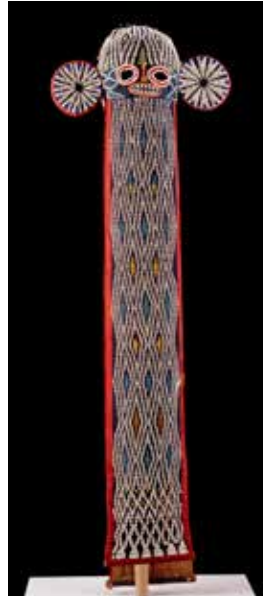
Akan artist, Ghana, *Goldweight* (caterpillar), 19th–20th century, brass, 1 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ x $\frac{3}{4}$ in. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 98.1.102



Egyptian artist, Egypt, *Figure of god Anubis*, 8th–7th century BCE, bronze, 3 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ in., The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 16.35



Senufo artist, Burkina Faso or Côte d'Ivoire, *Mask*, first half of the 20th century, wood, pigment, metal, 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Gift of Walker Art Center and the T.B. Walker Foundation 2006.36.3



Bamileke artist, Cameroon, *Elephant mask*, 19th–20th century, indigo-dyed cotton, glass beads, natural fibers, 54 x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund 94.2



Bamana artist, Mali, *Tyiwara headcrest*, first half of the 20th century, wood, cowrie shells, thread, 24 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 3 in. (with base). The Marguerite S. McNally Endowment for Art Acquisition 2012.25



Edo artist, Nigeria, *Water pitcher*, 18th century, bronze, 17 x 26 in. The Miscellaneous Works of Art Purchase Fund 58.9



Dogon artist, Mali, *Ram*, 20th century, iron, 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 1 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. The Putnam Dana McMillan Fund 99.71



Cameroon, *Bird headdress*, 19th–early 20th century, wood, pigment, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 27 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 12 in. The Putnam Dana McMillan Fund 2004.107.6



Bamana artist, Mali, *Kore Society mask*, date unknown, wood, 19 $\frac{9}{16}$ x 8 x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Gift of Julie and Babe Davis 2003.21.10



Grasslands artist, Cameroon, *Whistle*, c. 1940s, wood, leather, beads, 20 x 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 2 in. The Rebecca and Ben Field Endowment for Art Acquisition 2010.74.2



Sowah Kwei (Ghanaian, 1954–1999), *Fantasy coffin*, 1993, wood, plaster, acrylic paint, 46 x 50 x 120 in. The Robert C. Winton Fund 2010.72



Hausa artist, Nigeria, *Writing board*, 20th century, wood, pigments, leather, 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{16}$ x 1 in. The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund 2014.44.1

Map It!



Arts of Africa Second Grade Lesson

Containers: Art and Community

These activities are designed to introduce African art into your classroom while also reinforcing skills students are learning in other areas. Containers made by African artists across the continent provide a great way to talk about African art, how design can tell us how something is used, and how art can help us understand diverse cultures and communities.

Objectives

Students will understand that many African artworks are designed for specific uses and made beautiful through decoration.

Students will understand that artworks are part of the culture of communities.

Students will understand that people study artworks to learn about the history, beliefs, and daily activities of communities.

Standards

Art 0.1.1.5.1 Identify the elements of visual art including color, line, shape, texture, and space.

Art 0.1.2.5.1 Identify the tools, materials, and techniques from a variety of two- and three-dimensional media such as drawing, printmaking, ceramics, or sculpture.

Art 0.1.3.5.1 Identify the characteristics of visual artworks from a variety of cultures including the contributions of Minnesota American Indian tribes and communities.

Art 0.2.1.5.1 Create original two- and three-dimensional artworks to express ideas, experiences, or stories.

SS 2.3.1.1.2 Locate key features on a map or globe; use cardinal directions to describe the relationship between two or more features. For example: Key features—city, state, country, continents, the equator, poles, prime meridian, hemisphere, oceans, major rivers, major mountain ranges, other types of landforms in the world.

SS 2.4.1.2.1 Use historical records and artifacts to describe how people's lives have changed over time.

SS 2.4.2.4.2 Describe how the culture of a community reflects the history, daily life, or beliefs of its people.

S 2.2.1.1.1 Describe objects in terms of color, size, shape, weight, texture, flexibility, strength, and the types of materials in the object.

S 2.1.2.2.3 Explain how designed or engineered items from everyday life benefit people.

S 2.1.2.2.1 Identify a need or problem; construct objects that help meet the need or solve the problem.

S 2.1.2.2.2 Describe why some materials are better than others for making a particular object and how materials that are better in some ways may be worse in other ways.

ELA SL2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade two topics and texts with peers and adults in small or larger groups.

Engage

How was it used?

Take a close look at four African artworks to figure out how they were used.

You will need:

- Groups of three to four students
- “How was it used?” activity worksheet (page 52) for each group

Introduce the activity to students by explaining that they will be looking at containers made in different countries in Africa to learn about how artworks help us learn about community activities. Introduce the idea that artists in Africa often make artworks for specific purposes. Careful observation of the artworks often helps us figure out how artworks were used.

1. Observe and describe. Give students time to look closely at each of the four containers featured in this lesson (pages 48–51). With each image, ask students to list words on the board that they would use to describe the artwork. Discuss as a class.

2. Problem solve. In groups, have students use the “How Was it Used?” worksheet (page 52) to match each of the containers with one of the descriptions of how it was used. When done, discuss what visual clues (evidence) led them to make the choice they made for each. Stress that it is fine if they did not pick the “correct” match as long as they looked carefully at the artworks for clues. This kind of work takes time! (See information on pages 46–47.)

Explore

Patterns galore!

Discover the power of patterns to decorate useful objects.

You will need:

- Patterns worksheet (page 53)

Introduce the idea that throughout Africa artists decorate useful objects like baskets, bottles, and water jars with patterns to make them beautiful. Sometimes these patterns are closely associated with cultural identity.

1. Look and describe. Using the images on pages 48–51, invite students to look at each of the vessels. What words would they use to describe the patterns on each?

2. Move. Next, ask students to mimic the patterns with their hands or bodies. Discuss what they learned about the patterns.

3. Draw. Now that they have explored the patterns with their eyes and bodies, have students draw the patterns on the patterns worksheet (page 53) to better understand how the artists used lines, shapes, and colors to create patterns or repeating designs and how these relate to the different parts of each container.

4. Discuss. Conclude with a conversation about the patterns. Explain that the decorations on each container show us an example of what each artist’s culture considers beautiful.

Explain

1. Review. Invite students to review what they have discovered so far about each vessel. Ask them to add words to the lists they created when they first looked at each artwork.

2. Ask. Ask students, “What do you wonder about this artwork?” to encourage critical thinking and curiosity about the containers.

3. Discuss. Based on students’ observations and interests, introduce information about the materials used and the function of each container within its community of origin. Point out to students how they, like people who study history and culture, can figure out a lot of information about objects through careful observation, and how they can deepen this knowledge with additional study.

Extend

Map it!

Show students a world map. Point out Africa's location in relation to the United States. Review the idea that Africa is a continent.

Show a map of Africa with country names (page 56). Point out the countries from which the artworks in this lesson come and reinforce the idea that each country is home to multiple cultural groups! Explain that these are in different regions of Africa—East, West, Central, and South Africa.

Ask students to describe the location of each country in relation to at least one other country using cardinal directions. Begin by showing an example such as "Somalia is to the east of Burkina Faso."

Timeline

Create a time line on which the students can place these artworks from oldest to newest.

Design challenge

Have students design a container to hold, carry, or serve their favorite food or drink.

Use the attached worksheet (page 54) to get students thinking about these questions before designing and drawing their own containers: What will your container hold? Who will use it? How many people will use it? Is your food or drink hot or cold? How will you carry the container? What materials (clay, beads, gourds, etc.) will work best for your container? Why? What kinds of designs will you use to make your container beautiful? What else? What did you learn from the African containers that could help you with your own design?

After students have drawn their containers (page 55), ask them to share their ideas in small groups.

Remind them how the African artists included beautiful designs to honor and please friends and family who used the containers you studied.

Artworks



Somali artist, Somalia, *Basket*, early 20th century, fibers, leather, beads, cowrie shells, cloth, 13 x 10 x 10 in. The Mary Ruth Weisel Endowment for Africa, Oceania, and the Americas 2010.73

Look closely at the designs of the basket. Invite students to share what those designs might tell us (example: the decoration shows it's special, might not be used every day, etc.). An artist in Somalia designed this basket to store personal items, such as jewelry, or valuable foods, such as preserved meats and dates. Complex designs decorate its body, lid, and the straps that hold it shut to protect its contents.

In Somalia basket weaving is a highly valued art form. The women who weave baskets also create mats, fans, and other household containers. Women in different parts of the country decorate their specialty objects with unique regional designs.

The artist used a variety of different materials to make this basket, including colorful beads, leather, fiber, and wood. Look closely to see how the artist dyed the fibers used to weave colored patterns into the basket itself. The colorful patterns made of beads add another layer of beautification to the valuable basket. The design of interlocked diamonds appears on a variety of artworks from Somalia.



Zulu artist, South Africa, *Beer pot*, mid-20th century, clay, 14 x 16 in. Anonymous gift of funds 99.115.1

A Zulu (ZOO-loo) artist in South Africa created this ceramic pot with complex designs to hold beer. Round, shiny black pots like this one are focal points of Zulu family celebrations. They are designed not only to hold liquid but to help families connect with ancestors (people in the family who have died). Families hope that the ancestors can help make sure they can have healthy children.

The pot's patterns are mostly on the upper half of the vessel. Invite students to think about why the designs are only on the top. This tells us that it was made to be viewed from above. The pot was placed on the ground in order to connect the living family members and the ancestors, who exist below ground. The arcs that decorate the top half of the vessel are associated with the moon and the steady repetition of its phases. Together with the arcs, the leaflike forms and triangles below the arcs create a visual rhythm that represents the cycle of life.



Lobi artist, Burkina Faso, *Jar with lid*, mid-20th century, clay, 18 x 14 in.
Anonymous gift of funds 99.115.2a,b

This large, round-bodied jar has a lid that rests on two simple notches. The rows of protruding nubs on the lid and the body give the surface a vibrant appearance.

This jar is made with a low-fired clay. When filled with water, the nubs, which increase the amount of surface area on the exterior, speed the evaporation process. This special surface cools the water inside the vessel to a few degrees below air temperature. Imagine how welcome and refreshing this cool water would be on a hot day! The lid protected the water from harmful contaminants. The Lobi people value jars of this type because they help maintain the health of families and communities.

Although the bumps on the pot's surface serve a very practical function, they also beautify the object. The bumps circle the curves of the pot and make the surface lively. They also add interesting texture to the pot. Imagine how the appearance of the surface of the pot would change constantly depending on the light and shadows created by the position and intensity of the sun.



Borana or Guji artist, Ethiopia or Kenya, *Milk vessel*, third quarter of the 20th century, gourd, plant fiber, silver, 14½ x 7⅞ in. The Paul C. Johnson, Jr. Fund 99.162.2

Bands of twisted silver wire woven into fibers enliven the surface of this milk container. Underneath its woven cover, the container itself is created from a round-bodied gourd with a long neck. Gourds are preferred over clay jars because they are lighter. The stopper-like lid attached to the neck shows how important it was to protect the milk inside. Notice the vessel's round bottom. What might you deduce about its shape? It is not made to stand upright. The container would have had a leather strap so that it could be easily carried, perhaps even by a rider on a camel. When not on the move the vessel could be hung on a hook inside the home.

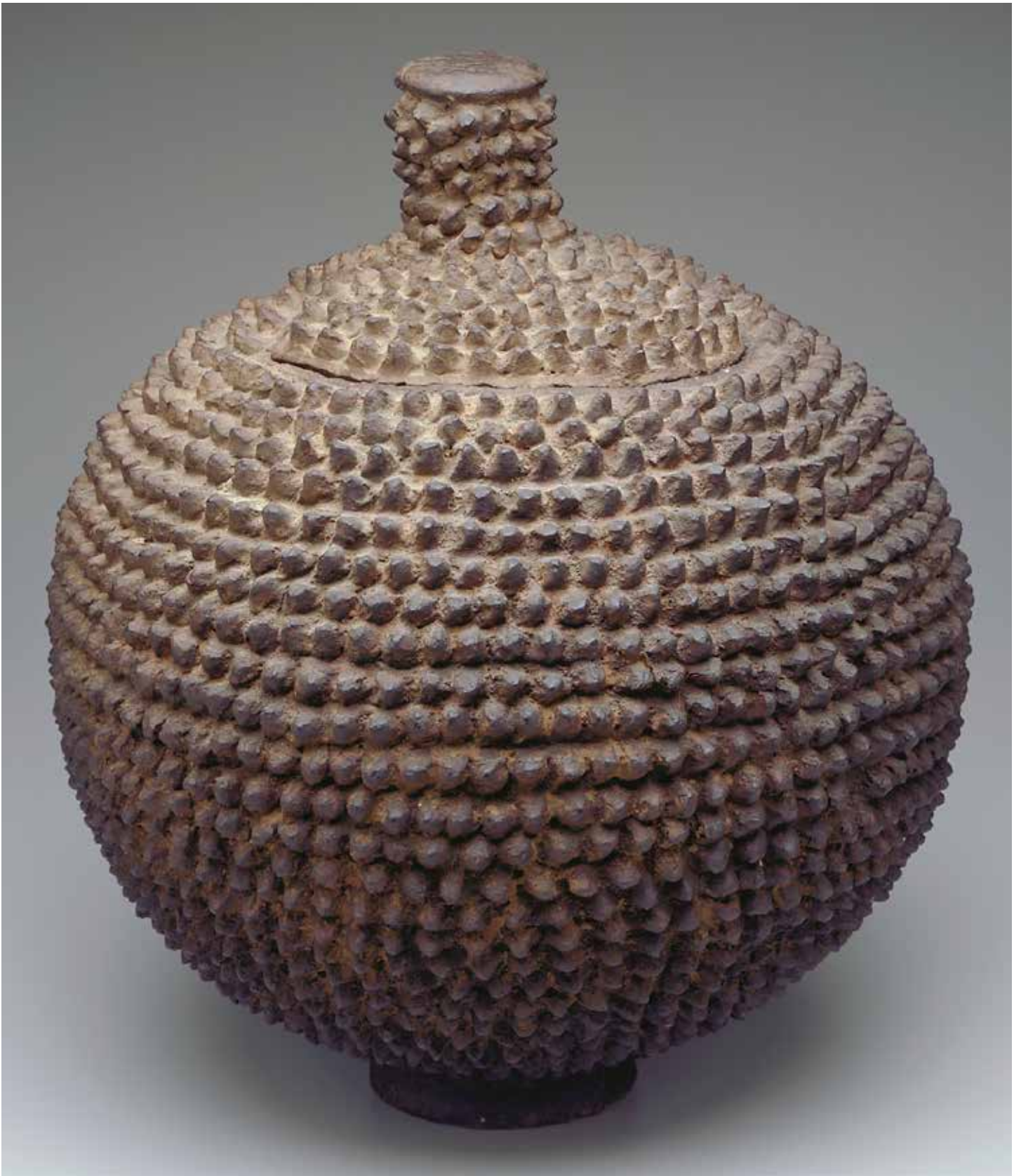
Within the pastoralist (livestock-raising) Borana (BOR-ah-nah) culture, in Ethiopia and to a smaller extent in northern Kenya, the art of creating milk containers like this one is passed on from mothers to daughters. The design on the woven covers relates to the women's woven (plaited) hairstyles. Milk containers are important objects because milk nurtures life. In the larger sense, milk and these containers are associated with the health of a community.



Somali artist, Somalia, *Basket*, early 20th century, fibers, leather, beads, cowrie shells, cloth, 13 x 10 x 10 in. The Mary Ruth Weisel Endowment for Africa, Oceania, and the Americas 2010.73



Zulu artist, South Africa, *Beer pot*, mid-20th century, clay, 14 x 16 in. Anonymous gift of funds 99.115.1



Lobi artist, Burkina Faso, *Jar with lid*, mid-20th century, clay, 18 x 14 in. Anonymous gift of funds 99.115.2a,b



Borana or Guji artist, Ethiopia or Kenya, *Milk vessel*, third quarter of the 20th century, gourd, plant fiber, silver, 14½ x 7⅞ in. The Paul C. Johnson, Jr. Fund 99.162.2

How Was It Used?

Look closely at each container to figure out how it was used. Draw a line to match the container to its use.



By a family to celebrate their ancestors



By a community to store and cool water



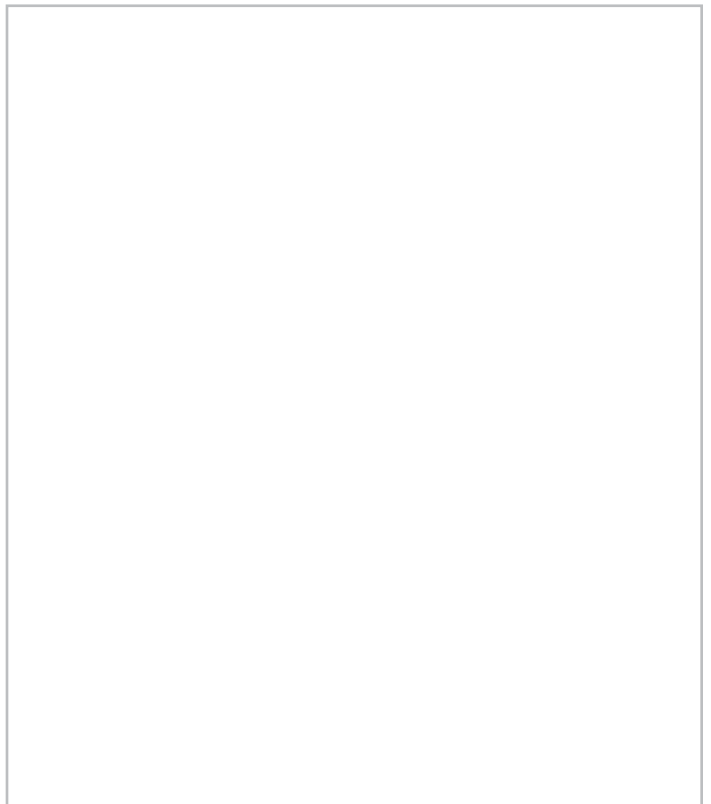
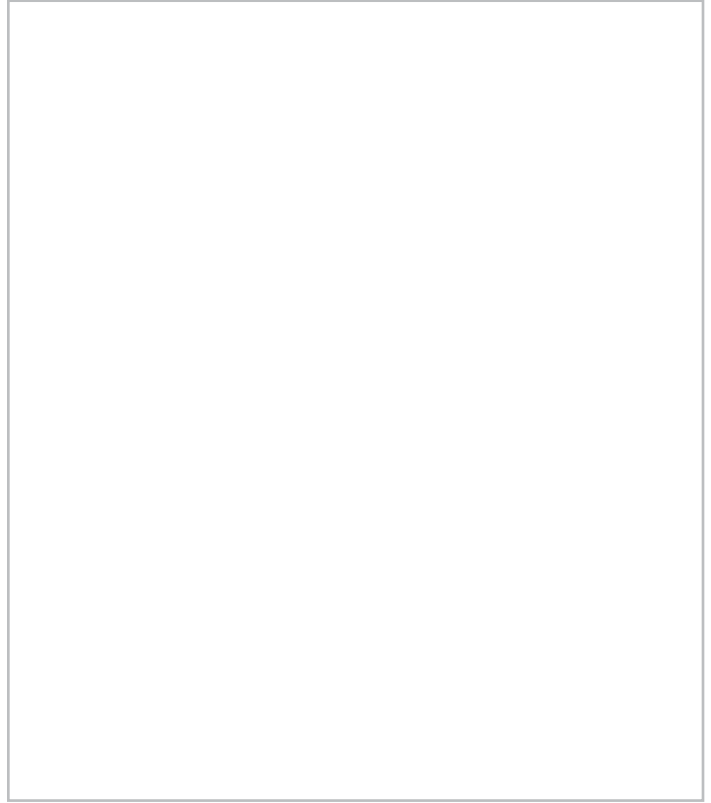
By one person to store, preserve, and carry milk



**By a person to keep jewelry, preserved meats,
and other precious items**

Draw the Patterns

Draw four different patterns that the artists used on the containers.



Design Challenge!

Answer the following questions to help you design a container.

1. What food or drink will your container hold?

2. Will your container need to keep it hot or cold?

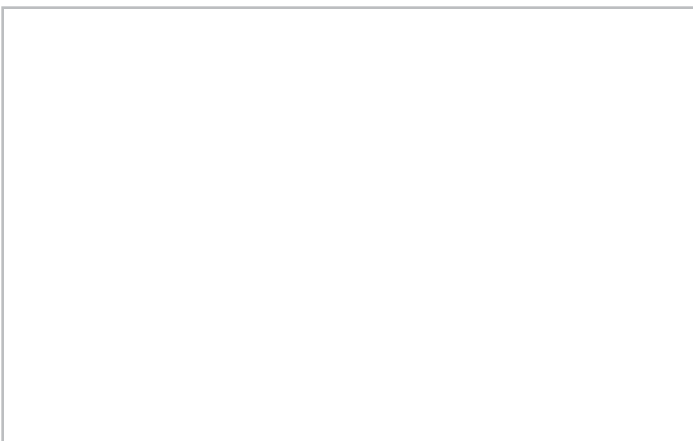
3. Who will use your container?

4. What materials will you use to make your container?

5. How will you carry your container?

6. What kinds of patterns will you use to make your container beautiful?

Draw your pattern ideas in the boxes.



Draw It!

Draw a container for your favorite food or drink. Decorate your container with patterns.

My container for _____.



Map It!



Arts of Africa Third Grade Lesson

Investigating the Arts of Ancient Egypt

These activities are designed to introduce the arts of Egypt into your classroom while also reinforcing skills students are learning in other areas. The search for visual clues provides an easy way to talk about Egyptian and other African art in your classroom.

Objectives

Students will understand that observing and studying artworks help them to answer basic questions about times and events in history.

Students will understand that close observation, discussion, asking questions, and identifying sources of information are all ways to learn about artworks and the world around them.

Students will be able to identify and use different sources to find answers to their own questions about four ancient Egyptian artworks.

Standards

Art 0.1.1.5.1 Identify the elements of visual art including color, line, shape, texture, and space.

Art 0.4.1.5.1 Compare and contrast the characteristics of a variety of works of visual art.

Art 0.1.3.5.1 Identify the characteristics of visual artworks from a variety of cultures including the contributions of Minnesota Native Americans.

SS 3.3.1.1.1 Use maps and concepts of location (relative-location words and cardinal and immediate directions) to describe places in one's community, the state of Minnesota, the United States, or the world.

SS 3.4.1.2.1 Examine historical records, maps, and artifacts to answer basic questions about times and events in history, both ancient and more recent.

SS 3.4.3.8.1 Identify methods of communication used by peoples living in ancient times in three different regions of the world. (Classical Traditions, Belief Systems, and Giant Empires: 2000 BCE–600 CE)

S 3.1.1.2.3 Maintain a record of observations, procedures, and explanations, being careful to distinguish between actual observations and ideas about what was observed.

Engage

What is it?

You will need:

- Image of *Cartonnage of Lady Tashat* (Ta-shat) on page 69

Let students know they will be studying an ancient Egyptian artwork to see what they can figure out about how it was used, and what they can learn about Egyptian art through close looking and asking questions.

Project the picture of the cartonnage (mummy case) and coffin provided (or print it to make a study sheet). Do not tell students what it is right away. Begin by asking them to describe what they see. Make a list of all the words they come up with. It is likely that someone will identify it as a mummy. Discuss: What visual clues in the Egyptian artwork led you to identify this as a mummy? Make a list of all the clues they used to figure it out. If students do not identify the artwork as a mummy right away, challenge them to guess how the Egyptian artwork was used based on what they can see.

Ask students how they might go about learning more about this mummy, which is at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. Share information about the mummy provided on page 64.

Explore

“What is it?” quiz game

You will need:

- Four groups of students
- Reading selections on the Egyptian artworks (pages 60–63)
- Quiz sheet (page 71)

Divide students into four groups. Give each group one of the write-ups on an Egyptian artwork. Have them read about their object. Then ask them to use the worksheet (page 71) to create quiz questions for their classmates to solve. Each quiz question should include a correct answer and two decoy answers. Encourage students to write questions that can be answered by looking closely at the artwork.

For example, for the mummy, the group might ask the question: What is this object? The three answers might be: a mummy to protect a body, a doll with a bed, and a statue for a temple.

Project the images with no identifying captions (pages 65–68). Have students share their questions with the other groups. For each response students provide, ask, “What do you see that makes you say that?” to encourage them to share their thought process. When they have figured out the answer to the question, review the clues in the artwork that helped them figure it out.

Explain

How do we know?

Demonstrate how studying art helps us understand more about Egyptian life and culture.

1. Explain. Begin the activity by explaining that much of what scientists, historians, and art historians (people who study art) know about ancient Egypt comes from the many artworks, large and small, created by Egyptian engineers and artists.

2. Read. Read the write-ups out loud to the students or have them read them to each other. As you are reading and looking at the artworks, make a list of the various ways we know about life in ancient Egypt. Consider materials, writing, symbols, and other pictures.

3. Review. Look at the list and look at the picture on page 70 that shows all the artworks including the mummy. What are some artistic characteristics that are visible in many of the works of art? (Look for balance, symmetry, animal images, symbols, etc.) These characteristics help us know something is from ancient Egypt when we see it.

Because the Egyptians developed a written language called hieroglyphics, it is possible to more fully understand the meaning of the Egyptian artworks than it is for many ancient cultures that did not have writing. What kinds of things can we learn from written records? (Possible answers may include stories, family relationships or histories, journeys, daily life, public/population records, etc.)

Extend

Map it!

Before or after the lesson, look at a map of the world. First review where the continent of Africa is relative to the United States. Then locate Minnesota to see where it is in relation to Africa, and, specifically, Egypt.

Ask students to describe Egypt's location relative to Somalia, Nigeria, Morocco, and South Africa, using cardinal directions.

Timeline

Ancient Egypt had a very long history. Place images of these artworks on a timeline to show them from oldest to newest. Be sure to show how long ago ancient Egypt was! How many years apart were the artworks made? If possible, make copies of images of other artworks from ancient Egypt, such as the pyramids, Great Sphinx, or Temple of Hatshepsut (available on many websites and in books on ancient Egypt) to add to your timeline so students can connect what they already know about ancient Egypt to the artworks at Mia.

Sketch

Long ago, when people began studying ancient Egypt, they took notes and made sketches of the artworks they saw. Ask each student to sketch one or two of the ancient Egyptian artworks (page 72). Discuss what they learned about the artworks by observing them closely and sketching. What did they notice that they didn't see before?

At the museum

Extend your learning about how art teaches us about cultures. Use the [Arts of Egypt scavenger hunt](#) designed for third graders available on Mia's website to encourage students to look closely at and think about Egyptian artworks in the galleries. Different kinds of clues will enhance their learning about Egyptian culture.

Artworks



Egypt, *False door*, c. 2400 BCE, limestone, 61 x 45 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. The Christina N. and Swan J. Turnblad Memorial Fund 52.22

False doors, which are doors that do not open, were very popular in ancient Egyptian tombs. Ancient Egyptians believed that when a person died, he or she went to an afterlife. Even after dying, a person still had all the joys of living on earth. Really important and wealthy people had the largest, most decorated tombs, and the false doors were one way to fool tomb robbers.

People would visit the door to say prayers and leave food and drink for the person who had died. Ancient Egyptians believed the soul of the departed would pass through the plain niche in the middle of the door and would get to enjoy the food and drink that was left there.

The door didn't have to be real, since it was the soul, not the body, that traveled through the door.

This tomb was made for a priest named Iryenakhet. His name is carved in hieroglyphics on the door seven times. The images on the door are nearly symmetrical, which means they are almost the same on both sides. But if you look really closely, the pictures of Iryenakhet at the bottom show him from different sides. For example, in one drawing his stick is in front of his skirt; in another, it is behind. When the tomb was first built, the artist painted it in bright colors, but today we can only see small bits of paint.



Egypt, *Clappers*, c. 1550–1292 BCE, hippopotamus ivory, 9⁹/₁₆ x 3 x 7¹/₁₆ in. (each, approx.). The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund 2012.64a,b

These ivory objects look a lot like human arms and hands. Imagine banging them together just like we clap our hands. They are percussive instruments called clappers, used a lot like cymbals. Ancient Egyptian dancers would play the clappers along with other musical instruments during a show. They could hold one in each hand and clap them like they were their real hands. Or they could hold them in one hand and play them that way. Historians learned all of this by studying ancient hieroglyphs and wall paintings.

A carver made the clappers from a hippopotamus tusk. Hippos were very important to the ancient Egyptians. They were so special that the Egyptians worshipped four different hippopotamus goddesses. All four goddesses were in charge of protecting Egyptian homes. The clappers helped to scare mean spirits away from happy celebrations.



Egypt, *Broad collar*, 2040–1783 BCE, Egyptian faience, 6½ x 25 in.
Gift of Edward S. Harkness 27.42.4

Ancient Egyptians often placed personal items inside tombs. They believed that the deceased (dead people), could be reborn and go on to enjoy an afterlife. The deceased would want their personal items with them in the afterlife to help them feel the comforts of home. For example, a woman's tomb might have a bronze mirror, makeup pots, perfume, and jewelry inside.

This broad, meaning wide, collar is decorated with a falcon head on each end. It is made of Egyptian faience (fey-AHNS), which is a glazed ceramic. Usually when we think of a ceramic we think of clay or a piece of pottery. But this is made of silica, an ingredient in glass.

The ancient Egyptians created a lot of faience jewelry for funerals. The greenish blue color reminded them of a new plant beginning to grow. It was a symbol of growth and progress.

Falcons were very popular and symbolic decorations. A falcon reminded the Egyptians of the soul. Horus is the sky god who has a man's body and a falcon's head. He protected the Earth beneath his wings.



Egypt, *Headrest*, c. 2635-2155 BCE, hardwood, traces of gesso, 8¼ x 7¾ x 3¼ in. The Dr. Mary Weisel Purchase Fund 2000.70.2

What do you sleep on at night? Is it something soft like a cotton ball or something hard like a rock? Do you ever wonder what the ancient Egyptians slept on? This is an ancient headrest, sometimes called a neck rest. It was the ancient Egyptian version of a pillow.

Like the one you see here, Egyptian headrests usually had a flat bottom that you could lay on the bed. The curved top was where you would rest your head and neck while you were sleeping. This helped keep your hairstyle neat and allowed a breeze to blow around your head, keeping you cool. Headrests have been used all over Africa, and the oldest ones were found in graves with other pieces of furniture in ancient Egypt and Nubia, to the south.



Egypt, *Cartonnage of Lady Tashat*, 945-712 BCE, painted and varnished linen, L. 67 in. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 16.414

Ancient Egyptians believed that people went to another life when they died. At death, many peoples' bodies were preserved and made into mummies to make sure their souls went safely to the next life. Making a mummy was a complex process. The body was covered in a case made of plaster and linen. This case was molded to the body and painted with images of Egyptian gods and symbols to protect the body and soul.

The mummy was then placed in a wooden coffin. The hieroglyphs on this wooden coffin state that this mummy, Tashat, was the daughter of the treasurer of the Temple of Amon at Thebes. She died when she was a teenager.

The coffin and cartonnage (the painted case around the mummy itself) show Tashat's face. These images do not show us what she actually looked like. Instead, they show an ancient Egyptian ideal of beauty.













Egyptian Art Quiz Game

After reading about your artwork, write two questions for your classmates that they could answer by looking closely at the art. One question might be: What is this artwork used for?

1. _____?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

What clues helped you figure this out?

2. _____?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

What clues helped you figure this out?

Your Egyptian Art Sketchbook

Map It!



Arts of Africa Fourth Grade Lesson

Problem Solving: Design Thinking

These activities are designed to introduce African artworks into your classroom while also reinforcing learning about the engineering-design process. Artworks are often the end result of a process called design thinking. Students will study examples of artworks designed by artists in Africa to learn how artists, like scientists, use the engineering-design process: ask, imagine, plan, create, and improve. Students will study two examples of African art to explore this process. They will apply what they learn to create a unique solution to a design challenge.

Objectives

Students will understand the basic steps of the design process.

Students will understand how African artists use the design process for creative problem solving.

Students will be able to describe the design process as it relates to real situations.

Standards

Art 4.1.1.5.1 Describe the characteristics of the elements of visual art including color, line, shape, value, form, texture, and space.

Art 4.1.1.5.2 Describe how the principles of visual art such as repetition, pattern, emphasis, contrast, and balance are used in the creation, presentation, or response to visual artworks.

Art 4.1.1.5.3 Identify characteristics of Western and non-Western styles, movements, and genres in art.

Art 4.1.3.5.1 Describe the personal, social, cultural, or historical contexts that influence the creation of visual artworks including the contributions of Minnesota American Indian tribes and communities.

Art 4.1.3.5.2 Describe how visual art communicates meaning.

Art 4.2.1.5.1 Create original two- and three-dimensional artworks to express specific artistic ideas.

Art 4.2.1.5.2 Revise artworks based on the feedback of others and self-reflection.

S 4.1.2.2.2 Engineering design is the process of identifying problems, developing multiple solutions, selecting the best possible solution, and building the product. Identify and investigate a design solution; describe how it solves a problem.

S 4.1.2.2.3 Engineering design is the process of identifying problems, developing multiple solutions, selecting the best possible solution, and building the product. Benchmark: Test and evaluate solutions, considering advantages and disadvantages for the engineering solution, and communicate the results effectively.

Engage

Personal Style and Design

1. Pick a piece of clothing. Have students pick one piece of clothing they have on. It could be a shirt, pants, skirt, pair of socks—anything.

2. Describe it. Using the attached worksheet on page 84, ask the students to write down words to describe the piece of clothing. What words describe how it looks? What words describe how it feels?

3. Tell its story. What makes this piece of clothing special? How and where did you get it?

4. Draw it! Have students draw their pieces of clothing, including as many of the details they wrote down as they can.

5. Share. Encourage students to share their drawings with the class. Discuss what is special (or not) about the way the clothing items are designed or made.

Explore

Think about your piece of clothing before it was yours. Invite students to think about the fact that a person or people designed the clothing they are wearing. What kinds of things did that person or people have to think about? Ask students to write their ideas on the back of the worksheet. (E.g., Who is going to wear this? What kinds of designs appeal to people this age? What would make this item special?) Create a list of the students' ideas and use them to introduce the steps of the design process, the key guidelines artists and designers follow when creating products or making artworks.

Introduce the design process

Ask: Consider what the end user needs.

Imagine: Use your imagination to think of many ways to meet that need.

Plan: Do research, make sketches, try techniques.

Create: Make it and test it out on people.

Improve: Make changes to make it even better.

Using the image of the Baga (BAH-gah) drum (page 79) and the design process worksheet on page 83, have students imagine the design process as the artist of the drum might have experienced it.

On the worksheet, have students match the possible thoughts and actions of the African artist to the appropriate stage of the design process. Begin by explaining that the artist was probably asked by an elder in the community to make the drum.

How will the drum be used?

Different leather will make the sound better.

The small knife doesn't cut as deeply as the large one.

I will need to get fiber before I can make this drum.

I need to make the drum big enough for a tall drummer.

I am excited to hear this drum.

Explain

What do you think?

Have students read the selection about the Baga drum. Discuss: what additional information in this reading might have informed the design process? How? Together make a list of factors the artist had to consider in the design process. Divide these into three categories using the activity sheet provided: environment, function, decoration. As a class discuss how form follows function in this artwork (the form of the drum, i.e., what it actually looks like / how it's decorated, is considered only after the artist thinks about its function).

Time permitting, invite students to repeat the activity in small groups, this time with the Egungun (ee-gun-GUN) costume made over time by artists in a Yoruba community in Nigeria or Benin. Ask students to begin by observing the Egungun costume closely. Ask: What do you notice about it? What do you wonder? Then have students read about the costume and how it was used in a Yoruba celebration. They can also watch short videos of how this type of costume looks when being used in a performance.

Again, make lists of the many factors the artists had to consider in the design process.

As a class, share ideas and create a list of all the factors the artist needed to think about when designing the costume.

Extend

Map it!

Show students a world map. Point out Africa's location in relation to the United States. Reiterate that Africa is a continent. Point out the countries in which the artworks in this lesson were made.

Design a pencil

Give the students a challenge to design a new and better pencil. Using the worksheets provided (pages 88–89), have them write down at least three questions they will need to answer before they can design their pencil. Invite them to compare their questions with others. Give them a chance to write down additional questions they think would help them design a new and better pencil. Then, have the students make sketches of at least three different ideas for a new pencil design, including notes about what materials and colors they might choose.

Then ask them to pick their best design and work it into a more finished drawing, study it and think about ways to make it even better, and add these improvements to the drawing.

Time permitting, students could create prototypes of their pencils using paper, tape, pipe cleaners, clay, or other materials in your classroom.

It's a wrap

After students have gone through the design process, have another discussion about each of the African artworks you discussed. Ask: What do you think is particularly remarkable or successful with this creative solution? Reinforce the idea that looking at art and talking about it are great ways to learn about how people lived in the past (and today).

1. Discuss. Why is it useful to think about creative problem solving when observing and analyzing artworks?

Artworks



A Baga artist who lived on the marshland coast of Guinea carved this very large drum. This type of drum is called a *timba*. It was the property of male elders (older, wise people) in the community. A *timba*'s main purpose is to be played during initiation (coming-of-age) ceremonies for both young men and young women.

An adult male would stand on a stool or other support in order to beat the *timba*. In all likelihood, this drum was also played at weddings, funerals of male elders, and during harvesttime. In many African cultures, as in cultures throughout the world, music is an important part of performances and communication.

The horse was brought to the Baga by the French during colonial rule in the late 1800s. Even though horses were not very useful in the marshland environment, they were symbols of power. Artists decorated stools, as well as drums, with horses, since these were items only elders could own.

The artist created this drum from a single piece of wood. To do so, he had to imagine or visualize the drum itself and the horse figure below it before he began carving. The side of the drum is decorated with flowers and abstract patterns. The top of the drum is covered with cowhide.

Baga artist, Guinea, *Drum*, early 20th century, wood, animal hide, plant fibers, pigments, 53½ x 26½ x 24 in. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 2011.8



Yoruba artist, Nigeria or Benin, *Egungun costume*, 1930–50, cotton, velvet, silk, felt, synthetic fibers, wool, aluminum, wood, buttons, yarn, plastic, string, 67½ x 65½ x 5 in. The Simmons Family Endowment for Textiles and gift of funds from Jim Harris 2011.31

At first glance it might be hard to tell that these colorful and decorated strips of cloth are a costume. The Yoruba performer who wore it looked out through a panel of knotted cloth near the top. He danced and spun around in this very large costume during a yearly festival called Egungun (ee-gun-GUN). It was used in a performance to celebrate the ancestors, important people who had died.

In this performance the masked dancer becomes the ancestor. When he spins the panels fly out in all directions as a visual way to symbolize the ancestor sending “breezes of blessings” to the audience. The dominant color of these masks is red, because it is associated with healing. Protective medicines hang in small bags from parts of the costume.

The many layers of expensive fabric, including cotton, velvet, silk, and wool, show the power of the ancestors. They also show the wealth of the family who paid to have it made. A community of makers including the family of the ancestors, priests, a tailor, and a medicine specialist created the Egungun costume. They decorated the cloth with aluminum, plastic, wood, string, and other materials. Community members repaired and took care of it so it could be used year after year.



Baga artist, Guinea, *Drum*, early 20th century, wood, animal hide, plant fibers, pigments, 53½ x 26½ x 24 in. The William Hood Dunwoody Fund 2011.8



Yoruba artist, Nigeria or Benin, *Egungun costume*, 1930–50, cotton, velvet, silk, felt, synthetic fibers, wool, aluminum, wood, buttons, yarn, plastic, string, 67½ x 65½ x 5 in. The Simmons Family Endowment for Textiles and gift of funds from Jim Harris 2011.31

Clothing Design Worksheet

Describe It!

How does it look? How does it feel?

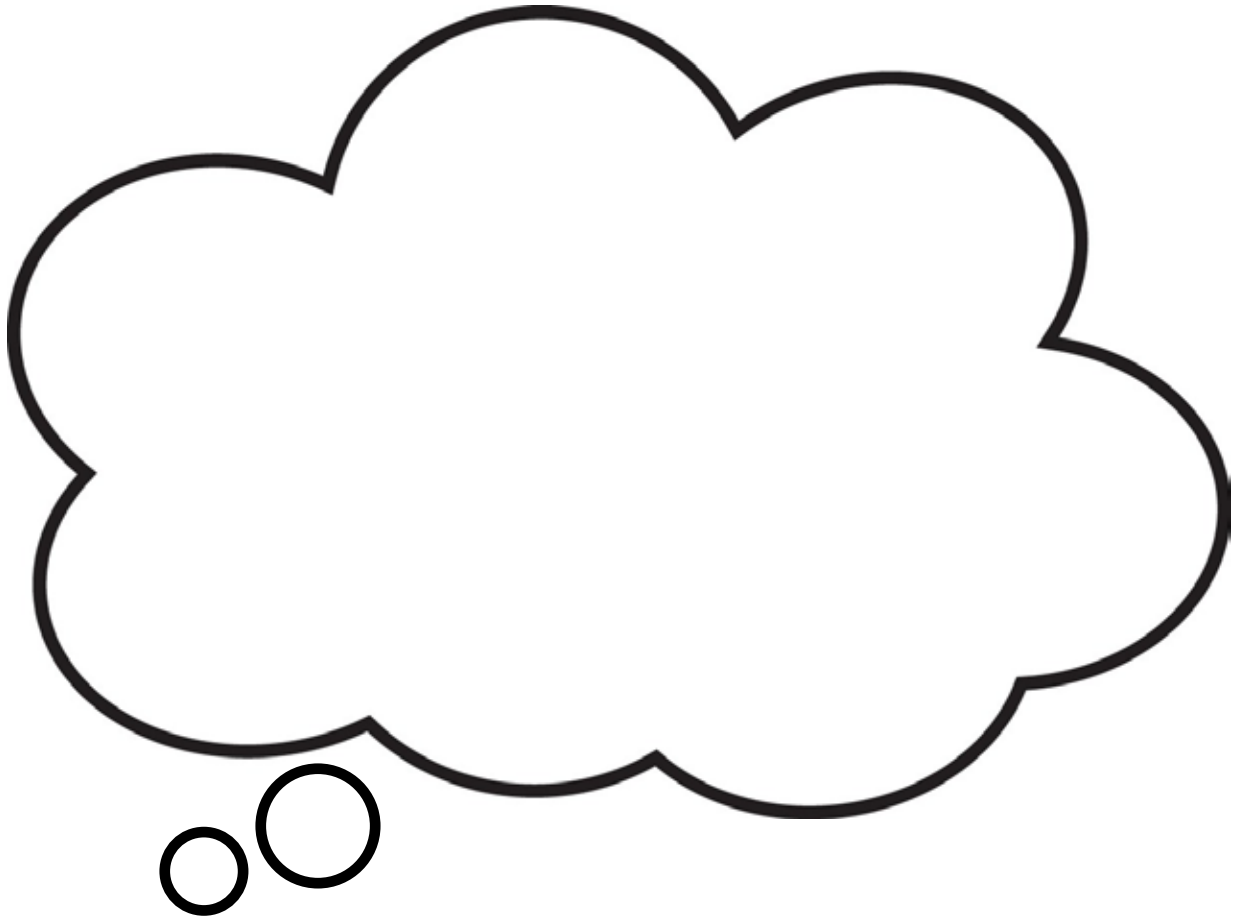
Tell Its Story!

What makes this piece of clothing special? How and where did you get it?

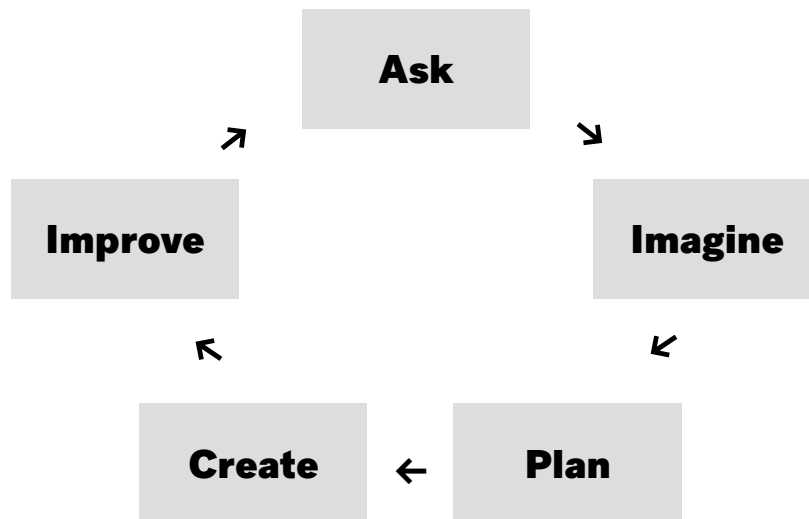
Draw It!

Include as many details as you can from what you wrote.

There was a person/people who designed your item of clothing before it ever reached you! What kinds of things did that person/people have to think about?



The Design Process



Design Process and the Baga Drum

The artist who made the Baga drum was probably asked to make the drum by an elder in the community. Draw a line from the African artist's possible thoughts and actions to the appropriate stage of the design process.



I am excited to hear this drum.

How will the drum be used?

Ask

Improve

Imagine

Create

Plan

The small knife doesn't cut as deeply as the large one.

I will need to get fiber before I can make this drum.

I need to make a drum big enough for a tall drummer.

Different leather will make it sound better.

Organize Your Thoughts

After reading or hearing more about the Baga drum, make some notes about what you found out.

Baga drum



Environment

Function

Decoration

How might some of these factors contribute to design decisions?

Design a Pencil

Name: _____

Challenge yourself to design a new and better pencil!

What do you need to ask yourself before drawing your pencil designs?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What else do you need to think about now that you've talked with your peers?

4. _____

5. _____

What materials might you use to create the pencil?

6. _____

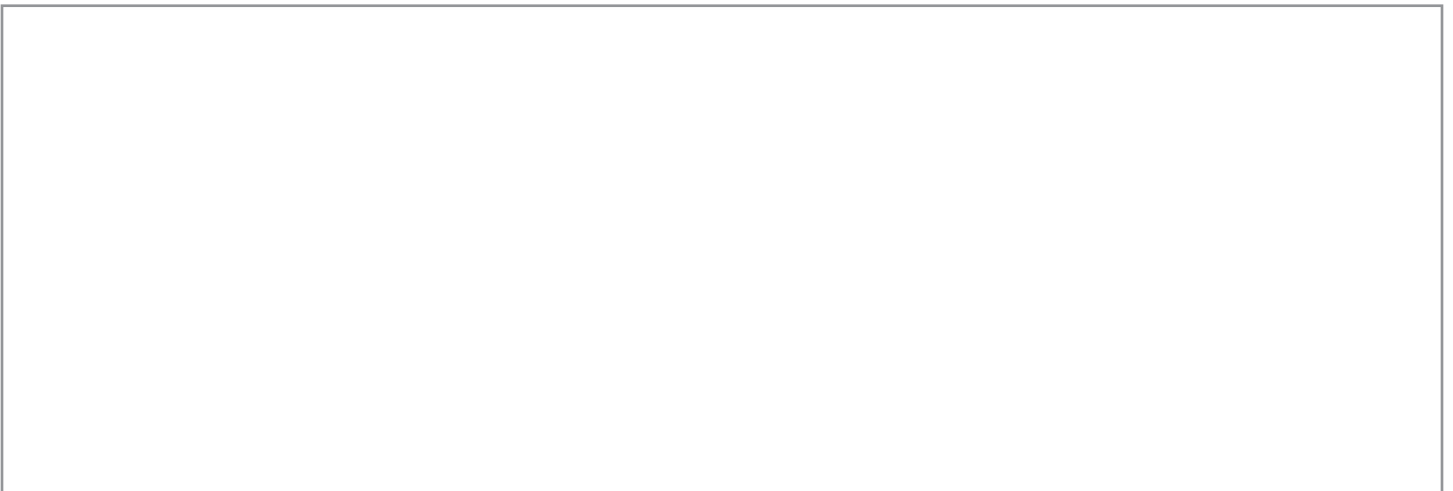
7. _____

8. _____

Sketch three ideas for a pencil:

Pick your favorite. Before you draw it, consider what could be improved.

Draw the new version in the box.



Map It!



Arts of Africa Fifth Grade Lesson

Developing Historical Thinking Skills with Art

These activities are designed to introduce African art into your classroom while also reinforcing historical thinking skills. This rare wooden sculpture of a horse and rider made over five hundred years ago in West Africa, during an age of great kingdoms, raises a lot of questions that require a wide range of inquiry and thinking skills to answer.

This lesson explores a few questions about the sculpture and some of the ways people have gone about trying to answer them. Even if we don't always come up with absolute or so-called "right answers," it is important for everyone to ask questions and seek answers using many tools and techniques. Students, historians, artists, teachers, and scientists have a lot to learn from one another. Sharing our ideas with others is a good place to start when seeking answers or solutions to problems.

Objectives

Students will understand how artworks can support learning about history.

Students will understand how history influences art.

Students will learn to apply inquiry skills to problem solving by studying how people have answered key questions about this five-hundred-year-old-plus sculpture from West Africa.

Standards

Art 5.1.1.5.1 Describe the characteristics of the elements of visual art including color, line, shape, value, form, texture, and space.

Art 5.1.1.5.2 Describe how the principles of visual art such as repetition, pattern, emphasis, contrast, and balance are used in the creation, presentation, or response to visual artworks.



Art 5.1.1.5.3 Identify characteristics of Western and non-Western styles, movements, and genres in art.

Art 5.1.3.5.1 Describe the personal, social, cultural, or historical contexts that influence the creation of visual artworks including the contributions of Minnesota American Indian tribes and communities.

Art 5.1.3.5.2 Describe how visual art communicates meaning.

SS 5.4.1.2.1 Pose questions about a topic in history, examine a variety of sources related to the questions, interpret findings, and use evidence to draw conclusions that address the questions.

S 5.1.1.3 Understand that different explanations for the same observations usually lead to making more observations and trying to resolve the differences.

ELA 5.2.2.2 Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

Engage

Project image on page 6 or provide students with a copy. Ask them to imagine this artwork was recently acquired by a museum, but it hasn't been given a name. Ask: What would you name it? Have students write down their answers, and then share as a class. As they share their ideas, have students explain what they noticed about the artwork to support their name choice. (E.g., "I titled it *Warrior* because I saw he was holding a bow and had a knife strapped to his arm.")

Explore

After sharing possible names and supporting evidence, reveal that the museum title of the artwork is *Equestrian figure*. Now ask students to look closely at the artwork again. What else do you notice? What do you wonder about? Why do you think it is called *Equestrian figure*?

Students probably noticed that the horse is very small—so small, in fact, that the man has to bend his legs to ride it. (If students are not noticing the size difference, ask, “What do you specifically notice about the size of the rider compared to the horse?”) Think about whether the rider and his horse could get very far with his feet dragging on the ground. No! So why might the artist who made this sculpture show it this way?

Explain

People who study the art and history of Africa have not come up with a single “correct” answer to this question of “Why is the horse so small?” but have suggested at least three explanations by using historical-inquiry skills, including drawing on historical knowledge, closely observing the sculpture itself, using scientific tools, and applying an understanding of how artists communicate ideas.

Have students, in small groups, read “Creative Connections: Equestrian Figure” beginning with page 96.

Ask them to read sections: Why is the horse so small?; Horses were smaller; Using emphasis to communicate meaning; Did the size of the piece of wood matter?, to learn more about the three possible explanations.

Use the attached graphic organizer (page 90) to write down the main ideas and key details for each explanation.

Discuss the three explanations as a class. (Note: Given the text complexity, students may require teacher support to aid comprehension.)

If time permits, continue further with: Historical Inquiry; Who made this?; What is it?; Background; Conclusion, as a class, in groups, or individually. Discuss and share ideas about what the artwork was originally used for.

Extend

Apply the insights gained about inquiry skills and historical thinking to another artwork, the Bamana *Kono altar (boli/zoomorphic altar)* sculpture from Mali.

1. Engage. Post a picture of the *boli* without the text (page 95). Have students, individually or in groups, consider the following questions:

- What do you think this might be? What do you see that makes you say so?
- What do you think it might have been used for? What evidence makes you think so?
- What do you think it is made from? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What do you wonder about this artwork?

2. Explore. Building on the inquiry skills from earlier in the lesson, have students complete the worksheet, exploring how they would go about answering these questions from historical, art historical, and scientific perspectives. Share ideas as a class.

You could also have students post their methods and questions on the wall using different color post-it-notes to indicate which ideas represent the position of art historian, scientist, or historian.

3. Explain. Have students explore the ArtStories pages about the *boli* (zoomorphic altar), found [here](#).

Historical Thinking: Why Is the Horse So Small?

The “Creative Connections” article gives three possible explanations for the size of the horse in the sculpture. Fill in the graphic organizer with information about each explanation.

Three Possible Explanations	Main Ideas	Key Details
Horses were smaller		
Using emphasis to communicate meaning		
Did the size of the piece of wood matter?		

Extend Your Thinking: What Is It?

Consider each perspective listed, and fill in the chart with the questions you would ask or methods you would use to find out more information about the artwork.

As an **art historian** (a person who studies art), I would use these methods/ask these questions to learn more about the artwork:

- *Compare it to other artworks I know about, looking for similarities or differences*
-
-
-

As a **scientist**, I would use these methods/ask these questions to learn more about the artwork:

-
-
-

As a **historian**, I would use these methods/ask these questions to learn more about the artwork:

-
-
-





Djenne (possibly Soninke) artist, Mali, *Equestrian figure*, c. 1450, wood, 28¼ x 6¾ x 10¼ in. (overall). Gift of Aimée Mott Butler Charitable Trust, Anne S. Dayton, Mr. and Mrs. Donald C. Dayton, Mr. and Mrs. William N. Driscoll, Clarence G. Frame, and Mr. and Mrs. Clinton Morrison 83.168



Bamana artist, Mali, *Kono altar*, second quarter of the 20th century, wood, cloth, soil, beeswax, animal blood, unidentified materials, 16¼ x 21½ x 7⅞ in. The John R. Van Derlip Fund 2012.65



Creative Connections: Equestrian Figure



Djenne (possibly Soninke) artist, Mali, *Equestrian figure*, c. 1450, wood, 28¼ x 6¾ x 10¼ in. (overall). Gift of Aimée Mott Butler Charitable Trust, Anne S. Dayton, Mr. and Mrs. Donald C. Dayton, Mr. and Mrs. William N. Driscoll, Clarence G. Frame, and Mr. and Mrs. Clinton Morrison 83.168

Introduction

This rare wooden sculpture of a horse and rider made over five hundred years ago in West Africa, during an age of great kingdoms, raises a lot of questions that require a wide range of inquiry and thinking skills to figure out.

This feature explores a few questions about the sculpture and some of the ways people have gone about trying to answer them. Even if we don't always come up with absolute or so-called right answers, it is important for everyone to ask questions and seek answers using many tools and techniques. Students, historians, artists, teachers, and scientists have a lot to learn from one another. Sharing our ideas with others is a good place to start when seeking answers or solutions to problems.

What do you notice?

This wooden sculpture of a horse and rider from Mali, in Africa, raises a lot of questions! What do you notice first? What else do you see? What do you wonder about? You probably noticed that the horse is very small—so small, in fact, that the man has to bend his legs to ride it. Think about whether the rider and his horse could get very far with his feet dragging on the ground. No! So why might the artist who made this sculpture show it this way?

Why is the horse so small?

People who study the art and history of Africa have not come up with a single “correct” answer to this question but have suggested at least three explanations by using historical-inquiry skills, including drawing on historical knowledge, closely observing the sculpture itself, using scientific tools, and applying an understanding of how artists communicate ideas.

Horses were smaller

Early Arabic documents written by travelers to the great kingdoms of West Africa emphasize the importance of the court’s cavalry, describing riders dressed just like this one. Some writers also describe the horses as being small.

Horses were likely introduced to West Africa by northern travelers from Carthage and Libya. Ancient rock art in Africa shows that some horses existed south of the Sahara Desert before the arrival of horses from the North; nonetheless, their presence in West Africa during the period under discussion can be attributed to Islamicized Berbers traversing the Sahara Desert to establish trade routes and convert native populations to Islam around 800 CE. Their success in establishing a powerful presence in West Africa owed much to their mastery of small, native horses, known as Barb or Berber horses.



Barb (Berber) horse. By Alexander Kastler, via Wikimedia Commons

The Berber horse, a native of North Africa, is seldom taller than 14 hands (most horses range from 15 to 16 hands, representing the physical length of a typical human hand). The breed, in spite of its small size, is strong. Centuries ago its ability to perform even in harsh environments must have been highly valued. It might

have been especially well suited for long-distance travel and, later, battle; it is nimble, responsive to riders’ touch of the reins, and willing to obey commands without hesitation.

The small scale of the horse in this sculpture might be a realistic representation of these small, sturdy horses and their importance to the expansion of trade, wealth, and territory during the age of Africa’s great West African empires.

Using emphasis to communicate meaning

Another explanation for the small scale of the horse is artistic emphasis: the artist might have wanted to show the rider as the sculpture’s most important aspect. Emphasis is a principle of art used by artists to draw attention to a particular aspect of an artwork.

Horses in this region required a great deal of care and maintenance; as a result, only people associated with the king, his court, and his cavalry owned them. In many parts of Africa a mounted horseman symbolizes great power, a potent fusion of human intelligence with animal strength. Though the identity of this particular rider is unknown, his body language, fancy dress, and stock of weapons indicate his wealth and command as a leader, much like the men described by Arab visitors to the Mali kingdom. The artist has focused the most naturalistic detail on the rider’s emblems of rank—his weapons, costume, and jewelry.

The artist skillfully rendered the rider’s weapons as well; he sports a dagger on his left arm and holds a bow in his left hand, and a cylindrical quiver, supported by straps fastened between his shoulder blades, hangs on his back. These symbols reinforce his status within the court system. The horse could be another emblem of his prestige. The artist might have emphasized the man by enlarging him relative to the horse as a way to communicate the man’s status.

Emphasis is a principle of art that assigns one element of an artwork dominance over another. An artist can emphasize one feature of the artwork, often to focus the viewer’s eye and add visual impact. As in this sculpture, emphasis is frequently achieved by means of contrast. Here, in addition to the contrast in size, the artist made the horse relatively plain and its limbs and head tube-like, compared to the rich, expressive details of the man.

Did the size of the piece of wood matter?

Another explanation for the small size of the horse is its materials: perhaps the artist was limited by the size or dimensions of the wood from which he carved the figure.

To answer this question, one must verify that the object is, in fact, carved from a single piece of wood. This knowledge is also useful for curators, the people who collect, take care of, and display artworks at a museum; it helps them confirm the authenticity of an object. Curators at the Minneapolis Institute of Art have had the sculpture imaged using X-ray and CT technology to confirm that the sculpture derives from a single piece of wood.

Knowing the sculpture comes from a single piece of wood might help us understand the artist's decision to make the horse so small—if the goal was to carve both figures from one piece. However, research into clay (ceramic) sculptures of the same subject reveals that these objects also depict the man much larger than the horse. Thus, one suspects the discrepancy in size of horse and rider was a deliberate choice by the artist, not a decision determined by the wood's size.

Yet, another artistic decision—lowering the horse's face rather than raising it—appears to have been influenced by the size of the wood. In ceramic sculptures made around the same time and place as this one, the horses' heads tilt up or jut straight out. The size of the wood used to make this sculpture may well have limited the artist's ability to carve the horse's posture similarly.



Djenne artist, Mali, *Equestrian figure*, 12th–16th century, earthenware and pigment. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, William Rockhill Nelson Trust through the George H. and Elizabeth O. Davis Fund and the generosity of Shirley and Barnett Helzberg 2000.³¹ Photo: Jamison Miller

Historical inquiry

Looking at this artwork and studying clues in an attempt to figure out why the horse is so small compared to the rider teaches us the importance of observation, asking questions, and doing research (even scientific research) to the process of historical inquiry.

Additional questions about this artwork, including who made it and why, also remain largely unanswered. This might seem surprising, given the ample research historians have done on the geography, migration patterns of different populations, and comparisons to other artworks.

Who made this?

This wooden sculpture shares many features with a group of clay (ceramic) sculptures from the Inland Niger Delta and, more specifically, the Bandiagara plateau. In these sculptures, the riders all wear similar embroidered pants (note the flower design on the rider's pants), necklaces with hexagonal beads, and bracelets and anklets. They all wear daggers on the left forearm and a

quiver (to hold arrows) strapped on their backs. They all have the same lines around the eyes and rows of small dots on their temples.

Historian Bernard de Grunne examined these facial scar patterns to determine a possible common clan; he arrived at the Kagoro, of the Soninke people, who migrated to the plateau during this time period. The rows of small bumps on the figures' temples refer to a particular nut that the Kagoro Soninke specialized in cultivating. Ancestors of the people who made this sculpture were powerful rulers, hunters, and religious leaders who supported the courts prior to moving to the inland Niger delta and Bandiagara plateau.

What is it?

The purpose or use of this sculpture remains unclear. Scholars have suggested that perhaps the object, with its unusual-shaped base, served as a stopper for a large clay pot or a container made from a big gourd. It also might have been used in ceremonies, as a staff to top a very large pole. Future research may lead to a better understanding of its use.

Background

Africa, an immense continent more than three times the size of the United States, has an amazingly rich history of fabulous kingdoms. Knowledge of Africa's great empires (loose feudal confederations of related groups of people) comes primarily from Arabic chronicles and from oral tradition. The first great empire was the kingdom of Ghana, which occupied much of the western region of the Sudan. This empire prospered from about 800 to 1050 CE, drawing its strength in part from lucrative trans-Saharan trade routes transporting gold, ivory, and other materials to Europe.

An illustrious general, Sundiata, established the next great empire, Mali, around 1235. By taking over parts of Ghana, he gained the prime position for trade on the Niger River delta. Between 1312 and 1360, the Mali empire reached its height of power under the leadership of two great leaders, Mansa Musa and Mansa Sulayman. These rulers steadily expanded Mali by conquering people over vast territories, including land that is today part of the modern nation of Mali—a distinct country of the same name. The stability of the great empire, which extended 1,500 miles across Africa, depended largely on the strength and achievements of its armies.

A third empire, the kingdom of Songhai, rose simultaneously with the Mali empire. Dating from roughly 1350 to 1600, it extended farther eastward.

These empires developed into intricate political, social, and economic societies. Intense commerce along the caravan routes gave rise to important trading cities. Records left by Arabic travelers and a few archaeological excavations around the inner Niger delta region reveal the magnificence and wealth of cities such as Timbuktu to the north, and Djenne (jen-nay) to the south. An eleventh-century chronicler wrote about the glory of Ghana, and a visitor to Mali in 1352 described the incredible use of gold in the capital city of Djenne. These large cities supported elaborate cultural centers and extravagant courts.

Djenne was home to community settlements for centuries before attaining prominence as a hub of commercial routes, which extended to North Africa. The delta, where the Niger and Bani rivers intertwine, served as rich fishing grounds and fertile lands for crops thanks to the annual flooding.

Conclusion

This sculpture of a horse and rider made in West Africa over five hundred years ago gives us many ideas to explore and patterns to discover. Following in the footsteps of historians, art historians, scientists, art educators, and others, we soon realize the value of closely observing, asking questions, sharing impressions, and seeking answers using many tools and techniques. We all stand to learn a lot by sharing our ideas with others!

Activities

1. What other questions do you have about this sculpture? How might you go about answering them? Who might you talk to to help you answer them? What might you read?
2. Pick an object in your home or classroom that you would like to know more about. Write down your questions. Who might help you answer them? What materials might you read? What related objects would you consider? What other problem-solving approaches might you take?

Map It!

