African Art

Lesson Plan

for Memphis Brooks Museum of Art

Permanent Collection Tours

Dogon, Mali

*Kanaga Mask*, late 19th – early 20th century
Wood, rawhide strips and pigment
43 3/8” x 23 3/4” x 7 1/4”
Gift of Henry L. Easterwood and William Roberson, Jr., in memory of Ben K. Baer 99.6

Songye, Democratic Republic of the Congo

*Male Kifwebe Mask*, early 20th century
Wood, pigment, plant fibers and feathers
33” x 16 1/2” x 9”
Memphis Brooks Museum of Art purchase 95.4.2
Dear Teachers,

The objects in the Brooks Museum’s African collection are vibrant and dynamic. Many were created for use in masquerades and festivals that feature music, dance, song, costume, poetry, and body decoration. A guided tour of the collection emphasizes the range of artful expression and spiritual beliefs of various African countries and cultures. The tour includes a discussion of the role of masks in African society and African mythology and explores the terms symmetry, pattern, and abstraction. In the studio, students respond to creative prompt and design a paper “African” mask. Students in grades 1-2 use markers to create symmetry and patterns. Students in grades 3-6 use colored paper and other materials to create a mask that shows movement. If time allows, students learn basic African dance steps and perform their masks to African music. The African Adventure Lesson Plan and tour experience has the potential to make curriculum connections in Social Studies, Math, Language Arts, and Science. Please use your discretion with determining the appropriate content for your class. We look forward to seeing you at the Brooks!

Sincerely,

Brooks Education
Lesson Plan

Grade Level:

1st - 6th

Number of Students:

60 maximum

TN State Standards in Art:

Standard 1.0 Media, Techniques, and Processes:
Students will understand and apply media, techniques, and processes.

Standard 2.0 Structures and Functions:
Students will use knowledge of structures and functions

Standard 3.0 Evaluation:
Students will choose and evaluate a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

Standard 4.0 Historical and Cultural Relationships:
Students will understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Standard 6.0 Interdisciplinary Connections:
Students will make connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

Common Core Standards Met during the Tour Experience:

Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

Grades 1 - 3: 1, 3, 6

Grades 4 - 6: 1

Language

Grades 1-6: 6

*See Curriculum Connections for specific core curriculum standards

Main Goal of the Tour

Students will discuss the role of masks and ceremonies in various African cultures and explore the terms symmetry, pattern, and abstraction.
Lesson Objectives Established with Bloom’s Taxonomy

The learner will...

Remember
Identify Africa and the Sahara Desert on a map and discuss the types of objects that will be seen on the tour. Discuss personal experiences with masks and dance.

Understand
Discuss new vocabulary words and how masks are used in various African cultures.

Ex.) “Do you know what pattern is?” Show students an example. Discuss masquerades, festivals, dance, or folklore.

Apply
Identify examples of vocabulary words among the African objects and discuss the intended use of the object.

Ex.) “Where else do you see pattern in the African galleries?” “Describe it. “How do you think this object was worn or danced? What do you see that makes you say that?”

Analyze
Compare two or more African objects or traditions. Discuss the similarities and differences between the two. Consider art vocabulary, materials used, origin, and use.

Ex.) How is a Dogon mask different from a Kuba mask?

Evaluate
Make judgments about selected objects based on criteria established. Consider art vocabulary, materials, origin, and function.

Ex.) Which mask uses symmetry the best? What do you see that makes you say that?

Create
Respond to a creative prompt to create an “African” mask.

Ex.) If you could have one special power what would it be? Create a mask that will transform you! Before you begin, think about what colors, materials, or visual characteristics could symbolize that power.

In addition to the tour and studio activity, the Curriculum Connections provide more ideas for engaging your students in higher order thinking and helping them form connections between African art and core academic subjects.
Classroom Preparation Prior to Visit

☐ Introduce students to the continent of African by identifying it on a map. Discuss the difference between a country and a continent. Africa is a continent that is composed of many different countries. Each of these countries contains many different cultures. Introduce vocabulary words: country and continent.

☐ Most of the objects in the Brooks Museum’s permanent collection come from sub-Saharan Africa. Identify the Sahara Dessert and sub-Saharan Africa with your students. (handout provided) Introduce vocabulary words: culture and ethnic group.

☐ Discuss the types of objects students will see on their tour such as African masks and statues. Introduce vocabulary words: ritual and ceremony.

☐ Review Museum Guidelines with students.

Teacher Resources

Websites:

1. PBS: AFRICA. How do you connect Africa to what you are teaching in your classroom? This website is a great resource for teachers and also has some interesting sections for students.
   
   http://www.pbs.org/wnet/africa/index.html

   
   http://africa.si.edu/collections/view/objects/asimages/2936?t:state:flow=0d05c8e80ac64c30-bbdc-cfa2b0f8b718

Suggested Reading:

   
   A young boy named Joshua is scared to perform in the school talent show until his uncle gives him three special gifts. One gift is an African mask that allows Joshua to overcome his fears and be himself.

   
   A visually exciting art book that looks at over 30 African masks from a variety of African cultures.
Sample Videos of African Dance:

5. Dogon in Mali: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO5Tyk_GUUs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO5Tyk_GUUs)

Vocabulary

Please use your discretion when determining the appropriate content for your class.

Art terms

**Line**
- a continuous mark made on a surface. Lines can vary in length, width, direction, and curve.

**Shape**
- when two lines meet and enclose a space, such as a circle drawn on paper. Geometric shapes are simple curves and straight lines enclosed to form recognizable shapes such as circles, squares, triangles, etc. Organic shapes are irregular shapes that are unrecognizable.

**Symmetry**
- another word for balance. If a design is symmetrical, the shapes and details on each side of an imaginary center line are the same. Asymmetrical is the opposite of symmetrical.

**Pattern**
- decorative visual repetition.

**Abstraction**
- the process of taking something you see and changing it so that it looks different. There are many ways to abstract what we see. African art uses the abstraction techniques of simplification, exaggeration and elongation.

**Pigment**
- a coloring material made from various organic or chemical substances. When mixed with a binder, it creates a drawing or painting medium.

**Sculpture**
- is the art of creating forms in three-dimensions. Two processes for creating sculptural forms are:
  - Carving - The removal of unwanted or excess material to free the form.
  - Constructing - Creation of a form by gluing, sewing, nailing, soldering, etc. various materials together.
Historical Terms

African Mask a covering worn on the face. In Africa, masks are created for a variety of reasons such as religion, celebration, and death. In a traditional African setting, masks are meant to be worn and danced rather than hung on a wall.

Continent a principal land mass of the earth including North America, South America, Australia, Antarctica, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Country a nation with its own government such as United States of America, Mexico, Canada, or Italy.

Culture describes socially transmitted behavior patterns such as arts, religious beliefs, political ideologies, and social customs.

Ethnic group a group of people that share a history, language and culture.

Societies in Africa, people of all ages belong to specific societies that function not only as a form of social cohesion, but as an establishment in which its members may continue to educate and better themselves and their fellows. Societies are generally arranged in the order of age grades, ranging from children to elders. In order to join, each person must undergo a period of initiation in which they are intensely instructed.

Raffia the fibers of the raffia palm often found on African masks.

Cowrie Shell a small white shell that has been used throughout the history of Africa as money, jewelry, and religious accessories. Cowrie shells symbolize wealth and power.

Ritual a ceremony related to religious doctrine or social customs.

Folk Tale a story passed on by word of mouth rather than by writing. Folk tales are an important part of African culture.

Kente cloth Kente is a patterned woven fabric worn for special ceremonies and occasions in Ghana. Traditional Kente patterns and colors have symbolic meaning.

Totem a symbolic animal, plant, or object that serves among some societies as the emblem of their ethnic group.
Curriculum Connections/ Post-Visit Activities

Language Arts

Read and discuss African folktale stories with your students. Challenge students to write a folktale about the mask they created at the museum.

Common Core Standards
Grades 1-6: Literature: 2, Writing: 3
Grades 3-6: Writing: 4

Grades 1-3: Before you begin writing, think about the power your mask represents and what animal or insect inspired you. What is your mask called? What powers did your mask get from the animal? What happens when you put your mask on and dance it?

Bobo or Bwa, Burkina Faso, DO HAWK MASK late 19th to early 20th century, Wood and pigment Bequest of Henry L. Easterwood RS2003.1.74

Grades 4-6: Before you begin writing, think about what your mask looks like and what special power your mask represents. What is your mask called? Where did it come from? What happens when you put your mask on and dance it?

Kuba Democratic Republic of the Congo BWOOD HELMET MASK 20th century Wood, beads, cowrie shells, fur, seeds, cloth, hide, metal (copper) Bequest of Henry L. Easterwood RS2003.1.79
Math

Grades 1-6

Use the masks students created during the museum visit to connect African Art to Geometry. Challenge students to analyze masks and identify lines, angles, and two-dimensional shapes. Students can also classify shapes and lines, measure lines and distances, calculate the area and perimeter of shapes, and observe symmetry.

REDO Suggested Common Core Standards

1st grade - Geometry: 1, 2

2nd grade - Geometry: 1, Measurement: 1

3rd grade - Geometry: 1, Measurement and Date: 7, 8

4th grade; Geometry: 1, 2, 3, Measurement and Data: 1 and 3.

5th grade – Geometry: 3, 4, Measurement and Date: 1

6th grade – Geometry: 1, 2

Ex.)
Science

Examine images of African masks with your class and ask students to identify and discuss the materials used to create them. Visit the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African Art online for high-resolution photographs. (See Teacher Resources)

Grades 1-3:

Create a touch gallery where students can feel wood, shells, raffia, feathers, beads, and cloth.

Grades 4-6:

Use the class discussion as a springboard for a scientific research project. For example, investigate how raffia palms are used to make raffia fibers or research the life cycle and habitat of cowries (cowrie shells).

Suggested TN Curriculum Standards

1st grade: GLE.0107: Inq.1, 2, and 3, GLE.0107.7.2, GLE.0107.9.1

2nd grade: GLE.0207.Inq.1, 2, and 3, GLE.0207.7.2

3rd grade: SPI.0307.Inq.1, SPI.0307.7.3

4th grade: SPI.0407.Inq1, SPI.0407.T/E.1, SPI.0407.5.2, SPI.0407.7.2, SPI.0407.9.1, 2, and 3

5th grade: SPI.0507.Inq.1, SPI.0507.T/E.1 and 2

6th grade: SPI.0607.Inq.1, 2, 3, and 4

Cowrie Shells

Raffia Palms
Social Studies

Historically, African masks were created to be worn and danced on special occasions such as harvest, funerals, or holidays, rather than displayed on the walls of a museum. Connect African Art to Social Studies by introducing students to traditional forms of African dance.

Grades 1-3:

View and discuss photographs and videos of African dance. Play music, teach students general African dance moves, play music, and let them “dance” the masks they created at the museum.

General African Dance Steps: (See Teacher Resources for music)

1. Stomp feet to the beat of the drum: lift knees high or keep them low.
2. Raise hands/arms above the head: Pump up and down with the beat of the drum.
3. Lean upper body forward towards the ground while stomping and pumping arms.
4. March around the room.

Grades 4-6:

View and discuss photographs and videos of African dance. Ask students to research a specific African culture and find out what type of masks they create and what kind of dances they perform. (See Teacher Resources for suggested videos)

Suggested TN Curriculum Standards:

1st grade: GLE1.01, GLE1.02, GLE1.03, GLE 3.01

2nd grade: GLE1.01, GLE1.02, GLE1.03, GLE 3.01, GLE 6.01

3rd grade: 3.1.spi.1, 3.1.spi.4, 3.5.spi.3

4th grade: 4.1.spi.3 / 5th grade: none

6th grade: 6.1.spi.1, 6.1.spi.5, 6.3.spi.3, 6.5.spi.3, 6.5.spi.16

Royal Kuba Masquerade

Congo

1909

Source:
http://www.randafriqueanart.com/kuba_Mukenga.html
Handout: A Map of Africa