

Acknowledgements

This teaching kit was developed by the Division of Education of the Philadelphia Museum of Art to complement the exhibition *African Art, African Voices: Long Steps Never Broke a Back* (on view October 2, 2004–January 2, 2005) and to serve as an ongoing curriculum resource. The kit includes image cards of ten objects from the exhibition, with information on the reverse; slides and postcards of the ten objects; additional information and teaching strategies contained in this book; and a CD of related African music. The Delphi Project Foundation, The Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation, and The Jesse Ball duPont Fund provided generous support for the development of these materials.

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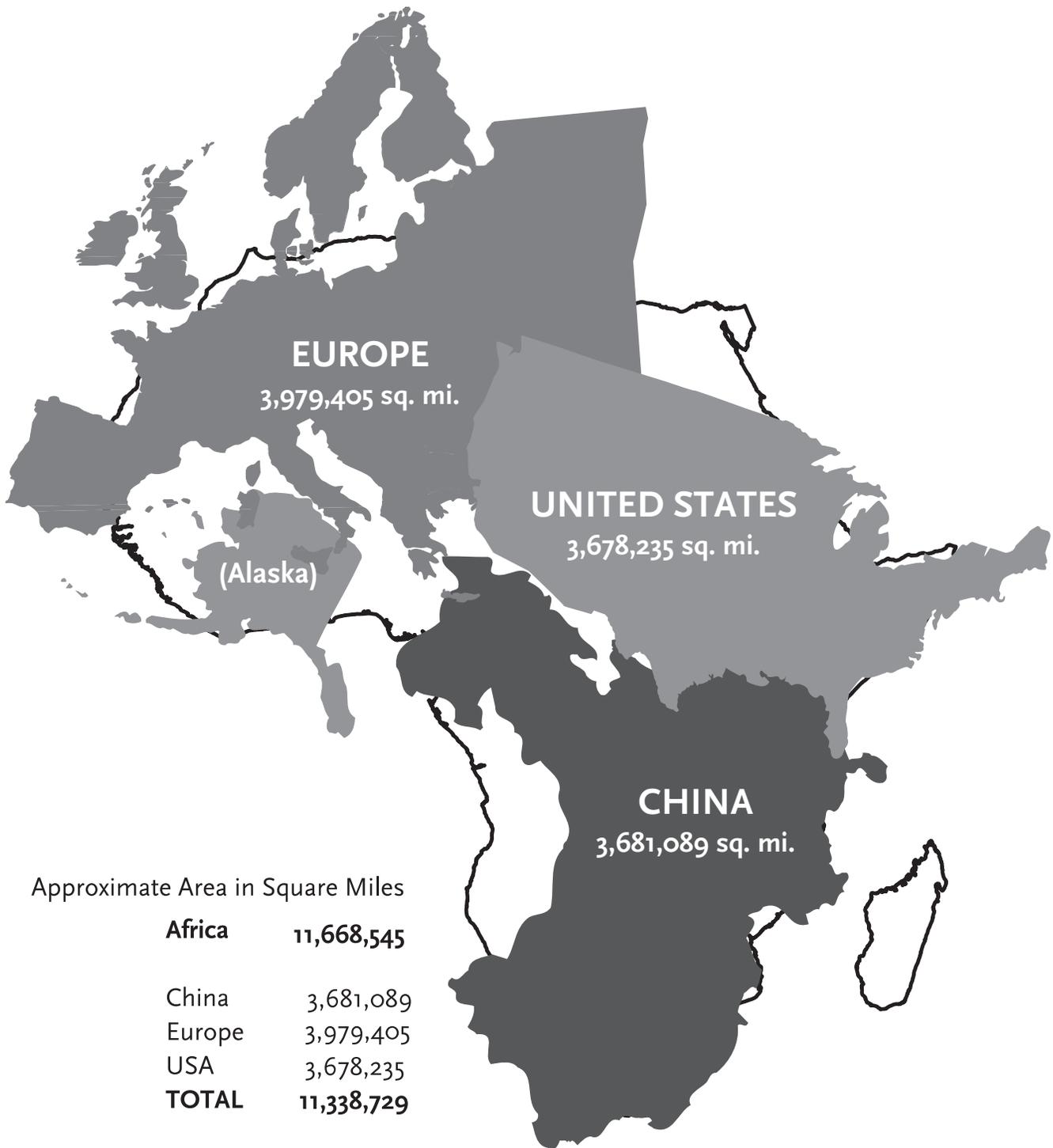
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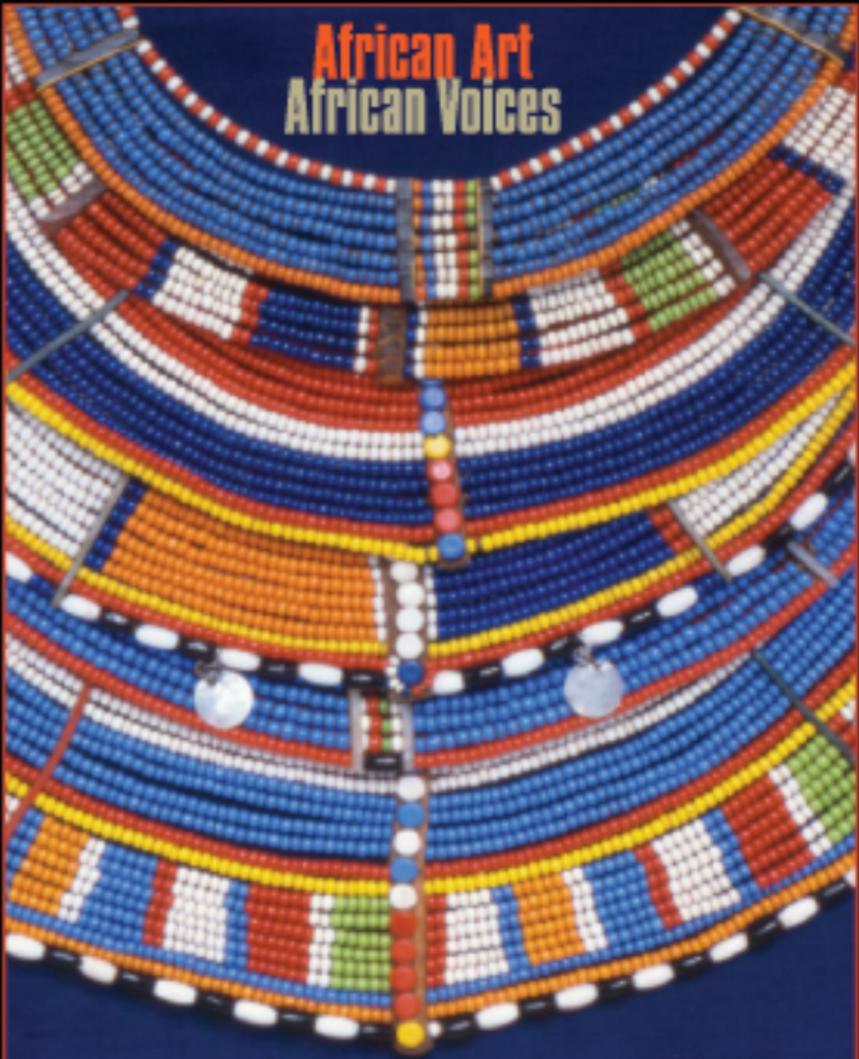
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HOW BIG IS AFRICA?



Information from the poster *How Big Is Africa?*, African Studies Center, Boston University



African Art
African Voices

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Introduction

The ten African objects selected for this teaching kit are relatively recent, dating from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The histories and the traditions they embody, however, resonate with the echoes of past eras. Several of the objects summon up the glory of ancient empires such as Ghana, “the land of gold” (c. 500), and powerful rulers like Sundiata, the Lion King of Mali (who ruled in the 1230s) and Alfonso I, King of the Kongo (c. 1456–1543). Other objects are vital components of time-honored rituals and performances used to resolve conflicts or to hold individuals accountable for their actions. Some are key ingredients in traditional rites of passage such as school graduations, weddings, and funerals. A few contemporary pieces reflect the unique ways in which African artists today combine a modern technology like photography, or knowledge of ceramic traditions from around the world, with their particular indigenous and individual sensibilities.

In Africa, art is a multisensory experience. The various materials used in the objects gathered here include cloth, gold, animal skins, bird feathers, bee venom, baobab flowers, wood, raffia, nails, mirrors, glass beads, and clay. In Africa, the objects made of these materials are used and therefore seen in many different ways depending on a variety of light conditions—in the dusky corners of small houses or outside in bright sunlight or moonlight, for instance. Because they are worn or used during rituals and performances they are seen in motion and in stillness. The sounds they make, how they feel when held or worn, and their odors and tastes are all part of how African art is known and experienced.

Keep in mind that museum exhibitions and photographs strip African art objects of these vital sensory qualities, and we can and must try to understand and imagine them as they exist and are used in their African contexts. The ten objects presented here provide precious clues to some of the complexities and achievements of the many peoples of the vast, diverse continent of Africa. The information and related learning activities also provided here will, we hope, help our minds and our imaginations expand with a deeper appreciation of the objects’ many meanings and purposes.



KENTE CLOTH

(Mmeeda, “something that has not happened before”)

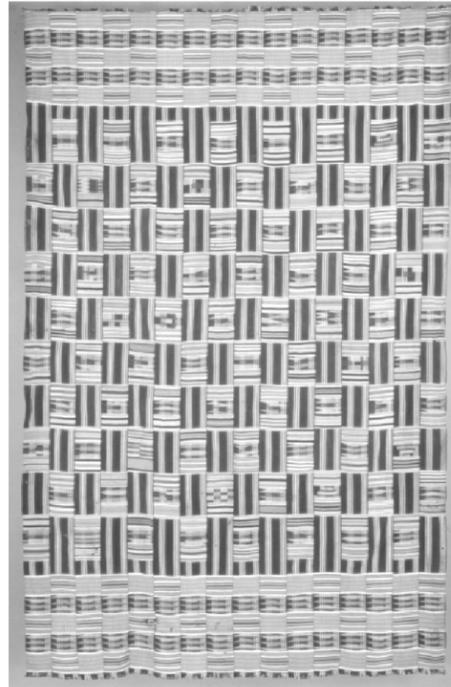
20th century

Cotton and silk

Length 92 1/2 in. (235 cm.)

Asante kingdom, Ghana

Seattle Art Museum: Gift of Katherine White and the Boeing Company, 81.17.434



KWAME NKRUMAH

Ghana’s first president, Kwame Nkrumah (KWA-may nnh-KROO-mah), wore a kente cloth with this Mmeeda design on February 12, 1951, the day he was released from prison. Nkrumah had been jailed for his opposition to the British government, which had made Ghana its colony in 1908. His political party won in the elections held four days before his release. On the day he was freed, Nkrumah wore this design to emphasize that this historic event was “something that had not happened before.” In 1957, Ghana became an independent country under Nkrumah’s leadership, and he became the country’s first president in 1960. While in office, Nkrumah continued to wear kente cloths with strategic messages to communicate with the Ghanaian people. For instance, when he waved from a balcony following the announcement of Ghana’s independence from Britain, Nkrumah wore a cloth called *Adwini asa*, or “I have done my best.”



In the United States, kente cloth has become an important symbol of identification with Africa. Kente is often used at African American graduations and other ceremonies honoring people for their accomplishments. Some Ghanaians feel that American uses of kente cloth have become more commercial than celebratory, reducing the cloth to a generic symbol for anything African. It is important, then, to remember the complicated message in each cloth’s design and that kente comes from a specific country (Ghana) with its own particular history.

LOOKING QUESTIONS

How many different colors can you find in this cloth? List them.

Each rectangle in the central part of the cloth has a different design. Draw three different rectangles and compare them.

Do you think this cloth was made by hand or by a machine? How can you tell?

The Asante (ah-SHAHN-tee) and Ewe (AY-vay) peoples of Ghana in West Africa make *kente* (KEN-tay) cloth, the best known of all African textiles. Asante kente, such as the cloth shown here, has beautiful, brightly colored **geometric patterns**. Kente cloth expresses different proverbs or ideas through different designs. More than three hundred different kente designs have been recorded, and each one has its own particular message. For example, this cloth is called *Mmeeda* (MEE-dah), which translates to “something that has not happened before.”

Kente cloth is woven primarily by men and is made up of many strips, each four to eight inches wide. These strips are cut into pieces and sewn together side by side to make a large cloth. The weaver must have the colors and design of the cloth in mind before he begins to weave. He may add variations of his own into a well-known, traditional pattern to make the design a unique one.

Historically, kente was royal cloth, and the king controlled the use and fabrication of it. With time, however, the use of kente became more widespread, and non-royal Ghanaians came to wear it on special occasions. When worn, kente is wrapped around the body and draped over the shoulder. The strips of the cloth must be straight, both **horizontally** and **vertically**, and the bottom of the cloth should hang at the same length all the way around the wearer’s ankles.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART

Make your own patterned cloth using strips of colored paper, pipe cleaners, or colored wire. To weave, you must have two sets of strips: **vertical** and **horizontal**, called the **warp** and the **weft**. The horizontal strips go over and under the vertical strips at right angles. What could your design mean?

Try draping a cloth of the same size as the Mmeeda design (approximately 90 x 60 inches) on a classmate.

Remember, kente is wrapped around the body and draped over the left shoulder. The bottom of the cloth should hang at the same length all the way around the wearer’s ankles.

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

One design of kente cloth is called “wise old lady.” Another is called “liar’s cloth.” Write a story in which you imagine how one of these messages came about.

SCIENCE

Find out how the dyes for the threads used in kente cloth are made. What elements from nature are used to make different colors?

BIRD RING

20th century

Gold

Height 2 in. (5 cm)

Asante kingdom, Ghana

Seattle Art Museum: Gift of Katherine White and the Boeing Company, 81.17.429



PORCUPINE RING

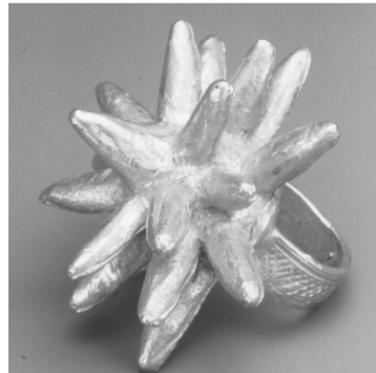
20th century

Gold

Height 2 in. (5 cm)

Asante kingdom, Ghana

Seattle Art Museum: Gift of Katherine White and the Boeing Company, 81.17.401



LOOKING QUESTIONS

What are these objects?

What do you think they are made of?

Are they luxury or everyday items? Why?

Who do you think might wear these rings?

Each ring has a specific meaning for the Asante people of Ghana. Based on what you can see, guess what each ring's message might be.

The Asante (ah-SHAHN-tee) people from the country of Ghana in West Africa made these two gold rings. Rings like these are worn by Ghana's rulers and are used for both decoration and to convey certain messages to the public. Each ring's design has a specific proverb or proverbs associated with it, and on special occasions the leader chooses to wear whatever design sends the appropriate message to the Ghanaian people at that moment. So, while you may look at these two rings and simply see pretty pieces of jewelry, people who are aware of the proverbs related to the rings see different meanings in them.

Did you notice that the bird on the ring has a keg of gunpowder in its beak and two cannons on its wings? This ring represents the proverb "The courageous bird Adwetakyi (ah-dway-tak-yee) sits on cannons" (a brave person faces all obstacles; he or she is always ready to confront the enemy).

Some people think the second ring shows the quills of a porcupine, while others see it as a cocoon. As a result, several different proverbs are linked to this design: (1) "Kill a thousand and a thousand more will come" (take away a porcupine quill and others will appear in its place—meaning that the Asante people are always prepared to defend themselves), (2) "The [cocoon]: it does not talk, but it breathes" (a stranger's character is not well known), and (3) "You have become like the [cocoon] that has no mouth but it breathes" (said of a quiet but evil person).

ASANTE GOLD

Gold is an important part of Asante culture and history. Because it is considered to be the sun's earthly counterpart, it represents the force of life, or "soul" (*kra*). As early as the 1400s, European explorers and traders wrote about the richness of West African gold objects. By 1800, Asante was a powerful empire and enjoyed much wealth through military conquest and control of the gold routes to the north and south. The gold trade grew until the slave trade overtook it around 1750. When the British prohibition of the slave trade began to be enforced around 1825, however, the gold trade flourished again for several generations, ending around 1900.

The Asante region still holds some of the richest goldfields in Africa, second only to those in South Africa. As a result, gold is one of contemporary Ghana's main exports, along with cocoa. The areas of Ghana that contain gold overlap with farming regions and natural forests, so mining operations can disrupt other economic activities as well as the natural environment. Farmers who have had their land taken away for mining purposes are often given money as compensation for their crops and loss of livelihood, instead of replacement land and the opportunity to keep farming. These issues have caused protests in major mining areas, and continue to pose a challenge to modern-day Ghana.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART

Design a ring for yourself as the leader of a country. Read today's newspaper and decide which leader you will be and what message you need to communicate to the people you serve. Write a proverb to accompany your ring.

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

Find proverbs in English that are similar to Asante proverbs.

Recommended books:

Leslau, Charlotte, and Wolf Leslau, comp. *African Proverbs*. New York: Peter Pauper Press, Inc., 1985.

Collis, Harry, and Mario Risso (illustrator). *101 American English Proverbs: Understanding Language and Culture Through Commonly Used Sayings*. Lincolnwood, Ill.: Passport Books, 1990.

SCIENCE

Do some research using the World Wide Web and find out how gold is formed in nature. Describe the chemical process.

Recommended reference:

Gold, <http://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/gold/gold.pdf> or <http://pubs.usgs.gov/gip/prospect1/goldgip.html>
Kirkemo, Harold, William L. Newman, and Roger P. Ashley. U.S. Geological Survey, Denver, Colo.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Research how leaders in the United States and Africa communicate messages to the public through what they wear. How do American leaders' styles compare to Ghanaian leaders' styles?

HUNTER'S SHIRT (Donso Duloki)

20th century
Cloth (strip weave), teeth,
horns, leather, tin, amulets
Length 51 1/2 in. (130.8 cm)

Mande tradition, Bamana
culture, Mali

Seattle Art Museum: Gift of Katherine
White and the Boeing Company, 81.17.70



“TO BE A MAN IS TO HAVE MANY SECRETS.”

—Bamana proverb*

Hunters' shirts show the hunter's mastery of *jiridon* (jeer-ee-don), or the “science of trees,” gained from journeys and **apprenticeships** with other hunters. Hunters create new amulets after a long, private period of time spent learning new information. This shirt is covered with amulets made from the tips of the horns of bushback antelope, encased in leather. The mixture of ingredients placed inside each horn is a closely guarded secret, and the steps for gathering and combining the ingredients are complicated. For example, venom from bees or snakes, plants from seven different paths, a flower from a baobab tree, and the washcloth of a woman might be collected and mixed together, then boiled, pounded, and burned. One type of amulet is intended to make an animal's eyes fill with tears so that it cannot see to run away or defend itself.

Today, young Malian men, like young people everywhere, leave home to pursue the challenges of finding jobs and educational opportunities. They travel to large African cities and to countries on other continents. In Bamako, the capital of Mali, hunters' associations focus on preserving their traditions and knowledge to share with future generations.

Because Salif Keita's parents were from the noble class, he was not supposed to become a singer. Consequently, he left home to seek his fortune in Bamako, where he sang in the Super Rail Band and Les Ambassadeurs. Recently, Keita has begun singing internationally about Sundiata and the Mande tradition of hunters.

*McClusky, Pamela, *Art from Africa: Long Steps Never Broke a Back* (Seattle, Wash.: Seattle Art Museum; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; 2002), 74.

LOOKING QUESTIONS

Describe the kind of person you think might wear this shirt. (Each student contributes one word to a list of adjectives.) Explain why you chose your word.

What is attached to the shirt? Where do you think these things were found?

What colors do you see? How would wearing a shirt like this help you blend into a forest?

Mande (MAN-day) hunters wear shirts like this one on special occasions. Can you imagine what the occasions might be? Think of a special occasion in your life. What kind of clothing did you wear? What did you do?

Certain Mande (MAN-day) men—hunters, warriors, leaders, people believed to have special abilities—wear shirts like this. The ideal Mande hunter hero is Sundiata, the legendary Lion King, who founded the empire of Mali in 1235. Tales of his amazing life evolved as spoken stories before they were written down in the eighteenth century. Today, a popular singer from Mali named Salif Keita (sah-LEEF KAY-tah), a possible descendent of Sundiata, wears hunter's shirts that shake and shudder in the spotlight as he dances and sings stories in places around the world.

Long ago, Mande territory was filled with animals: anteaters, baboons, bushback antelope, buffalo, elephants, giant eland, giraffes, hartebeest, hippopotamuses, and roan antelope. Hunters developed the special knowledge and skills required to track each of them. Their shirts were colored with light and dark brown dyes made from tree bark to blend in with the vegetation during different seasons, like **camouflage**. Because the hunters' shirts were never washed, they absorbed the odors of smoke, sweat, and dirt, and this disguised the hunters' scent.

Hunters spent most of their time in the forest, studying the habits and ways of plants and animals. They learned special uses for roots, leaves, and barks and for the bones, claws, skins, and organs of animals. Combining these ingredients in special recipes, they created **amulets** to attach to their shirts. Hunters wore their shirts on occasions like weddings, baptisms, festivals, and funerals.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART

Compare the amulets found on Mande hunter shirts to types of jewelry that we wear. Can amulets and jewelry increase our sense of power or safety? Why? How are amulets and some jewelry related to various belief systems (Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, etc.) or cultures (Egyptian, Native American Indian, etc.)? Create a personal amulet using natural materials, such as bones, stones, leather, shells, and plant materials that symbolize special qualities to you.

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

Brainstorm a list of people who have had a strong connection to nature and living outdoors. For example: Henry David Thoreau, the explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, or even fictional characters like Mowgli in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. Imagine or recall a time when you went camping, or took a long hike. Describe what clothes you wore and the special gear you carried for the time you spent away from civilization.

SCIENCE

Research the animals and habitats native to Mande territory. Make a chart showing what the animals look like and how they blend in with their environments. Are any of these animals endangered?

SOCIAL STUDIES

The Mande people live in regions of many different West African countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. Can you find all ten on a map?

BASINJOM MASK AND GOWN

Before 1972

Cloth, wood, feathers, porcupine quills, mirrors, herbs, raffia, cowry shells, rattle, eggshell, metal, genet cat skin
Height 85 in. (216 cm)

Ejagham culture, Nigeria and Cameroon

Seattle Art Museum: Gift of Katherine White and the Boeing Company, 81.17.1977



LOOKING QUESTIONS

What words would you use to describe this mask and gown?

What kinds of materials were used? Look for two materials that come from animals.

When worn and performed, this mask and gown is called Basinjom (bas-in-jom), or "God's medicine." On what occasions do you think the mask and gown appear? Why?

When worn, this mask and gown, along with the dancer inside, create the spirit of Basinjom (bah-sin-jom), or "God's medicine." Basinjom is used and performed by the Ejagham (eh-jah-GAHM) people of Nigeria and Cameroon in West Africa. His role is to identify people who have done harm to the community. In a public **ritual**, those accused and found guilty must admit to bad behavior, apologize, and offer gifts. They are then rewarded with forgiveness and a chance to start over.

Many elements of the costume are taken from animals or represent animals. The blue feathers on this headdress are from a bird called a touraco. The snout of the mask is made to look like a crocodile's mouth. The materials that make up Basinjom's mask and gown have particular meanings. The crocodile mouth is able to speak for the community about controversial subjects. The spotted skin on the gown calls upon the spirit of a catlike animal who protects Basinjom from harm. The knife that Basinjom holds has two eyes that allow him to see those who want to cause harm. The rattle is made of wicker and allows Basinjom to hear the sound of evil.

The Ejagham people are one ethnic group among 250 in Nigeria, which has a population of 110.5 million. Nigeria is the fifth largest producer of oil in the world. Many famous athletes and writers are Nigerian, including Hakeem Olajuwon (hah-KEEM oh-LIE-joo-wahn) of the Houston Rockets and writers Chinua Achebe (CHIN-wah ah-cheb-ay) and Wole Soyinka (whoa-lay soy-ink-ah).

TRADITIONAL BELIEFS

In the early twentieth century, German colonizers forced the Ejagham people to resettle in larger villages. Soon after, the British brought in their system of government, courts of law, schools, and clinics. In order to reinforce their own traditional methods of resolving conflicts, transmitting knowledge, and restoring communal life, Ejagham groups increased their practice of Basinjom.

Ejagham culture places a great emphasis on closeness with one's extended family group. Too much personal achievement for any one individual is questioned. Basinjom deals with this tension between the group and individuals. When a person is believed to misuse the strength they gain from an animal such as a leopard or a force of nature like lightning by using it to make themselves more important than others, Basinjom must discover the problem and resolve it.

Although Christianity and other Western influences, as well as ideas from neighboring groups and the modern world, have affected Ejagham traditional beliefs, their belief in Basinjom has not lessened, and Basinjom still appears in the modern era. In 1982, for example, he was observed performing in Nigeria at the coronation of a new ruler. Today, the Ejagham people rely both on traditional beliefs, such as Basinjom, and on Nigerian and Cameroonian courts of law.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART

Design a costume or a disguise that features at least two materials that represent or resemble elements from animals. What do these animals symbolize to you?

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

In pairs, imagine a conflict between an individual person and a group. Write a short dialogue in which the conflict is resolved with the help of a teacher, parent, friend, counselor, policeman, or judge.

SOCIAL STUDIES

The Ejagham people live in Nigeria and Cameroon. Find these two countries on a map of Africa. (Note that African ethnic groups are not necessarily confined to one country.)

SCIENCE

A material from the forest, called **raffia**, is used for Basinjom's hair and the hem of his gown. Find out what raffia is and where it comes from.

Recommended reference:

The Raffia Palm,
<http://www.dipbot.unict.it/Palms/Descr04.html>
Guglielmo, Anna, Pietro Pavone, Cristina Salmeri, and Maria Grazia Nicolosi (translator). Botanical Department, University of Catania, Catania, Italy

SOWEI MASK

20th century
Wood, metal, raffia, leather,
fiber
Width 22 in. (55.9 cm)

Mende culture, Sierra Leone

Seattle Art Museum: Purchased with funds
from the Mary Arrington Small Estate
Acquisitions Fund, 89.68



funeral processions; and when newly initiated girls come out, which is the ceremonial highlight of the year. These events usually take place at night, when the shiny black surfaces of the masks' faces both catch the light and blend into the darkness.

SOWEI MASK FEATURES

- The wood of this mask has been rubbed with palm oil or shoe polish to make it look both black and wet. These qualities connect it with the source of Sande knowledge—nature spirits that live in rivers.
- The tightly braided hair in crisp rows signifies control and sanity. The mask forehead is high and broad because the forehead is the place where prosperity enters into one's life. The eyes are small and narrow to conceal the eyes of the person wearing the mask and to protect the spirit who lives in the mask. In addition, for females, direct eye contact is considered disrespectful.
- The mouths of Soweï masks are tightly closed because the masks embody spirits who never gossip or giggle the way people do, reinforcing the belief that much human suffering is caused by inconsiderate remarks, mean-spirited criticism, and angry cursing.
- The necks of Soweï masks are wide because they must fit over the heads of the people wearing them, like helmets. The rings on the necks have several possible meanings. They may represent rings of fat, signs of a well-fed person. They may refer to a water spirit rising up from the depths of the river, creating concentric circles on the surface of the water. Or they may signify divinity, much as haloes do in Christian art.

LOOKING QUESTIONS

What is this?

What is it made of?

How was it made?

Is it male or female? What do you see that makes you think that?

Which parts are animal? Which are human? Which are from nature?

Which features are exaggerated?

The Mende (MEN-day) people in Sierra Leone made this mask for a secret women's society called Sande (SAHN-day). Because Sande practices are secret, information about them was limited until the 1970s, when women researchers did fieldwork in Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea.

Traditionally, Sande societies provide special schools, separate from the community, where girls are initiated into adulthood. Girls learn practical skills such as farming, spinning, child care, diagnosing illnesses, and treating illnesses with herbs. They are also introduced to the myths, history, and customs of their culture. This helps them become adult community leaders who can resolve conflicts through storytelling and debates. Singing and dancing and knowledge of ideal feminine beauty are also important parts of the curriculum.

This mask is made of carved wood, metal, raffia, leather, and plant fibers. The top of the head is crowned with swooping bush cow horns, a pattern of cowry shells is carved into the hair border, and remnants of a star appear on the forehead. Certain features are exaggerated for symbolic or practical purposes: the tiny, slit eyes; the small, tightly closed mouth; the large forehead; and the wide, ringed neck.

Small groups of performers wear Soweï masks as they dance for special occasions: when a Sande school opens or a new chief is installed; at

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART

Use light cardboard or stiff paper to create masks or headdresses that celebrate a **rite of passage** and completely disguise the wearer. Include animal, human, and other natural elements in the design. How could exaggeration of one or several features communicate the purpose of the mask symbolically?

MATH

Discuss the **patterns, geometry,** and **symmetry** in this object. Explain that carving is a **subtractive** process and working with clay is an **additive** process. Have students measure their heads and calculate the inside and outside dimensions of a mask/headdress.

SCIENCE

Research medicines used today that are based on traditional, herbal remedies from the rainforests and bush areas of Africa and other parts of the world. To learn how some traditional remedies can be integrated with modern medicine, visit this site by Andrew Weil, M.D.:

DrWeil.com, <http://www.drweil.com>
Weil Lifestyle, LLC, Phoenix, Ariz.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Compare **rites of passage** for girls and boys in different cultures, for example *quinceañeros*, school graduations, obtaining a driver's license, registering to vote.

STANDING FIGURE (NKONDI)

Late 19th–early 20th century
Wood, iron, imported nails, fiber,
beads, glass, feathers, chalk
Height 31 3/4 in. (80.5 cm)

Kongo culture, Democratic
Republic of the Congo

Seattle Art Museum: Gift of Katherine
White and the Boeing Company, 81.17.836



KONGO CONCEPTS

pakalala: Ready to attack and defend

This nkondi stands with his hands on his hips, his head held slightly forward, and his white eyes wide open—the stance of a powerful being in a heightened state of alert, poised to attack or defend. The Kongo word *paaka* means to cut meat into pieces, symbolizing the nkondi's role of analyzing and resolving complicated situations by making them smaller and more manageable.

mooyoo: the belly/life

Only a rolled up scrap of cloth remains in this nkondi's belly. When it was used in rituals, however, a packet of medicines concocted by the nganga would have been placed in the cavity, then sealed and covered with a mirror. The medicine packet gave the nkondi its energy.

kalunga: ocean, door, and wall between two worlds

The eyes of this nkondi reflect light because they are made of mirrors. Mirrors evoke the shimmering quality of *kalunga*, the thin, shiny barrier between the living and the dead. *Kalunga* allows souls to move into another world where they are washed clean and made ready to be born again.

The Kongo approach to life included principles of moral conduct, powerful medicines derived from nature, and sensitivity to the relations between living persons and the deceased. Far-reaching Kongo influences can be heard in samba music in Brazil and observed in drawings in Cuba. The work of contemporary African American artists David Hammonds and Renée Stout reflect Kongo ideas and beliefs.

LOOKING QUESTIONS

What adjectives would you use to describe the feeling of this object?

Try standing like this figure. How would you describe the body language?

What material is the figure made of? What has been added?

What questions would you like to ask the maker and the users of this object?

This figure, bristling with nails, is called an *nkondi*, (nnh-KON-dee). It was made sometime in the late 1800s or early 1900s by the Kongo people of the region in Central Africa now called the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Nkondi were used to promote healing and cooperation. The figures were carved from large, single pieces of wood cut from trees the Kongo people considered sacred. Once carved, nkondi were given special powers by a healer called an *nganga* (nnh-GON-ga). The nganga mixed plants and other elements to form healing ingredients, which were typically placed in the stomach of the figure, near the navel.

Nkondi were kept in their own small houses where they were approached, with the aid of an nganga, when people needed a solution for a conflict, a remedy for an illness, or wanted to seal a contract for an important event. Each nail or blade was chosen according to what kind of agreement was being made. People identified their particular nail by adding their saliva, or by attaching a small piece of cloth or string to it. Round and square nails sealed solemn decisions like a verdict in a murder trial. Different types of blades were used for weddings, divorces, land sales, or to cure illness. It was the nganga's job to keep track of the exact history of each one. The nganga served as a policeman, a priest, or a healer, depending on his talents and what the situation required.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART

Draw, model, or construct a standing figure whose body language communicates a specific attitude or mood.

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

Write several paragraphs describing your first impressions of the nkondi. Read and discuss the information provided. Write several new paragraphs describing what you learned. Can you think of aspects of your own life that relate to the nkondi and his role in Kongo society?

SOCIAL STUDIES

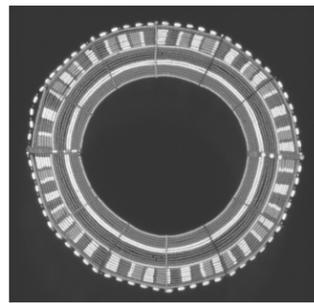
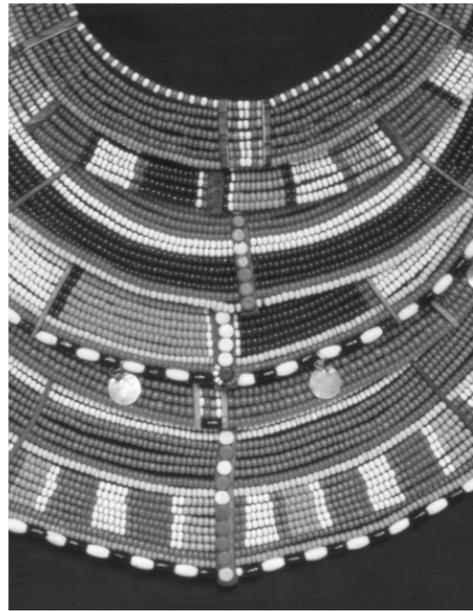
What kinds of contracts do people in the United States negotiate? Think about contracts between individuals, between groups, and between individuals and groups. Who and what make a contract official or valid? How are contracts enforced?

ASSEMBLY OF NECKLACES

20th century
Wire, glass beads, and plastic
Diameter (largest) 13 1/2 in.
(34.3 cm)

Kaputiei section, Merrueshi community, Maasai culture, Kenya

Seattle Art Museum: General Acquisition Fund, 2000.12.2-7



RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

In 1999, a young Maasai man named Kakuta Ole Maimai Hamisi (kah-koo-tah o-lay my-my hah-mee-see) went to college in the United States and did research at the Seattle Art Museum on its Maasai collections. Hamisi was disturbed because he found many photographs of his people but no information about them, their lives, or their culture. In response, Hamisi organized a project for the Seattle Art Museum in which people from his community created and collected objects that are important to their identity, like these necklaces. He carefully documented the owners' and creators' names and their actual words. The funds they received from the Museum made it possible for the people in Hamisi's village to build their first school.

The Maasai people live in Kenya and Tanzania on savannas, or dry grasslands, which are particularly suited to herding cattle. The arid climate and daily requirements for wood to burn as fuel have led to ecological and economic problems. In 1977, a Kenyan woman named Wangari Muta Maathai (wahn-GAH-ree MOO-tah MAH-thy) founded the Green Belt Movement (GBM), one of the most successful environmental conservation and development programs in the world. GBM promotes tree planting by local community groups, a process that improves the quality of the environment and empowers women by generating income, providing leadership roles, and giving them a positive image. Many women's groups have sold millions of seedlings and used the profits to feed and educate their children. Today, GBM methods have spread to Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Lesotho, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe.

LOOKING QUESTIONS

How many necklaces can you see? (There are six necklaces in this photo.)

What are they made of?

The top necklace has red and white beads on the inside edge and orange beads on the outside edge. What color is between them? (Blue)

These necklaces are worn for a very special occasion. What could it be? Who do you think wears them?

Use your imagination as you look closely at the color combinations and patterns. What could these necklaces mean or signify?

A community of Maasai (MAH-sigh) women in Kenya created this collection of necklaces for a young bride. On the morning of her wedding, the bride's female relatives dress her in an ensemble of necklaces, bracelets, earrings, a headdress, and a belt. Then, wearing her full bridal **ensemble**, she walks to her new home, accompanied by her new husband and his best man. After her new relatives rush out to welcome her, there is a feast.

Before 1900, bridal ornaments were made mainly of iron, copper, and brass wire worked by men who were **blacksmiths**. Additional ornaments were woven of fresh leaves and grasses. Beginning in the early 1900s, Maasai women were able to buy large quantities of small, hard, brightly colored beads sold along the east coast of Africa. Soon only Maasai women made ornaments.

Maasai territory is divided into sixteen regions and each region is known for its beadwork patterns. New generations of Maasai women are expected to invent distinctive new patterns and ornaments. They work together to create a collection of beadwork ornaments whose patterns and colors will display their skills and show at a glance where a bride is from.

A bride's ornaments are very expensive. In fact, one of these necklaces (shown at bottom in the photograph) is called the "bull necklace" because the bride's parents had to sell a bull in order to raise enough money to purchase the beads for it.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART, ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS, AND SOCIAL STUDIES

What special objects from your life would you like people from another culture to have in order to understand your accomplishments and know who you are? Brainstorm and make lists in small groups. Draw, paint, or videotape your special objects. Be sure to include written or oral documentation that explains who they belong to and why they are important to you.

Learn about Kakuta Ole Maimai Hamisi and the Maasai culture at:

Maasai Association,
<http://www.maasai-infoline.org>
Maasai Association, Olympia, Wash.

ART AND MATH

Calculate the dimensions of a series of four to six necklaces in the shape of flat, **concentric** circles. The smallest necklace will encircle the base of a person's neck; the largest will sit on the shoulders. Using these dimensions, measure and cut the necklaces out of light cardboard. Design a different **symmetrical, geometric** pattern for each necklace, using symbolic colors. Use paint, colored pencils or markers, or glue colored paper, colored beads, or dyed macaroni to the cardboard necklaces to make your designs.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Compare Maasai bridal necklaces and customs with American bridal gowns and customs.

SCIENCE

Learn more about the Green Belt Movement at these websites:

The Greenbelt Movement,
<http://www.greenbeltmovement.org>
The Greenbelt Movement,
Nairobi, Kenya

Wangari Maathai/Green Belt Movement (1984),
<http://www.rightlivelihood.se/recipe/maathai.htm>
Right Livelihood Award Foundation,
Stockholm, Sweden

The Greenbelt Movement: Reforestation in Kenya, <http://www.womenaid.org/press/info/development/greenbeltproject.html>
WomenAid International,
London, England

UNTITLED (THREE GIRLS AND A BABY)

1986

Gelatin silver print,
mounted with cardboard,
tape, and glass

5 1/8 x 3 1/2 in. (13 x 8.9 cm)

Malick Sidibé

Mali

Born 1935

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased
with the Lynne and Harold Honickman
Fund for Photography, 2003-74-1



in Mali in the 1980s. Today, however, he enjoys an international reputation and teaches young people in his neighborhood how to make inexpensive pinhole cameras and create beautiful black-and-white photographs.

I KA NYÈ TAN (YOU LOOK BEAUTIFUL LIKE THAT)

—Bambara expression

Sidibé's photographs are primarily keepsakes for his clients, but they are also **symbols** of wealth, social importance, and modernity. Signs of his clients' affluence, like stylish shoes, jewelry, or clothing, are often visible in their portraits. Can you spot different pieces of jewelry worn by the girls in *Untitled (Three Girls and a Baby)*? Sometimes these objects are noticeably European or American to emphasize the sitter's wealth and familiarity with foreign goods and contemporary taste.

While Sidibé enjoyed having control over his portraits, his clients also like to assert their individuality in their images. One man had himself photographed with his sheep, another with a sombrero. Even the ways people choose to stand or place their arms express their personalities. How do you think the girls in *Three Girls and a Baby* show what they like and who they are?

Sidibé's role as a Malian photographer was groundbreaking because in French colonies like Mali, the French government prohibited Africans from working as photographers. After Mali gained its independence from France in 1960, Sidibé became one of the first West African photographers to create images of African people for an African audience. Although he felt his work was beautiful and artistic, Sidibé did not consider himself an artist at the time he was making a large number of portraits. As a **commercial photographer**, his job was to please his customers by showing them at their best. Paradoxically, Sidibé's photographs are now collected by museums and admired the world over as art.

*Malick Sidibé, interview by Michelle Lamunière. *You Look Beautiful Like That: The Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé* (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums; New Haven and London: Yale University Press; 2001), 51.

LOOKING QUESTIONS

How many people are in this photograph? What are their ages? What do you think their relationship is to one another?

Describe the composition of the photograph. How are the people arranged? What is the strongest design element?

Is this a formal portrait or a candid snapshot? How can you tell?

Malick Sidibé (mah-LEEK see-DEE-bay), a photographer in Bamako, the capital of Mali, made this small, postcard-size, black-and-white portrait in 1986. The photograph is arranged **symmetrically** with two girls standing on either side of a seated girl holding a baby in her lap. The bold **horizontal** stripes of the skirts and blouses **contrast** strongly with the backdrop of **vertical** stripes. Sidibé used striped backdrops to create striking combinations of **patterns** in many of his photographs.

When he was seventeen years old, Sidibé moved to Bamako and attended art school, studying jewelry making. After graduation, he learned photography by watching French photographers as they worked. Sidibé then began making formal portraits like this one, as well as **candid snapshots** of young people at parties, clubs, and Sunday outings by the Niger River. The candid shots have become especially well known in Europe and America, yet Sidibé prefers making portraits. He finds portrait-making more artistic and likes having control over the final image: "For me, setting up a photo shoot isn't so different from drawing a scene: I decide what goes where, I decide how to **pose** the person. . . ."*

After Sidibé opened Studio Malick in 1960, his popularity grew quickly. On Saturdays and around Muslim holidays, people wearing new hairstyles and clothes would be seen waiting in line in front of his studio. Sidibé's black-and-white portrait business declined with the arrival of color photography

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART

Work in pairs to draw, paint, or photograph portraits with patterned backdrops. One person will be the artist or photographer and the other will be the client. Discuss which aspects the artist and the client will decide (backdrop, pose, lighting, clothing, jewelry, etc.) When one portrait is completed, switch roles.

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

Write a story or dialogue about the people in *Three Girls and a Baby* based on what you see. How are they related? What happened just before the photograph was taken? What will happen next?

MATH

Malick Sidibé made small photographs so that his clients could put them in envelopes and mail them to family and friends. Collect different sizes of envelopes and figure out the dimensions photographs would need to be to fit inside, in inches and centimeters.

SCIENCE

Make pinhole cameras, and then create black-and-white photographs. For simple directions on how to make pinhole cameras, see:

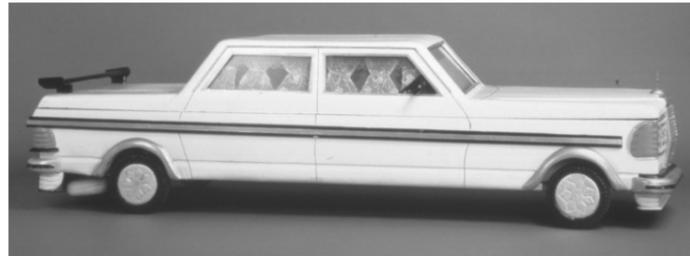
How to Make and Use a Pinhole Camera, <http://www.kodak.com/global/en/consumer/education/lessonPlans/pinholeCamera/>
Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y.

MERCEDES-BENZ COFFIN

1991
Wood and paint
Length 101 in. (256.5 cm)

Kane Quaye
Ghana
1922–1992

Seattle Art Museum: Gift of Oliver and Pamela Cobb and Mark Groudine and Cynthia Putnam in honor of Pamela McClusky, 93.163



LOOKING QUESTIONS

What is this?

What do you think it is made of?

What do you think it is for?
(Clues: It is made of wood, it opens like a box, and it is almost nine feet long.)

This realistic replica of a Mercedes-Benz car is made of painted wood and is almost nine feet long. The windows are decorated with lace curtains tied with pink ribbons. The entire car is sliced in half, horizontally, like a box with a lid. A “license plate” on the back tells us exactly what it is, who made it, and who sold it: Kane Quaye’s Super Coffins.

Kane Quaye (KAHN-ay KWAY) was a carpenter who lived from 1922 to 1992 in Teshi, a village on the southern coast of Ghana. After learning carpentry from his brother, he joined the workshop of a master carpenter in Teshi. This workshop was known for having created an unusual **palanquin** (carrying chair) shaped like an eagle for the chief of Teshi. Soon after, a different chief requested a chair in the shape of a cocoa pod, because at that time cocoa provided great wealth in Ghana. When this chief died before the cocoa pod chair was completed, it became his coffin. Then, because Quaye’s grandmother had always dreamed of riding in an airplane, at her death he decided to build her coffin in the shape of an airplane. The idea caught on, and in 1951 Quaye started his own carpentry business with **custom-made** coffins his only product.

For the past fifty years, Ghanaians have used special coffins to honor people who have died. For Ghanaians, the dead occupy a powerful role in everyday life and are thought to observe those who are living.

“A MERCEDES-BENZ IS FOR WEALTHY MOTORISTS.”

—Kane Quaye*

In Ghana, when members of wealthy families are close to death, custom-made coffins are ordered. In 1995, a former apprentice to Kane Quaye named Paa Joe estimated that his workshop, called Six-Foot Enterprises, produced approximately ten coffins each month. The professions and interests of the deceased inspire the types of coffins produced:

- A shoe for a man who owned a shoe shop
- A chicken and chicks for a woman with many children
- An oil can for a garage owner
- A parrot with a pen in its beak for a university teacher
- An airplane for a Ghana Airways employee

In Ghana, coffins like this one are not viewed as art, or as objects that are displayed for decoration or enjoyment. They are made to hold the remains of deceased persons throughout elaborate funeral ceremonies attended by hundreds of friends and relations. There is food and dancing, then the deceased is carried around town in the coffin to say goodbye to everyone before being buried. Typically, families spend as much money as they can on relatives’ funerals. After Ghana gained independence in 1957, a surge of industrial growth and new jobs made expensive funerals available to many more people.

In the 1970s, an American art dealer commissioned seven coffins for her gallery, calling them “fantasy coffins.” Since then, similar coffins have been exhibited in several important exhibitions of contemporary African art. In fact, this coffin was specially constructed for an exhibition at the Seattle Art Museum.

*Secretan, Theirry, *Going into Darkness: Fantastic Coffins from Africa* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 9.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART

Using colored pencils, design a “fantasy coffin” for a dear relative or friend, a world leader, a personal hero or heroine, or a beloved pet. How can the coffin reflect what you know about this person and his or her contribution to the world, the neighborhood, or your family?

Design a box that resembles an object, plant, or animal that is important to you. Start with a cardboard shoebox or a cigar box and add found objects, colored paper, papier-mâché, etc. Make sure that your box can open and close. Don’t forget to transform the inside as well as the outside of the box.

ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

Write a poem, prayer, eulogy, or obituary for someone who might be buried in the Mercedes-Benz coffin created by Kane Quaye.

MATH

Learn how to make scale models. Create a scale model of a “fantasy coffin.” For a grade 6-8 lesson plan that can be adapted for lower and higher grades, see:

Architects in Action,
<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/architectsinaction/>
Hempel, Jessi. Discovery Communications, Inc., Silver Spring, Md.

VESSEL

2001

*Polished and carbonized
terracotta*

Magdalene Anyango
Namakhiya Odundo
Kenyan, resides in England
Born 1950

Seattle Art Museum: General Acquisitions
Fund, 2002.41



LOOKING QUESTIONS

How do you think this ceramic vessel was made? How did the artist make the surface so smooth and the shape so symmetrical?

What colors do you see on the surface? Which color do you think is the natural color of the clay?

Vessels are often compared to humans. Find parts of this vessel that could be a lip, mouth, neck, ears, shoulders, belly, and foot.

Do you think this vessel was created for everyday use? Why?

Magdalene Odundo (mag-dah-LANE-ah o-DOON-doe) was born in 1950 in Nairobi, Kenya's capital city. Today, she is a professor of ceramics at the Surrey Institute of Art and Design in England and exhibits her work all over the world.

Odundo builds her pots by hand, making long, snakelike coils of clay and then pushing them together to form the walls of the vessel. She shapes and smooths the walls using **gourd** scrapers. A lengthy process of burnishing (polishing), applying slip (a liquid made of clay dissolved in water), and burnishing again produces the **lustrous** surfaces. Finally, the vessel is fired (baked) in a very hot oven called a kiln. During the firing process, oxygen is removed from the kiln's atmosphere, and this creates unpredictable variations of color on the surface of Odundo's vessels.

The shape of this vessel is perfectly **symmetrical**, yet uneven areas of velvety black appear to float across its bright red-orange surface. The vase-like shape and tiny round handles suggest a practical purpose. They also subtly echo aspects of female bodies, such as a long elegant neck and tiny, round ear lobes or earrings.

Odundo attended schools in Kenya and India before moving to England for college. Her distinctive style combines a great variety of elements and influences from around the world—including the British potter Bernard

Leach, modern artists like Constantin Brancusi and Jean Arp, the women potters of San Idelfonso Pueblo in New Mexico, and the simplicity and purity of Asian ceramics, as well as the arts, culture, plants, and animals of Nigeria, rural western Kenya, and Zimbabwe.

PERFECT SYMMETRY AND PERFECT BALANCE

"I still make vessels, this has not changed, and this is strictly a deliberate choice. It helps me avoid being distracted from my quest to one day make the piece that achieves perfect harmony—having perfect symmetry and perfect balance."

—Magdalene Odundo*

A ceramic vessel created by Magdalene Odundo is intriguing because it can remind us of many different things while being completely unique. Odundo says she might get an idea from watching the growth of plants, seeing how the sleeves of a Victorian dress hang, or observing the silhouette of a Kenyan woman wearing layers of cloth. The ways in which various standards of beauty in different time periods and places have dictated the shapes of women's bodies is a topic she studies avidly. These standards include elongated foreheads in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, tiny wasp waists held in by corsets in nineteenth-century Europe and America, and the unnaturally slender fashion models of today.

Odundo also draws inspiration from the traditions of female potters in Kenya and Nigeria and from San Idelfonso in New Mexico. Women potters who live in rural African villages make pots that meet their practical needs and their community's standards. Odundo, on the other hand, like other African artists who work in cities and travel throughout the world, is free to develop her own individual sense of beauty. The simple shapes of Odundo's vessels span centuries and continents, recalling sculpture both ancient and modern. Although they are in the form of containers, she does not intend them to be used.

*Magdalene Odundo, interview by Marla C. Berns. November 16, 1994; Farnham, Surrey, England.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

ART AND ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

To see more work by Magdalene Odundo, visit the website below. What do these vessels remind you of? Which one is most similar to the vessel on the image card? Why?

Magdalene Odundo,
<http://www.uam.ucsb.edu/Pages/odundo.html>
Berns, Marla C. University Art Museum,
University of California at Santa Barbara,
Calif.

Name the parts of this vessel using names for parts of the human body. Then, think of

examples of common expressions that use body part names, such as "the long arm of the law," "you hit it on the nose," and "they ran neck and neck."

ART AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Research standards of feminine beauty and pottery traditions found in different periods of history and cultures. Draw or create a ceramic vessel that incorporates one or more of the design elements you discover.

SCIENCE

Find out why clay vessels are fired in hot ovens. What happens to the clay when it reaches certain temperatures? Research various methods of **reduction firing** for pottery. Design a simple kiln, or adapt an existing one, for a reduction firing. If possible, try it out.

Recommended Resources

BOOKS FOR EDUCATORS

The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies. *Extended Lives: The African Immigrant Experience in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, 2001.

Berns, Marla C. *Ceramic Gestures: New Vessels by Magdalene Odundo*. Santa Barbara: University Art Museum, University of California, 1995.

Blier, Suzanne Preston (ed.). *Art of the Senses: African Masterpieces from the Teel Collection*. Boston: MFA Publications, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2004.

Danto, Arthur, et al. *ART/artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*. New York: Center for African Art, 1988.

Dowling, Katie. *Arts of Africa*. Chicago: Division of Student and Teacher Programs, Department of Museum Education, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1998.

Gilfoy, Peggy Stoltz. *Patterns of Life: West African Strip Weaving Traditions*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press and National Museum of African Art, 1987.

McClusky, Pamela. *Art from Africa: Long Steps Never Broke a Back*. Seattle, Wash.: Seattle Art Museum; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; 2002.

Remer, Abby. *Enduring Visions: Women's Artistic Heritage Around the World*. Worcester, Mass.: Davis Publications, Inc., 2001.

Vogel, Susan Mullin. *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art*. New York: Center for African Art, 1991.

Vogel, Susan Mullin. *African Aesthetics: The Carlo Monzino Collection*. New York: Center for African Art, 1986.

Wardwell, Allen. *African Sculpture from the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1986.

Visonà, Monica Blackmun, et al. *A History of Art in Africa*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2001.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Related to the Objects Featured in This Guide

Aardema, Verna. *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain: A Nandi Tale*. Illustrated by Beatriz Vidal. New York: Dial Press, 1981.

This magical story uses the same rhythm and repetitive structure as “The House That Jack Built” to tell how young Ki-pat helps end a terrible drought on Kapiti Plain and saves his cows “so hungry and dry.” The colorful, stylized illustrations vividly convey a sense of vast space and sky on the savanna. (Preschool–grade 4)

Assembly of Necklaces, Maasai culture, Kenya

Echewa, T. Obinkaram. *The Ancestor Tree*. Illustrated by Christy Hale. New York: Lodestar Books, 1994.

This upbeat story is about an old, blind storyteller named Grandfather the Onlooker, who is loved by all the children in the village of Amapu. After his death, the children find a special way to honor him, which involves helping their parents understand that some of the village customs must change in order to have meaning when new circumstances arise. (Grades 3–8)

Mercedes-Benz Coffin, Kane Quaye, Ghana

Echewa, T. Obinkaram. *The Magic Tree: A Folktale from Nigeria*. Illustrated by E. B. Lewis. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1999.

The relatives of an orphan boy named Mbi (mm-BEE) treat him poorly until he discovers a magic tree. When Mbi sings to the tree, it quickly grows and provides wonderful fruit. As soon as the villagers understand that the tree will respond only to Mbi, he earns their respect and love. The watercolor illustrations are exquisite. (Grades 1–6)

Hunter's Shirt, Bamana culture, Mande tradition, Mali

Diakit , Baba Wagu . *The Hatseller and the Monkeys: A West African Folktale*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1999.

In this humorous tale, monkeys teach BaMusa the hat seller an important lesson through a proverb: An empty satchel cannot stand, or, it is with a full stomach that one thinks best. The Fulani culture of Mali provides the setting for this story; there are also European and British versions. (Kindergarten–grade 5)

Kente Cloth, Asante kingdom, Ghana

Porcupine Ring and **Bird Ring**, Asante kingdom, Ghana

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

(continued)

Kroll, Virginia L. *Masai and I*. Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1997.

After learning about the Maasai people of East Africa in school, Linda feels a sense of kinship and imagines how her life would be similar and different if she lived with the Maasai on the open plains instead of in an American city. The realistic oil and colored pencil illustrations feature people and scenes in both locales, including traditional Maasai beadwork necklaces. (Grades 1–5)

Assembly of Necklaces, Maasai culture, Kenya

Mollel, Tololwa M. *Big Boy*. Illustrated by E. B. Lewis. New York: Clarion Books, 1995.

Inspired by a theme that runs through African folklore—the myth of a boy with miraculous powers—the author sets this story in contemporary Tanzania, his native country, and gives it a realistic spin. (Kindergarten–grade 3)

Hunter's Shirt, Bamana culture, Mande tradition, Mali

Untitled (Three Girls and a Baby), Malick Sidibé, Mali

Paye, Won-Ldy, and Margaret H. Lippert. *Head, Body, Legs: A Story from Liberia*. Illustrated by Julie Paschikis. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2002.

This traditional creation story from the Dan people of north-eastern Liberia teaches the value of each part of the body, or each member of a family or community, working together cooperatively. (Preschool and kindergarten)

Assembly of Necklaces, Maasai culture, Kenya

Step toe, John. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1987.

Based on a story collected in Zimbabwe, this beautifully illustrated book describes the adventures of two lovely daughters of marriageable age invited to come before the King, who is looking for a wife.

As the story unfolds, the daughter's different personalities determine their fates. (Grades 4–12)

Assembly of Necklaces, Maasai culture, Kenya

Sowei Mask, Mende culture, Sierra Leone

Toussaint, Kimani Christopher. *The Old Hermit and the Boy Who Couldn't Stop Laughing: An African Fable*. Illustrated by Alphonso Lassiter. Philadelphia, Pa.: United African Educational and Scholarship Foundation, 1999.

This story, which originated with the Bini people of Nigeria, addresses the universal issue of teasing. When an unusual old man encounters a young boy who can't refrain from making fun of him, there are consequences. (Grades 3–6)

Basinjom Mask and Gown, Ejagham culture, Nigeria and Cameroon

Standing Figure, Kongo culture, Democratic Republic of Congo

Washington, Donna L. *A Pride of African Tales*. Illustrated by James Ransome. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004.

A professional storyteller retells six traditional African stories, which are enhanced with watercolor illustrations of rural African life. "Shansa Mutongo Shima," from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, describes how a beautiful young woman outwits a suspicious suitor by using a clever disguise made of leopard skins and antlers. "The Wedding Basket," from Nigeria, and "The Roof of Leaves," from the Congo, describe what can make or break a marriage. "The Talking Skull," from Cameroon, is a comical story about the dangers of talking too much. (Grades 3–12)

Assembly of Necklaces, Maasai culture, Kenya

Basinjom Mask and Gown, Ejagham culture, Nigeria and Cameroon

Mercedes-Benz Coffin, Kane Quaye, Ghana

Sowei Mask, Mende culture, Sierra Leone

Wisniewski, David. *Sundiata: Lion King of Mali*. New York: Clarion Books, 1992

Generations of griots (GREE-ohs), storytellers who preserve history and wisdom for many African ethnic groups, inspired this telling of the epic of Sundiata, from his birth to his exile to his triumphant return. Magnificent cut paper illustrations and an extended note on the history of Ghana, the first great empire of West Africa, make this book an excellent resource for teaching. (Grades 3–12)

Hunter's Shirt, Bamana culture, Mande tradition, Mali

General

Diouf, Sylviane A. *Kings and Queens of Central Africa*. New York: Franklin Watts, 2000.

———. *Kings and Queens of East Africa*. New York: Franklin Watts, 2000.

———. *Kings and Queens of Southern Africa*. New York: Franklin Watts, 2000.

———. *Kings and Queens of West Africa*. New York: Franklin Watts, 2000.

Each book in this series contains brief histories of important kingdoms of Africa, well-researched biographies of three rulers, a look at contemporary African life, a glossary, recommended books and websites. The books are well organized, well written, and liberally illustrated with photographs of the art and peoples of each region. (Grades 3–8)

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

(continued)

Knight, Margy Burns, and Mark Melnicove. *Africa is Not a Country*. Illustrated by Anne Sibley O'Brien. Brookfield, Conn.: Millbrook Press, 2000.

From Algeria to Zimbabwe, the incredible diversity of the fifty-three countries that make up the continent of Africa is presented through brief descriptions of the everyday lives of children who live in them. Colorful illustrations depict children walking to school on city streets, playing games in rural villages, riding ponies down snowy mountains, drinking tea in a desert tent, and cavorting on sandy beaches. (Kindergarten–grade 4)

Leslau, Charlotte, and Wolf Leslau, comp. *African Proverbs*. New York: Peter Pauper Press, Inc., 1985.

This is a lively, lovely selection of proverbs from various African countries and cultures, including Ghana, Sierra Leone, Kenya, and the Asante people. (All grades)

RELATED WEBSITES

Related to the Objects Featured in This Guide

African Art, African Voices: Long Steps Never Broke a Back

<http://www.philamuseum.org>

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pa.

Art from Africa: Long Steps Never Broke a Back

<http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/Exhibit/Archive/Longsteps/default.htm>

Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, Wash.

African Museums and Artists

AfricanCraft.com, <http://www.africancrafts.com>

African Crafts Online, Inc., Washington, D.C.

Showcases traditional artisans and modern artists, as well as designers whose work incorporates African materials or designs. Includes several lesson plans and opportunities to shop

African Museums and Related Organisations on the Internet

<http://www.icom.org/africom/africa1m.htm>

International Committee for Documentation, International Council of Museums, Paris, France

A checklist of museums in Africa, organized by country, with website and e-mail information

Africa, http://www.universes-in-universe.de/africa/e_kont.htm

Universes in Universe—Worlds of Art, Berlin, Germany. (Pat Binder and Gerhard Haupt, editors)

Lists a limited number of exhibitions, publications, and museums related to traditional and contemporary African art

Culture, Anthropology, and History

Ijele: Art eJournal of the African World, <http://www.ijele.com>

Africa Resource Center, Inc., Binghamton, N.Y.

Ijele is an electronic journal on “modern and contemporary art and photography, iconography, symbolism, and aesthetics of Africa and African artists around the world.”

Wonders of the African World, <http://www.pbs.org/wonders>

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. PBS, Alexandria, Va.

The online guide and information resource for the PBS television series *Wonders of the African World*, an exploration of the wealth of African history and culture.

Africa: One Continent, Many Worlds

<http://www.lam.mus.ca.us/africa/main.htm>

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, Calif.

Features maps, stories, an activity guide, classroom ideas, and lesson plans

Africanhiphop.com, <http://www.africanhiphop.com/>

Madunia Foundation, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Presents information about African hip-hop around the world

Modern African Art: A Basic Reading List

<http://www.sil.si.edu/SILPublications/ModernAfricanArt/modern-african-art.htm>

National Museum of African Art Library, Smithsonian Institution Libraries, Washington, D.C. (Janet Stanley, compiler)

An annotated bibliography of recent publications and exhibition catalogues as well as popular and scholarly periodicals

African Pottery, <http://www.uiowa.edu/~intl/rft/pottery.html>

Roy, Christopher. University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa

Explains techniques of traditional African pottery-making through slides, videos, essays, a list of publications, and a DVD available for purchase.

RELATED WEBSITES
(continued)

U.S. Museums with African Art Collections

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.
<http://www.artic.edu>

The High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Ga.
<http://www.high.org>

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, N.Y.
Timeline of Art History, <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/>

Museum for African Art, Long Island City, N.Y.
<http://www.africanart.org>

The Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, N.C.
<http://www.duke.edu/web/duma/>

National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C.
<http://www.nmafa.si.edu>

National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.
African Voices, <http://www.mnh.si.edu/africanvoices/>

Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, Mo.
African Art, <http://www.slam.org/african.html>

University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa
Art and Life in Africa Project, <http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/>

University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and
Anthropology, Philadelphia
<http://www.museum.upenn.edu>

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Va.
Our Collections: African Art,
http://www.vmfa.state.va.us/collections/collect_african.html

Vocabulary

additive	Refers to the process of adding. In making clay sculpture, the artist adds small pieces of clay to form the figure or shapes.
amulet	A charm used to ward off evil or to bring good luck
apprenticeship	A period of learning from a master or someone highly skilled or knowledgeable in a specific area
blacksmith	A person who forms objects by heating and hammering iron
candid snapshot	An informal, unposed photograph
camouflage	The technique of disguising objects or people so that they blend in with the surrounding environment
commercial photographer	Someone who makes photographs to sell to clients as mementos, for advertising or business use, or for other purposes—in contrast to someone who makes photographs primarily as art
composition	The underlying structure or arrangement of the different elements of a work of art
concentric	Having a common center. Usually said of circles or spheres
contrast	Opposition or juxtaposition of different forms, lines, or colors in a work of art
custom-made	Made specifically for an individual customer
design element	The building blocks used in art: line, shape, value, color, space, form, and texture
ensemble	An entire costume or outfit, with all the parts in harmony
formal portrait	A painting, photograph, sculpture, or other representation of a person who sits or stands in a deliberate pose
geometric	Having the straight or curving lines or shapes used in geometry
geometry	The branch of mathematics that deals with the properties, measurement, and relationships of points, lines, angles, and figures in space
gourd	The hard-shelled fruit of any plant belonging to the family that includes pumpkins, cucumbers, and zucchini. Gourds are sometimes called calabashes. When the insides are removed and the shell is dried, gourds can be used as bottles, dippers, spoons, and scrapers.

horizontal	Parallel to level ground or the horizon
lustrous	Shiny, luminous
palanquin	An enclosed chair suspended from poles and carried on the shoulders of four or more people
pattern	A decorative design composed of elements in a regular arrangement
pose	A body position assumed deliberately for an artistic purpose
raffia	A fiber obtained from the leaves of the raffia palm and used for making mats, baskets, hats, and costumes
reduction firing	A technique in which the amount of oxygen is limited inside a kiln in order to produce special, unpredictable effects on the surface of the clay. This process is popular with artist-potters who enjoy the surprising results.
right angle	The angle formed by two intersecting, perpendicular lines; a 90-degree angle
rite of passage	A ceremony or special event marking a person's change of status, such as the entrance into a special group, or passage from one stage of life to another
ritual	A ceremony or rite; any pattern of behavior regularly performed in a set manner
subtractive	Refers to the process of taking away. Carving wood or stone is a subtractive process.
symbol	Something chosen to represent something else. In a work of art, colors and objects are often used symbolically.
symmetry	A situation in which the size, shape, and location of parts on the left and right sides, or top and bottom, of a composition or object are the same on opposite sides of an imaginary center dividing line (bilateral symmetry) or are arranged regularly around a center point (radial symmetry)
vertical	In a position or direction that is perpendicular to the horizon; upright
warp	The set of yarns or threads placed lengthwise in a loom, crossed by and interlaced with the filling or weft
weft	The yarns or threads drawn under and over the warp in a crosswise direction to create a woven fabric