



Lesson Plan

Animals in African Art

Level

Upper elementary and middle school

Objectives

1. Students will identify examples of animal symbolism.
2. Students will look at and discuss works of art from Africa that embody animal symbolism.
3. Students will research an animal from the African continent and identify its traits, characteristics, and powers.
4. Students will create a work of art combining the characteristics and powers of two or more of these animals.

Materials

Nature magazines, photographs of animals

Construction paper

Drawing paper and pencils, paint, and paintbrushes

Clay

Images

Image 5 Male and Female Antelope Headdresses

Image 6 Komo Headdress

Image 14 Linguist Staff

Image 16 Buffalo (see also the poster of this page)

Image 19 Helmet Mask

Image 23 Shrine

Introduction

Ask the students to look in newspapers and magazines (and through their clothing) to find visual examples of animals used as symbols (advertising, sports, government agencies, corporations, stores, etc.) and bring them to class. Discuss the animals and what they represent. For example, the eagle appears on some quarters as a symbol of the United States. Eagles is also the name of a Philadelphia football team. Ask the students what comes to mind when they think of each of the following:

lion	tiger	eagle
hawk	ram	jaguar
owl	lamb	mouse
elephant	donkey	blue jay

What features and abilities do these animals have that might stand for certain powers or might be metaphors for certain human characteristics, whether virtues or vices? Try to list at least ten. (For example, quiet as a mouse; stubborn as a donkey.)

Discussion of the Art

From the list of images on the prior page, choose works of art to project and discuss with the students. What animal or animals are represented in each work of art? Why did the artists choose these particular creatures? What skills, abilities, or powers do they symbolically express? In African art, animals may symbolize danger, power, wisdom, and transformation. The entire animal, selected parts of the animal, or combinations of animals and humans may be represented. Composite creatures contain the forces and attributes of many creatures and therefore are believed to have extraordinary powers.

Activity

The following activity could be part of a science/art class collaboration.

Make a list of animals of Africa that appear in this resource:

aardvark	elephant	mudfish
antelope	frog	snake
buffalo	leopard	spider
bird	lizard	

Have students choose an animal from the list to research on the Internet and in the library. They should create a small poster with the animal's picture and a list of its characteristics and special abilities (for example: runs fast, has camouflage, etc.). Display the student posters in the classroom or have students present their findings orally. Which animal characteristics would they most like to have?

Have students choose two or three animals from the class poster display. They may also choose different parts from each animal based on traits that they would like to combine. For example, the antelope's speed, the frog's camouflage, the bird's wings. With paper and pencil, they should sketch the animals and experiment with combining parts to form a composite creature. When they are satisfied with the results, they may create their own work of art incorporating their combination animal—a headdress, staff, clay figure, mask, altar shrine, or container. They may draw, paint, or sculpt the object in clay.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies/Art: Study animal symbols in works of art from other cultures: ancient Egypt, Assyria, Peru, India, medieval Europe.

Resources

The African Wildlife Foundation, www.awf.org.

Resources for Educators published by The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Art of Ancient Egypt: A Resource for Educators (Edith W. Watts. New York: MMA, 1998)—discussion of gods and goddesses.

The Arts of Korea: A Resource for Educators (Elizabeth Hammer, edited by Judith G. Smith. New York: MMA, 2002)—Korean rank badge lesson plan.

The Art of South and Southeast Asia: A Resource for Educators (Steven M. Kossak and Edith W. Watts. New York: MMA, 2001)—animal lesson plan.

Medieval Art: A Resource for Educators (Michael Norris. New York: MMA, 2005)—bestiary lesson plan.

The Royal Art of Benin: A Resource for Educators from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (Edith Watts, et al. New York: MMA, 1994)—discussion of animals.

These publications (except for the *The Royal Art of Benin*) may also be downloaded from the Museum's website at www.metmuseum.org/explore/classroom.asp. They are also available in the Museum's Library and Teacher Resource Center in the Uris Center for Education.

Assessment

What animal symbols did students incorporate into their composition or object? Why? How successful were they in combining the physical and symbolic qualities of each animal? How do these qualities relate to the object they have created? Ask the students to write a story about the object they created and its special powers.



Lesson Plan

The Power Behind the Throne

Level

Upper elementary, middle, and high school

Objectives

1. Students will identify symbolic imagery in an African chair and stool.
2. Students will discuss the function of art to represent rank, power, and status.
3. Students will design and construct their own throne or power chair.

Materials

Chair or stool (options):

- Construct a plywood chair or stool with large surfaces that can be painted, making it a permanent work of art
- Purchase an inexpensive chair or stool at a thrift shop or yard sale and modify it
- Borrow a school chair or stool and temporarily decorate it with cardboard, paper, and tape

Poster board and cardboard

Paints

Masking or duct tape

Upholstery tacks

Images

Image 31 Chair

Image 34 Stool

Supplemental images related to power:

Image 12 Ceremonial Ladle

Image 14 Linguist Staff

Image 16 Buffalo

Image 18 Veranda Post

Image 22 Plaque: Oba on Horseback (see also the poster of this image)

Image 25 Figure of a Chief

Introduction

Place the chair at the front of the classroom. Discuss how chairs can represent status, prestige, and power (perhaps mention the term “chairman”). In many cultures, the ruler sits on a special throne that may be an elaborate work of art, made of luxurious materials using time-consuming techniques. It may be larger or higher than ordinary chairs, decorated with symbols and insignia to represent rank and authority. Such chairs might not only serve as seats for the powerful ruler, but may also be a source of power themselves. They may require special care, and only be used during special events and ceremonies.

Discussion of the Art

Project images 31 and 34 and ask the students to describe how the artists conveyed rank, status, and power. (See the Comparisons for Classroom Discussion folder on the CD-ROM for easy projection of this pair.) What features identify the chair and stool as special places to sit? Discuss how the artist has adapted the female figure to be a support for the stool. What does she represent? Describe the pose and facial expression—what parts of the body are emphasized and what might that symbolize? Most traditional African rulers sat on stools. Discuss how the Chokwe chiefs were introduced to the European chair form and how they incorporated it into their own traditions. Why would a chief want scenes of daily and ritual life carved onto a chair?

Project the supplemental images and further discuss how the artists convey rank, status, and power in the works of art.

Activity

Explain that the students will create a class chair. Ask them to think about the figures depicted on the chair and stool (images 31 and 34). Have them identify notable figures from history, their community, and their families whom they respect and would wish to depict on a chair that represents power and authority. What rituals and special ceremonies might be included on a chair? Collaborate on a list of possibilities and refine the list—for example, use a generic grandmother figure to represent everyone’s grandmother, or a ceremony from each season to represent the entire year. Decide where the figures and scenes should be positioned—who should support the chair (to symbolize strength) and who should be depicted near the sitter’s head (to convey wisdom)? What other symbols might be added (such as animals, plants, special objects) to fill the rest of the surfaces? The chair itself can be altered; for example, place cardboard against the back of the chair to make it larger or higher.

Divide the class into smaller groups and assign each group one section of the chair. First, the groups should measure their area and sketch out a design on paper. They should then check in with the larger group and make changes based on input from the group. The designs may be transferred and painted directly on

the chair or painted onto poster board and/or cardboard that can be wrapped around the legs and taped in place, attached to the back and sides, etc. Various techniques (collage, painting, paper sculpture, papier mâché) may be used. A design of upholstery tacks can also be driven into the wood (see image 31).

Assessment

Assign each student a day that they may use the chair in the classroom. Certain privileges decided upon by the class in advance may be conferred upon the sitter. Ask each student to write a short paragraph about how he or she felt when sitting on the chair and what the images on the chair meant to them. Collect these impressions into a scrapbook or binder, including photographs, if desired. Invite guests (parents, other faculty, etc.) to the classroom to sit on the chair and record their impressions for the book as well.



Lesson Plan

The Human Figure and Abstraction

Level

Upper elementary and middle school

Objectives

1. Students will look at examples of the human face and form in African art.
2. Students will identify how features and parts of the body can be abstracted into geometric shapes or solids.
3. Students will experiment with abstraction by creating a figure or head with geometric shapes or solids.

Materials

Markers or crayons

Clay

Paper and scissors

Glue

Images

Faces

Image 20 Head of an Oba

Image 15 Memorial Head

Image 11 Mende Helmet Mask

Figures

Image 1 Seated Figure

Image 18 Veranda Post

Image 29 Seated Figure

Introduction

Ask one or two students to volunteer to have their bodies outlined on large sheets of paper that can be displayed at the front of the class. Using a marker or dark crayon, identify and outline geometric shapes in the figure: rectangles, triangles, ovals, etc. Add facial features, if desired, using geometric shapes. Next, label parts of the body with a concept that each might symbolize—head: intelligence; hands and fingers: skill; eyes: observation; legs: strength. How can anatomical features be changed to emphasize these ideas? Larger eyes, longer fingers, wider shoulders are some of the possibilities. What about pose and posture? Ask the students to look at examples of cartoons and works of art that exaggerate certain parts of the body. How do these figures compare with the outlined figure?

Older students: Choose a selection of representations of the human body from different time periods and cultures (refer to the Metropolitan Museum's collections online [www.metmuseum.org/worksofart] or the *Timeline of Art History* [www.metmuseum.org/toah]; or see the resources for educators listed below). Discuss how facial features and expressions, the scale of the figure as well as its proportions, pose, and gesture are represented. Also look at representations in popular culture, including cartoons, posters, advertising, etc.

Discussion of the Art

Project the images listed on the prior page, which show human faces or figures in African art. Notice the naturalistic features and the more abstract ones. Ask the students to find examples of geometric shapes and forms, including ovals, circles, squares, spheres, cubes, etc. Discuss the effect of simplifying and abstracting forms and its relationship to African concepts of beauty. What details have been added to the simplified forms? How does this individualize the figures? Look at the expression on the faces and the poses of the figures. Are there any features or parts of the body that are exaggerated or more prominent? What might this mean?

Activity

Distribute clay or construction paper. Have the students use geometric shapes or forms to design and construct a human face or figure. They may exaggerate the parts of the face and body to represent certain attributes like wisdom, speed, skill, imagination, dependability, or strength.

Resources

The Art of Renaissance Europe: A Resource for Educators (Bosiljka Raditsa et al. New York: MMA, 2000)—the human figure.

20th-Century Art: A Resource for Educators (Stella Paul. New York: MMA, 1999)—figural abstraction, Amedeo Modigliani, Willem de Kooning.

The Art of Ancient Egypt: A Resource for Educators (Edith W. Watts. New York: MMA, 1998)—depiction of the human figure.

The Art of South and Southeast Asia: A Resource for Educators (Steven M. Kossak and Edith W. Watts. New York: MMA, 2001)—figural sculpture.

These publications (except for *20th-Century Art*) may be downloaded from the Museum's website at www.metmuseum.org/explore/classroom.asp. They are also available in the Museum's Library and Teacher Resource Center in the Uris Center for Education.

Assessment

Display the finished artwork. How well did the students incorporate abstraction into their paper or clay figure? Did they emphasize any particular features?



Lesson Plan

African Art: Materials and Techniques

Level

Elementary and middle school

Objectives

1. Students will discuss the geography and ecology of sub-Saharan Africa.
2. Students will work with materials, techniques, and concepts associated with African art.

Materials

Terracotta or red clay, self-hardening or fire clay

Raffia

Beads, shells (or other embellishments)

Printed fabrics

Burlap and yarn

Colored tissue paper

Plastic flowerpot, empty and clean plastic water bottle, or cardboard box

Papier mâché

Images

Textiles

Image 33 Prestige Panel

Image 36 Apron

Image 38 Textile Mantle

Clay

Image 1 Seated Figure

Image 15 Memorial Head

Image 40 Untitled (Vessel)

Multimedia

Image 26 Palm-Wine Container

Introduction

The following activity could be part of a social studies/art class collaboration.

Display a map of Africa and assign students different regions in sub-Saharan Africa to research, identifying climate, geography, plants, animals, and other resources. Do these regions have contacts through trade with other parts of the world? Attach labels, stickers, photos, etc., to the areas around the map and string to indicate trade routes.

Discussion of the Art

Choose a selection of images listed on the prior page and ask students to identify the materials and techniques used to make them. Use the map of Africa to locate where each object originated. Were the materials native to this region or were they imported; for example, silk, raffia, gourds, beads? What technologies are needed to produce each object? In the case of the textiles, looms must be constructed to weave the fibers; clay objects must be fired in a kiln. What kinds of designs are on each object? If geometric patterns are used, do they have any symbolism? What surface embellishment decorates each object?

After looking at the works of art, students may wish to add more details to their map of Africa.

Activity

Ask students to bring materials to class, some for their own use and some to trade with other students. These could include beads, feathers, shells, fake fur, printed fabrics, and yarn. Order additional materials to supplement the items that the students bring in. The finished project can be a decorated piece of cloth, container, clay figure, or mask.

Textiles: Show students the Kuba textile (image 33). Distribute 12 x 12 inch squares of neutral-colored (tan, brown, black) burlap fabric, large plastic needles, and contrasting yarn (tan, brown, black). Demonstrate simple embroidery stitches—running stitches, back stitch, etc.—and show students how the open weave of the burlap can be used to chart a geometric design using stitches that run vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. Have students embroider a pattern that fills their square. They may wish to add beads, shells, a raffia fringe, or other embellishment to their textile.

Clay: Use self-hardening or terracotta fire clay to construct a figure, head, or vessel. Students may use coil and slab methods to build their object, then incise details and decorative patterns into the clay while it is still damp. After drying or firing, the object may be embellished with additional objects, a string of beads, cloth, or raffia, etc.

Multimedia: Ask students to bring a plastic water bottle, plastic flower pot, margarine tub, or other container to school. Using papier mâché, they should cover their container, changing the shape if they wish. When the papier mâché

is dry, they can paint it with a base coat. Then, using a pencil eraser dipped in paint, they should stipple an all-over design to simulate beads, covering the entire surface of the container. They may apply other decorations (like beads, yarn, shells, or fabric) with glue. If beads are not available, they can roll small pieces of colored tissue paper into wads and glue them to the surface.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Social Studies/Geography: Incorporate this activity into a study of Africa, its climate, ecology, regions, plants, animals, and natural resources. Identify materials used in the works of art that originate in Africa and others that are imported. Identify animals and their symbolism.

Resources

Medieval Art: A Resource for Educators (Michael Norris. New York: MMA, 2005)—materials and techniques lesson plan.

The Arts of Korea: A Resource for Educators (Elizabeth Hammer, edited by Judith G. Smith. New York: MMA, 2002)—clay lesson plan.

These publications may be downloaded from the Museum's website at www.metmuseum.org/explore/classroom.asp. They are also available in the Museum's Library and Teacher Resource Center in the Uris Center for Education.

Assessment

Display the finished objects. How well did the students use the materials and techniques to create their own works of art? Were they able to organize patterns, geometric shapes, and applied embellishment in a pleasing way?



Lesson Plan

Art and the Cycles of Life

Level

Elementary, middle, and high school

Objectives

1. Younger students will identify roles of family members and look at African figures of men and women.
2. Older students will identify notable events in the cycle of life, and look at African artworks designed to symbolize or accompany these stages.
3. Students will create their own work of art, a family grouping or an object designed to accompany a transitional event in their own life.

Younger Students

Materials

Clay

Paper, pencils, crayons, paints

Images

Image 4 Mother and Child / Seated Male with Lance

Image 7 Ancestral Couple

Image 13 Pair of Figures

Introduction

Have the students bring in photographs of their family. Discuss the ages of the family members and the role that each plays in the family—working outside the home, cooking meals, doing chores, taking care of pets.

Discussion of the Art

Show students the images of couples listed above. Ask them to describe the figures, their scale, poses, the parts of the body that are emphasized, and/or what each figure is holding. How do these relate to the role of the figure? What features (jewelry, hats) might reflect the status of each figure?

Activity

Have the students sketch their family members or sculpt them in clay, making sure that each person's role is identified by his or her clothing, objects, or pose.

Older Students

Materials

Mixed media

Images

Image 3	Mask and Hood (funeral)
Image 8	Mask (coming of age)
Image 11	Mende Helmet Mask (coming of age)
Image 13	Pair of Figures (adulthood)
Image 15	Memorial Head (memorializing the deceased)
Image 27	Reliquary Figure (honoring ancestors)

Introduction

Ask the students to think of the transitional events that have occurred in their families—a birth, wedding, birthday, first day of school, graduation, death of a loved one. How are these events marked through rituals, gifts, and special objects? For example, a wake is held for people to share memories of a deceased relative; a christening includes symbolic gifts to the baby like a silver cup or spoon; specially designed cakes are served at weddings and graduation parties.

Discussion of the Art

Why are life transitions important and how have African people marked these transitions? Project the images listed above and discuss the stage of life that each object represents, the ceremonies and rituals that accompany it (image 3: funeral; image 8: coming of age; image 11: coming of age; image 13: adulthood; image 15: memorializing the deceased; image 27: honoring ancestors). Students should think of the roles of men and women, young and old, and the cultural traditions in their community. How and why are ancestors commemorated?

Activity

Choose an individual transition or a special event, such as graduation, to commemorate in a work of art. Students may wish to honor a recently deceased family member by creating a remembrance object or container.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Visual Art: A class might wish to commemorate their graduation to another school or transition to another stage of life by creating a work of art to leave as a gift; for example, a mural, a special memory book with photographs and drawings, etc. Discuss other ways peoples of Africa, as well as other cultures, celebrate transitions in life. Consider poetry, music, song, and dance.

Resources

The Art of Renaissance Europe: A Resource for Educators (Bosiljka Raditsa et al. New York: MMA, 2000)—individual, family, society, world at large.

The Art of Ancient Egypt: A Resource for Educators (Edith W. Watts. New York: MMA, 1998)—funerary art.

Medieval Art: A Resource for Educators (Michael Norris. New York: MMA, 2005)—reliquaries.

A Masterwork of African Art: The Dogon Couple—Activities for Learning (Edith W. Watts, Alice W. Schwarz, and Rose Tejada. New York: MMA, 2002).

These publications (except for *A Masterwork of African Art: The Dogon Couple*) may be downloaded from the Museum's website at www.metmuseum.org/explore/classroom.asp. They are also available in the Museum's Library and Teacher Resource Center in the Uris Center for Education.

Assessment

How well did younger students represent the different age groups and stages of life of their families in their artwork? Were their roles defined by the use of symbolic imagery or objects?

How well did older students understand the concept of transitional events in their lives and represent them through a symbolic object?



Lesson Plan

Masks and Headdresses

Level

Elementary and middle school

Objectives

1. Students will look at and discuss African masks made for a variety of purposes.
2. Students will create a mask to represent a particular ceremony or event.

Materials

Cardboard, poster board
Raffia, yarn
Paint, markers

Images

Image 3	Mask and Hood
Image 5	Male and Female Antelope Headdresses
Image 6	Komo Headdress
Image 8	Mask (see also the poster of this image)
Image 10	Headdress
Image 11	Mende Helmet Mask
Image 19	Helmet Mask
Image 24	Janus-Faced Headdress
Image 32	Mask

Introduction

Think of reasons why masks are created and worn, including performances, ceremonies, holidays, didactic purposes, and for disguise and transformation. Students may have seen masks in a museum; can they be considered art? Why or why not? Since masks are worn by people, how do clothing and movement affect the wearing of the mask? What is the effect of a mask in performance, when accompanied by dancing, singing, instruments, special lighting?

Discussion of the Art

Select three or four images from the list above to show the students. What materials can the students identify? What or who might the mask represent? Is it a human face, an animal, a combination of animals? Does it incorporate geometric forms? Who wears the mask? What abstract or concrete ideas are embodied in the mask—forces of the spirit world, protection, ideal behavior? Discuss how masks

are used in ceremonies and rites. Read the descriptions of the images you have selected and discuss the additional costume elements worn by the performer as well as the function of the performance.

Activity

Ask the students to design a mask for a specific ceremony, ritual, or time of year. After choosing the purpose of the mask, they should make a list of three or four objects or features that will illustrate the idea, then sketch a design that combines these elements. The use of abstraction, patterns, metaphor, and embellishment can be simple or complex, depending on the age group.

Distribute cardboard, construction paper, or poster board in different colors, and have students construct their mask or headdress, attaching additional cardboard to make the mask three-dimensional. They may paint all or part of the mask, or attach raffia, yarn, beads, shells, fabric, twigs, etc.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Dance/Drama: Ask the students to design a costume to wear with their mask and/or to choreograph a dance or movement. They may add music or percussion sounds to accompany their performance.

Resources

You may want to view the video on the DVD included in this resource. Several segments show masks performed as part of a variety of celebrations in Africa.

Assessment

How well did the students incorporate a particular idea of an abstract concept, event, or ritual into their mask? Have the students wear their masks (and they may incorporate sounds, music, movement, dance, and additional costume elements) and see if the rest of the class can guess for what purpose the mask was created.