

UNIT II

Honoring People Through Art

Suggested Grade Level: 5th –12th

Unit Overview

In this unit, students will explore how Africans have honored special people through their artwork, both historical and contemporary. They will investigate and discuss art from several African cultures that honors kings, heroes, and other special people. Four lesson plans exploring the idea of honoring people through art will include: creating a royal throne, performing a masquerade, making a photomontage, and figurative sculpting.

Lesson 1 looks at the importance of royal thrones in African cultures, specifically looking at Asante stools. Students will then assemble found objects into a modern stool design that honors someone important to them.

In **Lesson 2** students will look at African ceremonies and celebrations that honor people and will create their own masquerade that honors their selected person. Students may work in groups to construct their masquerade.

Lesson 3 directs students to look at a photomontage made to honor and celebrate a great leader in society. Students will explore cultural meanings for remembrance and how the position and importance of the person in society can be communicated symbolically. Finally they will create a photomontage of their selected honorable person.

Lesson 4 examines both contemporary and historical sculptural art that honors African heroes. Students will understand how these artworks serve to honor a special person or symbolize national ideals. They will develop their own figurative sculpture of a special person in their lives.

UNIT II - HONORING PEOPLE THROUGH ART

Lesson One

Royal Thrones

LESSON PLAN

The Golden Stool is the primary symbol of the Asante nation. Legend has it that the Golden Stool of the Asante Kingdom dropped from heaven in about 1700 AD unto the lap of the founder King Osei Tutu. The Golden Stool became the focal point of the creation of the Akan confederacy, of which the most important people were the Asante. It is said that the Golden Stool contains the soul or *sunsum* of the nation. It is considered to be so sacred that no one is allowed to sit on it. In this lesson students will examine the importance of stools or thrones in African culture with particular emphasis on Asante stools. Students will then be making their own stool that honors an important person to them.

Background Information

Refer to the **Study Guide** section of this lesson.

Objectives

- Look at how African artists honor people through their artworks.
- Understand the role and importance of royal thrones and stools in Asante culture.
- Create art that honors someone special in their own life.

Elements and Principles

space, shape, value, texture, variety

Technique

Found object sculpture creating a stool form.

Materials

images in this lesson, map of Africa, sketchbook, pencils, found objects, wire, scissors, glue

Vocabulary (see glossary)

Asante, Akan, Ghana, Asantehene,

Engaging Students

After reviewing the information in the Study Guide section, begin a class discussion on a design that may be symbolic of a person they want to honor. Begin having students think about found objects, at home, in the school, or else where that they can assemble into a unique stool design that honors their person.

Essential Questions

- What is the significance of royal stools in the Asante culture?
- Do any other cultures have similar traditions?
- How will you select the qualities or characteristics of the person you wish to honor?
- How will you express those qualities in your artwork?

Activity

Students will be creating a sculptural stool form by assembling various found objects.

1. Have students brainstorm about various found objects they could use in the construction of a stool (soup cans, coffee cans, sticks, rocks, or various items from nature, etc.) Have them sketch out ideas in their sketchbooks. When they return to class next time have the students bring some found objects they would like to incorporate into the assembly of their stool.
2. When making the stool forms, materials may be assembled with the aid of glue, wire, or any other creative methods.
3. When the stools are completely assembled students should think of final embellishments and finishing touches to make their stool a royal throne. This can be achieved with various arts and crafts material (fake flowers, beads, glitter, etc.), paint (painting designs

and images), or more found objects (bottle caps, shard mosaics, etc.)

4. As an option, students may design and create a miniature scale stool or do a schematic sketch without constructing the actual 3-D artwork.

Reflection

Students can write about the creative process and experiences. Have students share their sculptures with each other and talk about their concept, assembly process, and experiences.

New Mexico Visual Arts Standards/Benchmarks for Grades 5-8

- 4A) Explore the influence of personal experiences, imagination and the dynamics of culture to works of art.
- 5B) Understand contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry.
 - 5B.1) Demonstrate how history, art and culture can influence each other in making and studying works of art.
- 6B) Recognize historical and cultural themes, trends, and styles in various works of art.

UNIT II - HONORING PEOPLE THROUGH ART

Lesson One Royal Thrones

STUDY GUIDE

Royal Thrones: Asante Stools



[<http://www.hamillgallery.com/ASANTE/AsanteStools/AbstractStools/AsanteStool27.html>]

Stools are central symbols of Akan polities. The practical and ritual use of stools is almost certainly ancient in Akan culture, and most probably predates contact with Islam and Europe. Throughout the Akan area, important persons commission carved stools for daily or ceremonial use. At a great man's death, his soul is transferred to his personal stool, now blackened

and consecrated for the purpose. In each Akan state, the blackened ancestral stools of kings and other royals are kept in a special shrine called a stool room, where collectively they represent the state's dynastic soul and history.

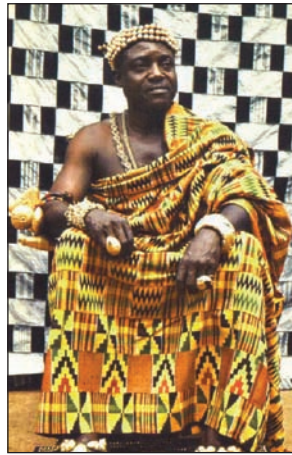
Most stool-type thrones were carved from one piece of wood and had a central supporting pedestal running between a base and a round or rectangular seat. The pedestal was usually either surrounded by carved human or animal figures or was itself ornately carved in the form of a human or animal figure. Many stool types exist, and like Akan culture itself, they are hierarchical. This ceremonial stool belongs to a prominent and wealthy chief, for it is decorated with silver strips.

In some cultures, different sizes of stools were used for different events. The Bamun people, for example, from the eastern grasslands of Cameroon, made fancy beaded stools in two sizes. Large stools were reserved for the king at ceremonial occasions; small stools were used in more personal settings, such as when the king was meeting with his court. (Chanda)



[<http://www.prempeh.org/points/symbol.html>]

The most famous African stool, which has never actually been used as a seat, is the Golden Stool of the Asante, displayed on its own chair. Oral tradition relates that the stool came into existence around 1700, during the reign of Osei Tutu, the first *asantehene*, the Asante paramount chief or king, and founder of the Asante Confederacy. Osei Tutu had a clever priest, Anokye, whose power caused the Golden Stool, which was said to contain the spirit of the Asante nation, to appear from the sky, where upon it fell onto the lap of Osei Tutu. Although it has never been blackened, the Golden Stool is considered spiritually powerful and even alive. It symbolizes to this day the unification of many Akan peoples under the Asante. It is still much revered, as may be inferred from its position on its own chair, higher than the Asante king beside whom it appears when both are seated “in state.” It has both locally cast and European bells attached, which are rung to announce its presence on the rare occasions when it is seen in public. (Perani)



Asante Chief
(Perani & Smith,
1998, p.115,
plate #7)

- In addition to the Yoruba people, several other African groups have kings who wear special clothes. Here is another leader. He is the Asantehene or Asante king of Ghana.
- What is he wearing?
- Notice he is wearing special Kente cloth. He is also holding a gold-handled, elephant-tail, flywhisk that can only be owned by the Asantehene. When he is “enstooled,” the ceremony of becoming Chief, he sits very briefly on the Golden Stool. The Golden Stool is a sacred symbol representing both the spiritual and material worlds holding the Asante people together. After that brief coronation, he sits on other stools as he does here.
- Do you know how the President of the United States is inaugurated as president? Do people wear special clothes or use special books or flags for that occasion?
- Can you think of a person who you really admire? Is that person someone you really know or someone famous who you admire?

References

Chanda, J. (1993). *African Arts & Culture*, Davis Publications, Inc., Worcester, Massachusetts.

Perani, Judith and Fred T. Smith (1998). *The Visual Arts of Africa: Gender, Power, and Life Cycle Rituals*. Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

UNIT II - HONORING PEOPLE THROUGH ART

Lesson Two

Masquerade Celebration

LESSON PLAN

Masquerades are the most important feature in many African cultures. A mask is created that metaphorically and symbolically represents a spirit, animal, or ancestor. This mask is accompanied with a complete costume that disguises the identity of the wearer who dances and performs in front of the community to music and singing. Masquerades are performed for many significant occasions such as important initiation rituals, celebrations or protection, marking life cycles (birth, marriage, death), and agricultural celebrations. In this lesson students will be creating their own masquerade including a mask, costume, and performance that celebrates the life and achievements of someone important to them.

Background Information

Refer to the **Study Guide** section of this lesson

Objectives

The students will:

- Study African masquerade performances that honor people.
- Create a masquerade performance (costume, song, and dance) for the person or people they wish to honor.
- Perform their masquerade for the class.

Elements or Principles

movement, variety, rhythm

Technique

Designing a costume from paper and other art materials, creating a vocal or instrumental song, and developing a dance performance.

Materials

paper, scissors, glue, beads, raffia, string/yarn, (any material that can be incorporated into a costume design), cd player, perhaps musical instruments.

Vocabulary (see glossary)

masquerade, performance

Engaging Students

Close your eyes and think about the person you wish to honor. Imagine that you are that person for one day, a special occasion, a performance masquerade party. How do you think your person would behave, dance, and express him or herself? What kind of costume would your person wear to a masquerade party? Once you feel you have a clear understanding of your person's costume, dance moves, and song, open your eyes and make it happen! You may work individually or in groups.

Essential Questions

- How can you communicate your person's interests and characteristics in a costume, dance, and song?
- What are your person's favorite colors, animals, designs, or hobbies and how can you express this artistically?
- What art elements can contribute toward your expression of the honored person?
- What is the strength of a masquerade?

Activity

1. Make a costume out of paper that communicates the essence of the person you are honoring. Add painted designs and/or decorative features to your costume.
2. Create a performance dance that you can do wearing your costume that communicates something about the person you are honoring.
3. Choose music to accompany your performance. Perhaps it is music your person enjoys or music that you feel adequately represents their persona.

Reflection

Students will perform their masquerade celebration and afterwards have the opportunity to share their process and experiences.

New Mexico Visual Arts Standards/Benchmarks

- 4A) Explore the influence of personal experiences, imagination and the dynamics of culture to works of art.
- 5B) Understand contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry.
 - 5B.1) Demonstrate how history, art and culture can influence each other in making and studying works of art.
- 6B) Recognize historical and cultural themes, trends, and styles in various works of art

UNIT II - HONORING PEOPLE THROUGH ART

Lesson Two Masquerade Celebration

STUDY GUIDE

Masquerade Performance

Masquerades constitute the artistic culmination of traditional African culture and art. Masquerade performances occur in many African cultures for the marking of life cycles (death, birth, and marriage), initiation rites, and agricultural cycles as well as celebration and communication with each other (education) and spiritual forces. African

masks, like those seen in exhibits, shops, and hanging on walls for décor are out of context. These masks are meant to be honored, used and seen in combination with elaborate costumes during a masquerade performance. This accoutrement transforms the dancer into the spirit embodied by the mask. An elaborate dance performance to musical accompaniment is performed. However, today many traditional ritual masquerades are used to entertain tourists.



Egungun Ancestral Masker performing at Imewuro Ijebu-Yoruba. (Abiodun et al., 1991, p.26)

Sometimes Yoruba people who have died are remembered by the living when an Egungun masked ancestor dancer appears. He is covered in bright cloth and dances in a vigorous way, sometimes spinning around.

- What do you notice?
- How do people in your family or country remember the people who have died?
- Is there anyone who you want to remember in your artwork?

A lot of African art is used by people in their community's everyday life. Some artworks only come out once a year or on special occasions. Some artwork is even kept secret, except to a few people to see. Many artworks are made and enjoyed in community with song, dance, music, and poetry. It's part of life!

UNIT II - HONORING PEOPLE THROUGH ART

Lesson Three - Photomontage

LESSON PLAN

In this lesson students will look at artwork by an African artist who is honoring and celebrating a leader. Students will explore why and how this art has been made and gain an understanding of the way these works function in African communities. Students will gather ideas through writing and sketching for their own photomontage artwork that will honor someone special in their life.

Background Information

Refer to the **Study Guide** section of this lesson.

Objectives

The students will:

- Look at how an African artist honors people through their art.
- Create art that honors someone special in their own life.

Elements and Principles

shape, value, space, variety, composition, tension, emphasis.

Technique

Cut and paste images into unified composition.

Materials

map of Africa, sketchbook, pencils, photographs of an individual to honor in the photomontage, magazines, scrap paper and materials.

Vocabulary

photomontage, commemorate, memorial

Engaging Students

Students will be creating their own photomontage to honor someone important in their own lives or in the life of their community. This montage is to celebrate someone special or to give as a gift of honor to them. Students will gather ideas for their photomontage.

Essential Questions

- How can artists honor important people through art?
- Are there artworks in your communities that celebrate special people?
- Why do you think artworks are made to commemorate people?
- Think of someone in your own life or someone who is famous who you would like to honor by making a poster or another kind of artwork that your teacher will suggest.

Activity

1. After the discussions have students brainstorm and write responses to questions such as:
 - Why do you want to honor, remember, or celebrate this person?
 - What are your favorite memories of this person or with this person?
 - What do they like or believe?
 - What qualities/characteristics do you most admire about them?
 - Why are they special to you?
 - What are some of the physical characteristics of this person?
 - What colors remind you of them? What colors, things, or shapes would symbolize this person for you? Why?

Also help students develop a list of questions for an interview with that person or others who knew of that person. Interview questions may include: What is this person most proud of in their life? What challenges have they overcome and how? What is their favorite memory?

2. At home students should acquire photographs of the individual and interview the individual or those who knew of that person. If this person is not alive or they do not know this person personally, they should do some research on the life of the person. Students

should consider their own feelings and knowledge about this person and put those feelings or memories into words and drawings and find photographs they could use in their photomontage.

3. **Important: Have students make copies of photo images that are too precious to be using in their photomontage.** Then have students search for a creative way, using appropriate art principles, to combine photo images, words (personal feelings, interview comments, etc.), and any sketches, drawings, or photograph images that are appropriate to the piece into one unified artwork.

Reflection

Students may be asked to write a paper that includes research and interview findings, self reflections and feelings, and artistic intent as well as the completion of the photomontage.

New Mexico Visual Arts Standards/ Benchmarks for Grades 5-8

- 4A) Explore the influence of personal experiences, imagination and the dynamics of culture to works of art.
- 5B) Understand contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry.
- 5B.1) Demonstrate how history, art and culture can influence each other in making and studying works of art.
- 6B) Recognize historical and cultural themes, trends, and styles in various works of art.

UNIT II - HONORING PEOPLE THROUGH ART

Lesson Three Photomontage

STUDY GUIDE

Nelson Mandela

Some African artists in the past and today have made artworks to honor, remember, and celebrate special people who were important in their own lives or in their communities. For example, artists have made artworks to honor the kings who often served as both political and spiritual leaders. Many modern leaders such as

Nelson Mandela, are remembered for helping African countries struggle for independence from colonial rule. Ordinary people are also remembered, especially at their funerals, for all the good things they have done in their lives. Many people may be important and valued members of the African community.



Nelson Mandela
South Africa

This is a picture of Nelson Mandela.

Soweto is a famous city near Johannesburg where Mandela and many Blacks lived.



Nelson Mandela was born on 18th July, 1918, and has spent most of his life fighting for the freedom of his beloved country, South Africa. He is a famous leader who fought for equal treatment for Black people in South Africa. When he was a young man the country had a system of laws called *apartheid*, which means “apartness.” This system separated people by the color of their skin. These laws did not allow Blacks, Indians (who were people from India), or Coloureds (people with mixed backgrounds) to have most of the rights guaranteed to the White people in terms of the good land, a good education, the better jobs, or respect. These laws were strictly enforced by the police and many people died fighting against injustice.

Because Nelson Mandela was such a strong leader against apartheid, he was imprisoned for 27 years by the government of South Africa. While Nelson Mandela was in prison, many people fought and died to gain freedom and justice. He was finally released from prison on February 11, 1990. When the country of South Africa finally became free in 1994 and Blacks were allowed to vote for the first time, Mandela was elected the first president. South Africa was the last African country to achieve independence.

Nelson Mandela and his wife, Winnie Mandela. This is a photo collage with three photographs.



The picture in the foreground shows Nelson and his wife, Winnie Mandela, after he was released from prison. This picture was taken when he came to the United States to receive the Congressional Gold Medal. The picture behind shows him as a younger man and the one in back shows him boxing with Jerry Moloi, a famous boxer, in a gym for exercise.

- What do you think the artist is expressing in this photo collage? Why? What has the artist done to give you that idea or feeling?

Did you know that Nelson Mandela is also an artist?

In 2002, Nelson Mandela made some drawings that were changed into prints that he sold in 2003 to make money for orphan children and people with HIV. Famous people like Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover bought the prints. Mandela made millions of dollars from his art. He called his drawings “My Robben Island” after the place where he was imprisoned for 17 years. He was in prison for a total of 27 years. The exhibit of his art was shown on Robben Island on February 7, 2003.

In 1994 he became the first Black president of South Africa, the last country to be free from colonial rule.

Questions for the Class

- What did he do that made him a famous hero both in his country and for people around the world?
- What do you think the artist is expressing in this photo collage? Why?
- What has the artist done to give you that idea or feeling?
- Why did he win the Nobel Peace Prize?

UNIT II - HONORING PEOPLE THROUGH ART

Lesson Four

Figurative Sculpture

LESSON PLAN

In this lesson students will look at contemporary artworks that honor African ancestors or important figures, such as Kwame Nkrumah, and examples of African figurative sculpture. Students will understand how these artworks serve to honor important or special people. They will develop their own figurative sculpture honoring a person.

Background Information

Refer to the **Study Guide** section of this lesson.

Objectives

The students will:

- Look at African sculptural figures and discuss how African artists have honored a person in a three-dimensional sculptural form.
- Brainstorm, research, and gather ideas and information about a person they want to honor in their artwork.
- Create a figurative sculpture that honors a person.

Elements and Principles

form, texture, shape, emphasis, proportion

Technique

Working with clay or plaster to create a sculpture of a figure.

Materials

African art images, map of Africa, sketchbook or paper, pencils and other materials for sketchbook work, clay or plaster, water bowls, newspaper, clay tools, plastic bags, tape

Vocabulary

representational, abstract, symbolic

Engaging Students

Ask the students to discuss their research about a person they admire in their own lives and cultures. We learned about art made in many African countries to honor people, commemorate important ideas, or to recall important historical events.

Essential Questions

- How have African artists created sculptures that honor an individual?
- Are all figurative sculptures representational? abstract? symbolic?
- When looking at the African sculptural pieces, what are the identifiers that say this is an important person? (headdress, posture, size, symbol, use)
- How can they portray “honoring” in their sculpture? (posturing, symbols, unique dress)
- Encourage them to think of their research findings about what was important, unique, and great about their person whom they are honoring

Activity

Have students write down the three most important attributes or contributions about their person whom they want to honor. Then have them briefly sketch ideas for a three-dimensional sculptural form. They may use symbols (adornment, etc.) or gestures (royal stance, etc.) Their sculpture must be figurative.

Teacher begins with a demonstration of how to create a basic figurative form in sculpture. For example, show students how to create a basic form out of newspaper and tape to be covered by the plaster. Once students have created their basic figurative shape, encourage them to be creative with their sculptures.

Review the vocabulary terms and remind students that they are to communicate the three attributes about their person through their sculptural pieces.

When the sculptures are completed and bone dry, they may be fired and glazed (if clay) or if the sculptures are plaster, they may be sanded and painted. Additional items (clothing, jewelry, etc.) may be added (glued or hung on) for adornment.

Reflection

Have a gallery day where students walk around and look at each other's sculptures. Encourage positive criticism and discussion. Wrap up the reflection by allowing each student to share important points about their work and the process used to create it.

New Mexico Visual Arts Standards/ Benchmarks for Grades 5-8

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UNIT II - HONORING PEOPLE THROUGH ART

Lesson Four Figurative Sculpture

STUDY GUIDE

Figural Sculpture: Honoring a Person



Yoruba head mount for royal regalia for the Ooni, the king of Ile-Ife. 11th-12th century (Abiodun, R., et, al., 1991, p. 17). Located at the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Lagos, Nigeria. Online at [<http://www.yoruba.at/images/oniife.jpg>]

Yoruba artists have made artworks since ancient times to honor their leaders. For example, this life-size brass head was made in the 11th century to display the royal crown for the Ooni, the foremost Yoruba King of Ile-Ife, when the king was not wearing it. Based on what Yoruba scholars have written, this was probably not a portrait of the real Ooni at that time, but rather this sculpture would symbolize the ideal character and nature of the Ooni, who has acted as the foremost

political and spiritual leader since the beginning of Yoruba culture.

Looking Closely:

- What do you see?
- What do you think the artist wanted to express about the Ooni or king?
- Did you notice the holes along the hairline? These holes were probably used to attach the king's beaded crown. That crown may have been something like the crown you will see the Oba wearing in the next image.



Linked Pair of Edan, Osugbo, Ijebu, 19th-20th century (Abiodun, 1991, p.24)

This is the staff given to the male and female Yoruba Ogboni Elders who are the wise people who decide conflicts.

There are two figures with big heads and beards, joined with a chain and sitting on stools. Even though they both have beards, one is a woman and one is a man. This is a metaphor; it goes beyond what is seen to suggest something more powerful, some deeper meaning. This is common of much art in Africa. In this particular case, it means that the ancestor is not just a man and not just a woman, but they represent motherhood and fatherhood and all people. The chain conveys their interdependence. That means they need each other.

Maybe it represents the power to use their heads to make good and wise decisions.

She is placing her left hand over the right and hiding her thumbs as a sign of greeting. The man on the right holds the paired emblem of the society in his hands

Looking Closely:

- What do you see in this sculpture?
- What do you think their big heads mean?
- Notice the woman on the left. What is she doing with her hands?
- Can you think of anyone you know who does a special greeting with their hands?



Kwame Nkrumah on Ghanaian independence day. Kwame Nkrumah was a very famous leader in the country of Ghana. He led the people to independence from the British in 1957. Under Nkrumah leadership, literacy increased and many hospitals and schools were established.

Kwame Nkrumah

African people make artworks to show respect for famous leaders and heroes in many ways. Kwame Nkrumah, from Ghana, is the first famous leader we will study. He was the first president of Ghana. Ghana was the first country to gain independence from any of the European countries on the African continent. Before independence Ghana was called the Gold Coast. Kwame Nkrumah chose the name Ghana that he adapted from the famous 11th Century civilization called Ghana known for its government, education, culture, architecture, and gold.



Nkrumah Monument 12/19/02 Accra Country, Ghana

Photographer Mark Moxon

Looking Closely:

- What do you notice in this photograph?
- What feeling or idea do you get from this photograph?
- What did the photographer do to convey that feeling?
- What did the artists and architects do to show their feelings and ideas about President Nkrumah?
- Describe the design. How does your eye move around this photo?