

Art of Africa

Teacher Materials

Grade 4



MUSEUM
OF MODERN ART
UNIVERSITY

Art of Africa: Grade 4

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Shina Malulu Mask

Photo courtesy of Bill Mueller

<p>The Museum of Texas Tech University</p>	<p>The Museum of Texas Tech University is an educational, scientific, cultural, and research element of Texas Tech University. It consists of several components: the main Museum building, the Moody Planetarium, the Natural Science Research Laboratory, the research and educational elements of the Lubbock Lake Landmark, and the Val Verde County research site.</p>
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<p>Quick Facts about the Museum of Texas Tech University</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Museum Association was founded in 1929, the year of the beginning of the Great Depression. • The original location of the museum was the basement of Holden Hall on the then Texas Technological College campus. • The basement museum, named the West Texas Museum, opened its doors to the public in 1936. • Although the museum initially owned only a handful of objects, it now preserves over 2 million objects. • The current museum building opened in 1970, the same year its name changed to the Museum of Texas Tech University.
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<p>Mission Statement</p>	<p>The mission of the museum is to collect, preserve, interpret, and disseminate knowledge about natural and cultural material from Texas, the Southwest, and other regions related by natural history, heritage, and climate. The Museum's collections, exhibitions, programming, and research complement the diverse interests of Texas Tech and its role in public and professional education in local, state, national, and international communities. Through classroom instruction, practicum, and field work, the Museum provides both theoretical and practical education. It is dedicated to acting as a responsible partner to Texas Tech and the community of museums.</p>
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<p>Group Reservations</p>	<p>Reservations for touring the Museum are required, even for self-guided tours. Bookings must be made at least 2 weeks prior to your visit. Call (806) 742-2456 to reserve your tour time.</p>
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Art of Africa: Grade 4

<i>Introduction</i>	<p>This packet is designed to enhance the grade 4 Core Knowledge visual arts curriculum on Art of Africa.</p> <p>It includes topics for teacher-led discussions in the Art of the Sub-Saharan Gallery at the Museum, as well as student activities to accompany the discussions.</p> <p>The focus of the tour is on the artwork of peoples from the Central African Region, the Western Central Region, the African Coastal Region, and the Western Sudan Region.</p>
<i>Caution</i>	<p>Some of the sculptures in the exhibition are semi-nude. While this type of artwork is neither uncommon nor odious in the cultures in which it was created, some western sensibilities might be offended.</p> <p>It is always advisable to inform parents prior to a visit what their children will be viewing, and especially to prepare students prior to their visit. Proper museum etiquette suggests that the artwork is representative of a culture unlike our own and should be treated with respect.</p>
<i>Overarching theme: Masks</i>	<p>People interpret their culture artistically in various ways, depending on location, availability of materials, beliefs and traditions. In this tour of the Art of the Sub-Saharan Gallery, students will examine characteristics of several African cultures as they are artistically represented in masks. Students will compare and contrast artworks under the headings of line, shape, design, color, materials, pattern and texture.</p>

African Art

The commonalities within African art lie in the “communal” as opposed to the “individual” approach to the creative process. Most African art focuses on key elements of life and the forces in nature as they impact the life of the community. Dominant aspects include birth, death, the roles of men, women and children, maturation, sickness, health, the importance of food and water, leadership, and human relationships with nature. Rain, lightning, drought, floods, and other events of nature are also prevalent icons in African art.

The cultural material from sub-Saharan Africa is a method of communicating. In their original settings, some objects related to celebrations of joy, others to mourning; some were sacred, others secular. Each object is much more than it appears to be. To understand the individual work it is necessary to understand the culture from which it derives.

Masks

Masks play a particularly important role in the cultural material of Africa. The mask is to the face what body paint and costume are to the body, but masks are more profound. Almost everywhere the face is regarded as the most expressive part of the person. Masks are themselves faces. They are carved and colored in the likeness of spirits and other powerful and mystical beings. The most important features are emphasized, while other features may be reduced to simple geometric shapes.

To put on a mask is to become another being – one represented by the mask – and it is to be transformed from the mundane into something special and compelling. In many of these cultures, the things of nature – mountains, rivers, animals, and plants – are all thought to possess metaphysical qualities. This is true to the extent that the sculptor will placate the spirits of the trees that are cut down and made into masks.

The artist also treats the tools used to carve the mask with the same sort of respect. Sculptors become famous over wide regions for their particular artistry and attract apprentices who study with them for years. Representatives of other cultural groups may travel many miles to obtain a piece from a master carver for use in their own ceremonies.

<p>Pre-visit preparation</p>	<p>Prior to visiting the Museum, assign students 3 cultures to study. They will need to find one mask for each of the three cultures assigned. You will be studying one mask together (the Butterfly mask of the Bobo culture). Photocopy one culture matrix sheet per student and bring to the Museum (reproducible copy page 12 of this packet). An example of a partially completed matrix is also included for your information (pg. 13).</p> <p>Photocopy one Mask Template sheet (pg. 8) per student and bring to the Museum.</p> <p>You may bring pencils (no pens, please). Clipboards can be made available at the Museum. Be sure to request them when booking your visit.</p> <p>Prepare students by explaining what they will see when they get to the Museum, and what they are required to accomplish while at the Museum.</p>
<p>Visit to the Museum</p>	<p>Once you have signed in at the Guard's desk in the Main Lobby, proceed to the African Gallery.</p> <p>Masks are located throughout the gallery. There are 32 masks in total representing 18 cultures: Bobo (6 masks), BaKuba (1), BaPende (1), Baluba (2), BaMileke (2), BaKwele (2), BaPuna (1), Bwa (5), BaYaka (1), Dogon (1), Bete (1), Marka (2), Mossi (1), Idoma (1), Baga (1), Yoruba (2), Woyo (1), and Baule (1).</p>
<p>Teacher Discussion</p> <p>Notes</p>	<p>Locate the map of Africa. This shows where peoples are situated who created the masks that students will be studying.</p> <p><i>Discuss the following points:</i></p> <p>The Voltaic Peoples (inhabitants of areas around the Upper Volta River) of the Western Sudan were mostly farmers, farming millet and sorghum. This is comparative to West Texas agriculture (cotton). The Mossi are the largest group of Voltaic Peoples. Others are the Bobo, Bwa, Nuna, Ko, and Gurunsi. All these groups share a common religious belief centered on Do, a spirit of the bush.</p> <p>All masks of the Voltaic Peoples represent Do or its children.</p> <p>The masks are simplified abstract faces or animal heads with geometric decorations painted in red, white or black.</p> <p>If masks are danced properly, they may serve to bestow good crops and health, and insure prosperity for the community. Masks are normally repainted after every dance.</p>

For the Bwa, the mask is part of the larger culture of costume, dance and ritual performance. The mask's dancer assumes the identity of the spirit it represents and communicates its message. It is often used during rites of passage, initiation, and funerals.

Complete the group activity:

Find the butterfly mask behind the barrier by the map. Using this as an example with the whole class, fill in the first column of the culture matrix together, discussing each heading and describing the attributes of the mask according to the headings. A vocabulary list is provided on pages 9-10.



Butterfly Mask

Photo courtesy of Bill Mueller

<p><i>Student Activity</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students complete the culture matrix for the desired cultures. Instruct students to locate masks in the gallery from each culture they have chosen or been assigned. Have them fill in the name of the culture on their culture matrix, then fill in each blank underneath the culture heading with a brief description of the mask. 2. Have students select one mask and sketch it on the back of the culture matrix sheet, making note of lines, colors, and materials. 3. Using the mask template provided (p. 8), have students create their own mask that incorporates elements of the masks on display and their own beliefs (i.e. western popular culture).
<p><i>Post-visit classroom Activities</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the information gathered at the Museum on the culture matrix sheets. Discuss similarities and differences among all the masks. 2. Discuss what can be inferred about the cultures from the information gathered about the masks. 3. Choose one cultural group and learn about it in greater detail (individual or small group work). 4. Create a mask that incorporates information gathered about the masks at the Museum. (See Mask Art Activity, p. 11)

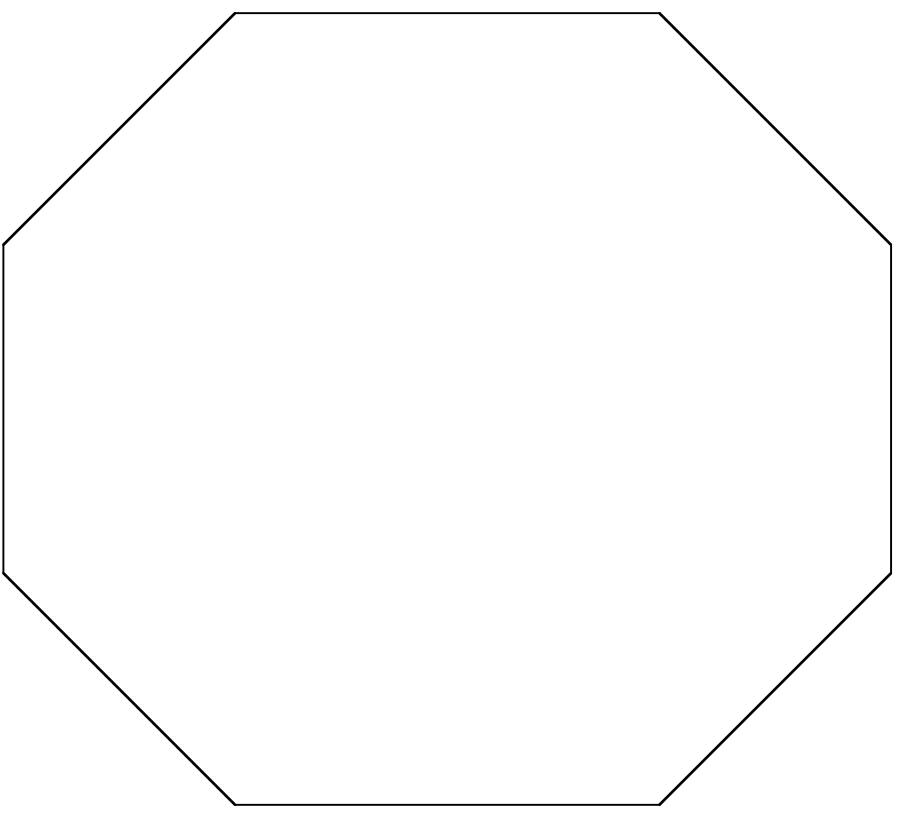


Bird Mask

Photo courtesy of Bill Mueller

Mask Template

Using the template below, design a mask that best represents your beliefs and culture. How is your mask the same as some of the masks in the African Art exhibition? How is your mask different?



Vocabulary

Abstract Images or artwork that uses designs, colors, textures, and shapes that may not look real but emphasizes moods or feelings. Images are often rendered difficult or impossible to identify in terms of our normal visual experience.

Color The hue or value of an object. Hue generally refers to the pure spectrum colors, or the color names – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet – that appear in a rainbow. Value is the lightness or darkness of a color. Paint primaries are red, blue and yellow. Printer primaries (for color printers) are magenta, cyan, and yellow. Complements are colors that are opposite to each other on a color wheel or hue circle. When mixed with one another in paint, complements result in muted tones.

Design The creative and organized arrangement of the elements of the artwork, such as lines, colors, textures, shapes.

Form The organization of shapes, masses, or groups of elements in an artwork. Form and shape imply space; they can be two- or three-dimensional. Form and shape can be either **organic** (naturally occurring) or **geometric** (named shapes such as square, triangle, circle, cube, sphere that are usually constructed or human-made). Not all constructed objects are geometric; some have irregular contours. Not all naturally occurring objects are organic, as in the example of snowflakes and soap bubbles that are geometric in form.

Line The path of a moving point through space, with a dimension of length. It has a position and a direction in space. Lines can vary in width, movement, direction, length, size, position, number, density, curvature, and color. Lines are created by **points**. Lines create shapes or planes, and volume. Lines can be an artificial creation of an artist, but can also be found in nature as **structural features** (i.e. branches) or as **surface designs** (i.e. stripes on a zebra or seashell). Combining lines creates textures and patterns, which develops into form and value. Expressive qualities of lines include calligraphy, maps, floor plans, and graphs. Through its character and direction, lines communicate **emotion**: horizontal lines suggest a restful feeling (objects parallel to the earth that are at rest in relation to gravity give a feeling of repose); vertical lines communicate feelings of spirituality or loftiness, extending upwards beyond human reach to the sky or heavens.

Materials The media used by an artist, such as wood, raffia, paint, beads, shells, charcoal, clay.

Naturalistic Images of the environment that are recognizable, as would be seen in daily life.

Pattern The repetition of shapes, lines, or colors. Patterns can be found in nature, or constructed by humans. Patterns can be structured in the following ways: flow (as seen in water, stone); branching (river deltas); spiral; and packing & cracking (packing - the way a cluster of soap bubbles deforms each bubble that is added to the cluster; cracking – surfaces that shrink from loss of moisture, such as clay or old paint).

Realistic Recognizable objects and artworks that portrayed as we actually see them. Realistic art presents lifelike proportions, shadows, textures, and colors.

Shape A two-dimensional spatial form outlined by lines or changes in color, materials, or shading.

Space The visual or actual area around and within shapes or forms. Positive space defines the contents of a shape or form that is bound by edges or surfaces. Negative space refers to the area around a shape or form.

Texture The way a surface looks and feels – smooth, bumpy, cold, rough, warm, etc.

Value The lightness or darkness of tones or colors.

Mask Art Activity

Materials

corrugated cardboard (old cardboard box)
scissors
paint (poster/tempera paint): brown, black, red, white
paint brushes
raffia, beads, string, feathers, shells

Directions

1. Think about some of the masks on display at the Museum. Decide on a design for your mask.
Keep in mind that you'll have to cut out the pieces, so you'll want to make them fairly basic shapes.
2. Sketch out your design on a piece of paper.
3. Sketch out the design on the cardboard.
4. Cut out any eye, mouth or nose openings. Cut the cardboard into the desired shape with scissors (such as an abstract human or animal design).
5. Paint the cardboard dark brown. Let dry.
6. Add decorations in black, red, or white such as geometric designs, thick lines.
7. Add raffia, beads, feathers, and shells.

Culture Matrix

	Culture:	Culture:	Culture:	Culture:
Mask Name				
Region				
Line				
Shape				
Design				
Color				
Materials				
Pattern				
Texture				

Culture Matrix

1

Culture Matrix

	Culture: <i>Baka</i>	Culture: <i>Bakuba</i>	Culture: <i>Bwa</i>	Culture:
Mask Name	<i>Butterfly</i>	<i>Shina Nshulu</i>		
Region	<i>western Sudan</i>	<i>Central African</i>		
Line	<i>vertical, thick, circle zig-zag</i>	<i>straight, thick 1 large painted curved</i>		
Shape	<i>rectangular</i>	<i>face</i>		
Design	<i>human face (small) large decorated "wings"</i>	<i>human abstract face decorated</i>		
Color	<i>cream, brown, black</i>	<i>brown, black, red</i>		
Materials	<i>wood, paint</i>	<i>wood, paint, beads, feathers, cowrie shells</i>		
Pattern	<i>geometric: circles, diamonds, triangles, zig-zags</i>	<i>repeated in cowrie shells beads-blue & white and black and white triangles</i>		
Texture	<i>smooth</i>	<i>smooth, hard feathers-soft shells-lumpy</i>		

