

AFRICAN ART COLLECTION

Group I

Kindergarten and First Grade Animals in African Art

A. Animals

1. Bush cow mask (also labeled EC 15) from the Mama culture of northern Nigeria.
2. Bird Carving from the Senufo culture of the Ivory Coast.
3. a,b,c Three soapstone carvings of elephants.
4. Wooden Giraffe.
5. A & B: Chi Waras Pair (male and female) from the Bamana people of Mali.
6. Traditional Tie-dye & Batik from Nigeria or the Ivory Coast
7. Kpan Mask from the Baule People of the Ivory Coast
8. Carved Wooden Elephant
9. Carved Soapstone Hippo

B. Other items that must be kept with this Group:

1. Inventory Folder
2. Blue notebook with handout on entire African Art collection.
3. *The Discerning Eye: African Art from the Collection of Carl and Wilma Zabel* by Charles Bordogna.
4. Videotape of Africa Day 2002
5. Family Guide: Images of Power and Identity
6. Framed ID

African Art Collection

Group 1: Animals in African Art (For Kindergarten and First Grade):

Questions

- Is Africa a Country or a Continent?
- Can you find some of the countries of Africa on a map?
- What animals live in Africa?
- What do certain animals make you think of?
- If you could be an African animal, which one would you be?
- Do you know any American sports teams that have animal connections?

Exploring the Use of Costumes:

- Have you ever worn a costume?
 - Some dancers in Africa wear costumes in order to pretend to be animals. African costumes are made of Fabrics, beads, raffia, wood, and various found objects.
- When are costumes worn?
 - At dances celebrating weddings, farming, funerals, and many social events.
- Why does the animal mask look the way it does?
(It usually presents ideas associated with the animal.)

Examples of African Masks in this collection include:

Item 1: Bush cow mask from the Mama Culture of northern Nigeria

The powerful forces of nature regularly intervene to provide fertility of both humans and of the fields on which farmers depend for sustenance. A symbol of this power throughout Africa is the great bush buffalo, one of the most feared of African mammals. Among Mama (Katana) peoples of northern Nigeria masks that represent the bush cow are used by a secret society to which only men can belong, which is called *mangam*. The purpose of the society is to insure agricultural fertility and the general well-being of the community. The power of the society is transmitted through the ancestors, who have the ability to intervene with the nature spirits on behalf of their descendants, and the Mama (Katana) say that these masked spirits are the ancestors returned from the grave.

(Art and Life in Africa: University of Iowa Museum of Art,
<https://africa.uima.uiowa.edu/chapters/abundance/agricultural/>)

Item2: Bird Carving from the Senufo culture of the Ivory Coast.

The object was given as a prize to outstanding cultivators of farms. With a stick in the belly it was paraded as part of a ritual. The bird form is of significance,

since birds are seen as divine messengers able to communicate with the spirit world and come back to earth.

Items 5A and 5B: Chi Waras Pair (male and female) from the Bamana People of Mali
To the Bamana people, farming is the most important and noblest profession. At planting time, men of the Chi-Wara association of farmers dance with headdresses like these in the fields to honor Chi-Wara, the mythical “farming animal” that taught agriculture to the ancestors of the Bamana. (The statue is attached to a basket worn on the head.) The headdresses, always danced in male and female pairs, depict the antelope-like-Chia-Wara and display the ingredients of successful cultivation. The long horns of the male Chi-Wara stand for the tall growth of millet, a grain. The long ears refer to the cultivators’ listening to the songs sung by women who encourage the men while they work in the fields; the open zigzag pattern in the neck symbolizes the sun’s path along the horizon between the two solstices.

The “female” Chi-Wara headdress, representing the earth, always accompanies the male headdress during the harvest dances. The baby carried by the female symbolizes baby human beings. As in the male Chi-Wara headdress, the long horns stand for the desired growth of tall millet. The element of the water is represented by the fiber costume attached to the headdress. When danced by a pair of men chosen as exemplary farmers, the headdresses symbolically combine those elements necessary for good agriculture: sun, Water, and solid rooting of the plant in the earth.

(Taken from African Art: Aesthetics and Meaning

Bayly Art Museum

University of Virginia

Charlottesville, Virginia

January 25- August 15, 1993

<http://static.lib.virginia.edu/artsandmedia/artmuseum/africanart/Exhibition.html> - see

Items 2 and 3 on Exhibition List)

See also the African Art Museum, Society of African Missions – The Legend of Chi Wara - <http://smafathers.org/museum/resources-ebooks/the-legend-of-chi-wara/>

Item 7: Kpan Mask from the Baule People of the Ivory Coast

The Kpan mask is a female spirit mask that embodies the power and beauty of women; she dances gracefully but with potential force. The eyes are downcast and heavily lidded indicating composure. In contrast the forceful bush cow emerges from the head indicating the power of her mind. Red masks are female masks; male masks are black. This mask may have been worn because of the smoothness of the interior.