

AFRICAN ART COLLECTION
Group III
Fourth and Fifth grades.
Ideas about Beauty, Life, Music and Adornment

A. Beauty:

- 1: Maiden Spirit mask from the Igbo culture of Nigeria
- 2: Beauty mask from the Igbo/Idoma people of South East Nigeria
- 17: Terracotta beauty mask from the Guro culture of the Ivory Coast
- 20: Igbo Shrine, Nigeria, Igbo culture

B. Life:

- 3: "Owari" or game board with bag of stones
- 4: Black cloth Ndebele Doll
- 18: Mwana Hiti doll from the Kwere people of Tanzania
- 19: Male mask from the Guro culture of the Ivory Coast

C. Music:

- 5: Triple drum
- 6: Calabash with beans on net.
- 7: Large gourd thumb piano or Kalimba probably from Nigeria.

D. Adornment:

- 8: Traditional necklace
- 9A: Two Zulu or South African napkin rings.
- 9B: Two Zulu beaded pins
- 10: Elephant hair bracelet from Uganda
- 11: Carving of female head from the Kambe People.
- 12: Carving of man with drum
- 13: Wooden hair pick/comb
- 14: Beaded loincloth used by child
- 15: Traditional printed cloth wrapper from Benin
- 16: Textile

E. Other Items that must be kept with this group:

- 1. Inventory Folder
- 2. Blue notebook: A detailed handout on the entire African Art Collection
- 3. Book: *Africa Adorned (missing)*
- 4. Book: *Speaking with Beads*
- 5. *Family Guide: Images of Power and Identity* (Smithsonian)
- 6. *The Discerning Eye: African Art from the Collection of Carl and Wilma Zabel* by Charles Bordogna.
- 7. A Videotape of Charles Bordogna on how to discuss the African Artifacts that were donated to TIC TOC in the year 2000
- 8. Detailed handout on the entire African Art Collection

African Art Group III in 2 containers; Outline and Notes as Given by Charles Bordogna.

African Collection

Group III: For Fourth and Fifth grades

Theme: Ideas about Beauty, Life, Music and Adornment in African Art

Introduction: Examples of Ideas in Art

(Note the specific examples in this introduction are not necessarily items in the collection itself.)

Fertility:

Appears in many female statues characterized by firm breasts, full stomachs, and healthy skin or surfaces as in the female figures of the Senufo culture of the Ivory Coast and the soweï masks of the Mende culture in Sierra Leone.

Moral Character:

Characterized by erect posture and health as in the human statues of the Baule culture of the Ivory Coast

Beauty:

See the polished surfaces of many pieces, for example, the soweï mask of the Mende culture of Sierra Leone and the round forehead of the akua'ba dolls of the Ashante culture in Ghana.

Coiffure:

Elaborately designed, often referring to attractiveness in body and character as in the soweï masks of the Bassa culture of Liberia.

Power and Creativity of Women:

See the Gelede masks of the Yoruba culture in Nigeria.

Spirituality:

See the composure on many face masks indicating insight, control, coolness, and dignity as in the portrait masks of the Baule culture of the Ivory Coast.

Youthfulness:

This quality is associated with life, vigor, and the ability to work and is seen on the statues of the Bamana culture in Mali.

Evil:

Expressed in either deformity masks such as the masks of the Ibibio culture of Nigeria. Evil can also be related to dangerous nature spirits and found in the masks of the Kran and Wee cultures in Liberia and the Ivory Coast.

Questions:

Do African cultures have an idea of beauty?

Yes! Beauty is often associated with youth, health, and moral goodness.

Do African cultures have formal ideas about art?

No! Most have informal ideas such as that masks should reflect good or bad traits, health or sickness, spirituality or wildness. While there is not art for art's sake in traditional African art, many objects seem to have been adorned with images simply to delight the owner. Hence, decoration for decoration's sake did exist.

Beauty:

Item 1: Maiden Spirit Mask from the Igbo Culture of Nigeria: a stylized representation of a beautiful female spirit (like Miss America) worn by men and danced in front of young men to inspire them to work hard hoping to appease that spirit.

For information please see the following museum websites:

https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/4880/Maiden_Spirit_Helmet_Mask_Agbogho_Mmwo

<http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/158949>

Item 2: Beauty Mask from the Igbo/Idoma People of South East Nigeria: note traditional features of filed teeth and scarification.

Item 17: Terracotta Beauty Mask from the Guro People of the Ivory Coast: Pottery is used to create beauty masks of spirits that people hang in their homes. Shows that this tribe is beginning to make some masks out of terracotta. European paints are also used. This mask was probably never used. It is intended to be a female spirit mask or personal possession used for health and protection. It represents beauty.

Life

Item 3: "Owari" or game board (labeled EC)

Item 4: Black Cloth Ndebele Doll: used by children; has wonderful traditional form.

Item 18: Mwana Hiti Doll from the Kwere people of Tanzania: Used by females as a spiritual force of protection and health. Given to young girls who believe there to be a spirit embodied in the doll. The doll is very rudimentary with a bi-crested coiffure that shows how the women traditionally wore their hair. The girls keep these dolls in personal shrines as they grow older.

For more information on the Kwere people please see the following museum websites:

<https://africa.uima.uiowa.edu/peoples/show/Kwere>

Item 19: Male mask from the Guro culture of the Ivory Coast: Male mask with glistening black skin showing composure and inner spiritual strength. Not made to be worn, probably a house mask of an ancestral spirit, it shows the revered quality of composure.

African Art Group III in 2 containers; Outline and Notes as Given by Charles Bordogna.

Music

Item 5: Triple Drum

Item 6: Calabash with Beans on Net: still used today, very traditional.

Item 7: Large Gourd Thumb Piano or Kalimba, probably from Nigeria.
Adornment

Item 8: Traditional Necklace with excellent detail.

Item 9A: Zulu or South African Napkin Rings: good example of beadwork

Item 9B: Zulu Beaded Pins

Item 10: Elephant Hair Bracelet from Uganda

Item 11: Carving of Female Head from the Kambe People: Illustrates adornment.

Item 12: Carving of Man with Drum: silver wire around the neck illustrates adornment.

Item 13: Wooden Hair pick/Comb

Item 14: Beaded Loincloth used by child

Item 15: Traditional Printed Cloth Wrapper from Benin

Item 16: Traditional Textile