

SENEGAL-AMERICA PROJECT LESSON PLAN



AUTHOR: Kathy Snyder & Zan Lombardo	GRADE LEVEL: Elementary School
SUBJECT: Art	DATE: December 11, 2005
TOPIC: Ashanti Gold Weights	
ESSENTIAL QUESTION: Why did the Ashanti create gold pieces in a variety of shapes and sizes?	
PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE: Students will learn about the Ashanti tribe's use of fancifully sculpted gold to use as weights for weighing gold dust and make their own versions out of clay, which will then be painted to look like gold. They will also create original proverbs to bring meaning to their sculptures.	
THINKING SKILL: T-7 Access and reflect diverse sources, contexts, disciplines and cultures.	
LESSON CONTENT: Cognitive—1. Students will identify Ashanti gold weights and their relation to the culture and history of West Africa. 2. Students will derive meaning from Ashanti proverbs and be able to create their own proverbs. 3. Students will be able to brainstorm a list of appropriate objects and figures to sculpt from listening to or reading the Ashanti proverbs. Psychomotor—4. Students will sculpt small clay figurines of appropriate objects. 5. Students will paint their fired clay weights with gold paint. Affective—6. Students will communicate their ideas and imagination through sculpting recognizable shapes from clay. 7. Students will make connections between proverbs and their clay creations and be able to explain and share them with their classmates.	
PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES: 1.B. Students will recognize and use a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce review and revise original works in the arts. (shape, form) 1.E. Students will demonstrate the ability to define objects, express emotions, illustrate an action or relate an experience through creation of works in the arts. 1.H. Students will handle materials, equipment and tools safely. 1.K. Students will know and use traditional and contemporary technologies for furthering knowledge and understanding in the humanities. 2.A. Students will explain the historical, cultural and social context of an individual work in the arts. 2.G. Students will relate works in the arts to the geographic region of West Africa. 3.A. Students will recognize critical processes used in the examination of works in the arts and humanities (analyze, interpret, evaluate/form judgments). 4.B. Students will know how to communicate an informed individual opinion about the meaning of works in the arts.	

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES:

1. Use a balance scale to weigh small bags of "gold dust" (yellow sand) so the children understand the concept of using weights for measurement on a balance scale.
2. Teacher shows picture samples of Ashanti gold weights, explains the use of gold weights and discusses with the students how the Ashanti people created interesting shapes based on social life, proverbs and folk tales.
3. Students discuss meanings of proverbs and make a list of possible objects from nature to sculpt from those sources. (See list of Ashanti proverbs below.)
4. Choosing from the brainstormed list, students will shape objects, animals and people from small pieces of clay. When finished, clay is put away to dry and then is fired. (Model Magic clay can also be used if kiln is not available.)
5. Fired clay weights are painted with gold paint. As paint dries, students come up with proverbs of their own related to the figures they have sculpted.
6. Teacher asks for volunteers to share their figurines and original proverbs with the rest of the class. Students may use their gold weights to pretend to buy things with the weights (artwork, for example).

EVALUATION PROCEDURES:

Students volunteer to share their finished gold weights and self-invented proverbs with the class.

Rubric: Does fold weight sculpture show 3-D form and texture?

Students make comments on each other's work, in spoken or written form.

Teacher observation of process and product.

MATERIALS AND AIDS:

- Examples of Ashanti proverbs
- Globe or map of Africa to show West African countries of Ghana and Ivory Coast
- Balance scale
- Small bags of sand
- Clay
- Clay tools
- Gold paint
- Sketchbooks or paper and pencil

Since gold was always kept as dust (not worked as object or as ingots with fixed values), scales and weights were always required. They were already in use when the Portuguese arrived in the late 15th century, where observers remarked on the use of gold for personal adornment. As John Locke wrote following his voyage in 1554-5, "*Some of their women weare in their bare arms certain forsleeves made of the plate of beaten golde. On their fingers also they weare rings, made of golden wires, like a knot or a wreath;* while a traveler in 1693 mentions that *The gold they took here was all in Fetishes, which are small pieces wrought in many pretty figures, which the Blacks tie to all Parts of their Bodies for Ornament, and are generally very good gold.*" The subject matter of Ashanti weights is frequently symbolic - bound up not only with their social life, but also with their rich fabric of folk-tales (a legacy not, of course, restricted to the Ashanti), in that many weights illustrate tales and proverbs, many of them profound and humorous.

Again, the history of the Ashanti state is intimately connected to the gold trade, which cemented its power throughout West Africa, and its prestige abroad.

ASHANTI PROVERBS:

The knot tied by a wise man cannot be undone by a fool.

The leader has a right to his higher position by virtue of his greater wisdom.

A square, reef or Hercules knot design is often featured on objects of leadership art.

Hornbill Caught by a Snake

Although the snake does not fly, it has caught the hornbill, whose home is in the sky.

This represents optimism and patience.



According to legend, the hornbill was deeply indebted to the snake but did not pay its debts because it reasoned that it could always fly away if the snake tried to catch it. This tactic was successful until it got careless one day and the snake, which had been quietly and patiently for just this opportunity, caught it.

Headless Fish

How a fish should not be divided. The story associated with this gold weight is of a man who caught a fish and gave the head to his "head" first and older wife, and the rest (the edible part) to his second, younger and favorite wife. The head wife killed herself with grief over the insult, and the chief had his goldsmith make a gold weight in the form of a headless fish as a reminder of the discord that follows an unjust action.

Ivory Side-Blown War horns with Attached Enemy Jawbone Trophies

If a horn deserves a jawbone, they attach one to it.

Recognition of valor must be earned.

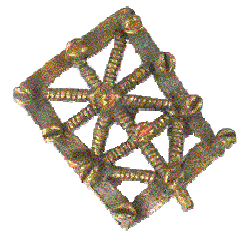
The jawbones of defeated enemies were attached to a leader's war horns as emblems of bravery, but also as a warning to potential enemies. Such use also dishonored the enemy, because war horns sang the praises of their owners, and the sounds now emerged through the very jaws of those whom he had slain.



Shield Framework

When a shield wears out, the framework still remains.

Men die, but their words and works live on, or, a person's true nature does not change, but may only be revealed through adversity.



Porcupine

You can tell from the quills of a porcupine whether he is prepared to fight or not.

This represents the readiness of the Asante nation to wage war on its enemies.

One should never rub bottoms with a porcupine.

Don't get into an altercation with someone who has more power than you do - such as the chief - or you will certainly be the loser.



The porcupine, or kotoko, is the Asante national emblem, and the motto "Kum apem a, apem beba" (Kill a thousand, a thousand will come) in reference to its quills as symbols of Asante warriors, is still quoted.

Two Birds Confronted over a Cockroach

Fowls will not spare a cockroach that falls in their midst.
He who falls victim to his enemies can expect little mercy.

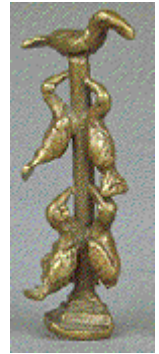


A Flock of Birds on a Tree

Only birds of the same clan or species play together on the same tree.
Class consciousness: Birds of a feather flock together.

Chicken Head

You do not need a big stick to break a cock's head.
A plea for appropriate action: small issues call for small responses,
more important ones call for more serious action.
Don't make a mountain out of a molehill.



Leopard

The rain wets the leopard's spots but does not wash them off.
The leopard cannot change its spots; a man's true nature will not change.



Information from <http://rubens.anu.edu.au/htdocs/surveys/african/ashanti/history.html>