

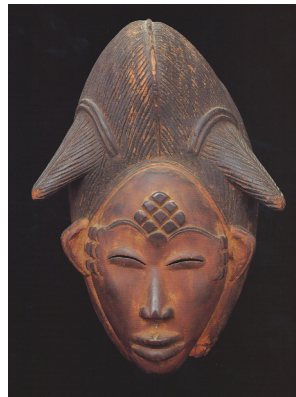
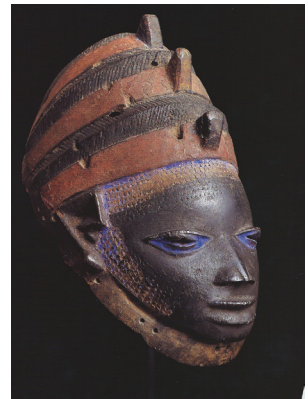
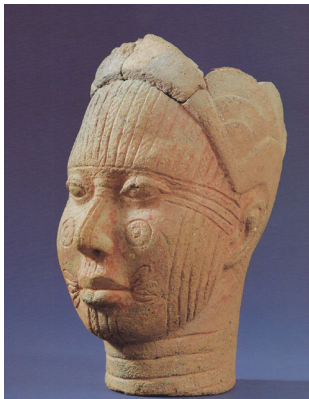
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# ART SMART

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6th Grade / January

THEME:  
African Masks



# 6th Grade Art Smart

## African Masks

### Quick Overview/Intro

#### **Function of Masks:**

- Ceremonial costume
- used for religious and social events to represent spirits of ancestors
- control good and evil forces
- they are believed to come alive with the spirit

#### **Pattern of Masks:**

- Patterns are used as information
- braided hairstyles often on the top
- can be male and/or female
- often adorned with crosses signifying the Islamic faith

#### **Style of Masks:**

- I. Traditional style - social, cultural values and religious beliefs
- II. Individual style - artists own vision

#### **Materials:**

- Made from various materials - copper, bronze, light stone, fabric, clay, wood
- Majority of masks are made from wood because of their access to forests and because they believe trees to be home to the spirits

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## Africa

### **Mask 1 (from present day Nigeria)**

- This is a mask made of terra-cotta, or fired clay. Made centuries ago by artists who specialized in working with clay.
- The marks on the mask adorn and beautify the terra cotta head, just as similar marks on people are considered a sign of beauty as well as ethnic identification.
- This mask was found in the present day city of Ife, that has always been an important urban center. Ancient terra cottas have been found at various sites in and around Ife, both near and far from the center of the city.

### **Mask 2 (from Zaire)**

- In many African societies, white, the color of kaolin clay, symbolizes ancestral spirits.
- It's large white eyes remind the initiates that their ancestors were watching over them as they underwent tests that marked the transition from childhood to adulthood.
- Notice the three lines below the eyes. With the white of ancestral spirits streaming down its cheeks, the mask witnesses the joys and sorrows of living generations.

### **Figure 4 (from Zaire)**

- The mirrored eyes and stomach of the Kongo figure remind people that the sculpture has the authority of the ancestors.
- This sculpture would be used in moments of social crisis to resolve conflicts and find solutions to problems that plagued Kongo communities.
- The sculpture's open mouth and raised right hand, which once held a weapon, show that the figure is ready to speak and act.

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## Africa

### **Mask 13 (from Nigeria)**

- In southwestern Nigeria, Yoruba men create gelede masks to honor women, and to encourage them to use their mystical powers constructively, rather than destructively.
- In Yoruba society, as in most African societies, it is usually only men who wear masks, even masks that represent women.
- Gelede masks like this are worn in performances that honor spiritually powerful women, elders and deities.
- Both the mask and performance would visually convey "the concept of balance, a female quality that men must understand in order to survive".

### **Mask 14 (from Mozambique)**

- This Makonde helmet mask was probably worn at a great festival of masks, staged after a long period of training or initiation when teenagers learn about the responsibilities of marriage and family life.
- Makonde masks are often very lifelike, this wooden helmet mask even has human hair.
- The zigzag, star and v-shaped marks on the face correspond to the ornamental tattoos or scarification marks once worn by Makonde men.
- These marks were permanent and used to record irreversible transitions. Makonde men received them during rights of passage.

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## Africa

### **Mask 15 (from Cote D'Ivoire, Africa)**

- 3 overlapping faces make it look like it is in constant motion.
- used for weddings, funerals, political meetings, solar & lunar eclipses in Muslim families.
- bright paint is reapplied prior to each Ramadan (occurs in the 9th month of the Islamic calendar and it is one of the 5 pillars of Islam).
- reflections of the positive, joyful side of man & culture.
- Shows the compatibility of Islam and African cultures - a bridge for any religious differences.

### **Mask 16 (from Cote D'Ivoire, Africa)We**

- This mask is meant to terrify.
- Masks become more important as they accomplish more and more magical feats.
- Elder masks wield more power than youth masks
- All masks are considered sacred.
- aggressive looking masks like this one are considered the greatest & most powerful.

### **Mask 18 (from Gabon, Africa -known as the gold coast)**

- This mask has delicate features
- An elaborate Coiffure (hair style)
- It's an example of "feminine beauty".
- worn by costumed male stilt dancers during funerals
- the stilt dancers tower above their audience (this also serves in judicial functions).

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## Africa

### **Mask 22 - Pendant Mask (from Cote D'Ivoire, Africa)**

- 19th century
- small, gold pendant mask (artist left his fingerprint on the forehead)
- these sometimes adorn the stools of Asante kings and chiefs.
- Also worn in the hair, attached to a cap or worn as a necklace.

# AFRICA



Akan	1
Asante	2
Bamana	3
Baule	4
Benin	5
Chokwe	6
Dogon	7
Ebrie	8
Fang	9
Kuba	10
Kongo	11
Ligbi	12
Makonde	13
Mbagani	14
Punu	15
Sapi	16
Yoruba	17
We	18