Threads of Change- Elementary Art

PERFORMING

- **Content Standard #1**: All students will apply skills and knowledge to perform in the arts.
  
  A- Use materials, technique, media technology, and processes to communicate ideas and experiences.  
  
  B- Use art material and tools safely and responsibly.  
  
  C- Use visual characteristics and organizational principles of art to communicate ideas.  
  
  D- Be involved in the process and presentation of a final product or exhibit.

CREATING

- **Content Standard # 2**: All students will apply skills and knowledge to create in the arts.
  
  A- Apply knowledge of materials, techniques, and processes to create artwork.  
  
  B- Apply knowledge of how visual characteristics and organizational principles communicate ideas.  
  
  C- Explore and understand prospective subject matter, ideas, and symbols for works of art.  
  
  - **Discuss**: Explore the symbolic feelings colors give. Distinguish between warm and cool colors. Compare these feelings to the symbolic colors in kente cloth.
    
    - Hang up one piece of construction paper for each of the primary and secondary colors. Brainstorm with students what feeling each color brings to mind. Write down the student’s responses on the corresponding colored paper. Leave the papers up for students to draw ideas from while creating.
  
  D- Select and use subject matter, symbols and ideas to communicate meaning.  
  
  - **Inspire**: Look at how people express ideas in African textiles. Have students draw inspiration from; the symbolic colors in kente cloth, the shifting shapes and meanings of batik adinkra symbols, or the narrative themes in appliqué quilt-like textiles (From the Threads of Change PowerPoint slide show of exhibit artifacts: Flag of King1, and Funerary Shrine Cloth). Students should then take this inspiration and apply it to creating symbols in their own work.
  
  E- Know different purposes of visual art to creatively convey ideas.
  
  - **Discuss**: This can be met similarly to content standard 2-D. In addition to exploring symbolic meaning, stress the reasons African textiles are created and used. For example, explain that kente cloth was originally created for kings to wear. The colors and patterns are symbols of the king and his ideals.
F- Use technology as a tool for creative expression.

  o **Inspire**- Use both new and old technology to create individual works of art.

    ▪ Use a student-friendly flat cardboard loom to create small-scale weavings.
      

    ▪ Use a digital camera and take photographs of each student. Print these headshots in black and white on colored paper. Allow students to cut out their face and use it while creating a layered paper appliqué-like effect. Students can use the work to tell a story about themselves. Inspiration should be taken from works like Flag of King1 and Funerary Shrine Cloth.

    ▪ Use a kid-friendly computer drawing program (such as the Kid Pix software installed in many elementary schools across the nation) to create patterns or symbols. Students could digitally draw their own Adinkra symbols, or a section of pattern like that in bogolanfini. Once the digital drawing is complete, several print-offs can be made on colored paper of the symbol or pattern. These print-offs can be cut out, and arranged to create a new work of art. Additional alterations can be made to the printout through the use of markers, paint, crayons, and even diluted bleach, applied with a q-tip, on colored paper.

**ANALYZING IN CONTEXT**

- **Content Standard #3**: All students will analyze, describe and evaluate works of art.

  A- Generalize about the effects of visual structures and functions and reflect upon these effects in personal work.

    o **Discuss**- Break down the stylized imagery of African textiles. Point out the basic shapes that make up these images and patterns. Help students use these shapes as structure when creating their own images inspired from African fabrics.

  B- Identify various purposes for creating works of visual art.

    o **Discuss**- Conduct a guided discussion about the different ways people use African textiles. Ask students what the purpose of fabric would be in different situations. Some questions to ask; What is the reason for fabric when someone wears it on their body? What about fabrics only worn for special occasions? What is the reason someone might create fabric to hang on a wall?

  C- Understand there are different responses to specific artworks.

    o **Discuss**- Talk with students about the differences between how our culture sees African textiles (as art objects) and how they function in their own culture (as symbolic vehicles or clothing as well as art objects).
Discuss- Engage students in discussion using an African textile as the subject. While showing an example, discuss the theme and purpose of the fabric. There should be no wrong answers, just a communal sharing of ideas.

D- Describe and compare the characteristics of personal artwork.

Writing- Create a writing prompt for students to complete after their artwork is finished. Depending on their grade level, ask students to describe what parts of their work is similar to the African textile from which it was inspired. Younger students could simply list elements taken from the cloth (shapes, colors, style of drawing, texture, subject), or even circle words from a list.

E- Understand how personal experiences can influence the development of artwork.

Writing- Create a project where students express a narrative image from their life. The style of imagery should draw inspiration from African textiles. Inspiration can be taken from elements such as the geometric style of the Korhogo cloth. Students will draw out a special event or time in their lives using elements they find appealing in the Korhogo cloth. After the production of the piece is done, students should create a small ‘wall text’ describing what is happening in the image. The writing can be shown along side of the work when it is displayed.

ARTS IN CONTEXT

- Content Standard #4: All students will understand, analyze, and describe the arts in their historical, social and cultural contexts.

A- Know that the visual arts have a history and specific relationships to various cultures.

Discuss- Explain how textiles function within their culture.

- Bogolanfini cloth. Traditionally this fabric was worn as clothing by both men and women in Mali. Women wore bogolanfini as a dress during initiation rites. Men wear bogolanfini as tunics while hunting. The symbols on bogolanfini are believed to protect and heal the wearer. Today, bogolanfini is also produced for a purely aesthetic manner, many people buy bogolanfini for wall hangings.

- Kente cloth. In the past, kente was worn by Ghana’s royalty as a way to show power and wealth. Colors and patterns were combined to create cloth with specific meanings. Today, kente is more accessible to the public. This cloth is still held with importance and only worn during special occasions. Many modern American traditions incorporate kente, such as kente stoles worn with graduation robes.
• **Adire cloth.** Adire cloth was traditionally made by women. The patterns are created by using starch as a resist to dye. The creation of indigo dye is a difficult process, and only experts can naturally produce the rich dark blues. Today, efforts are being made to save this dwindling technique. Several art schools in West Africa teach indigo adire cloth dying techniques. Traditional processes are taught as well as new and inventive ways to utilize technology, such as synthetic dyes. These art schools also teach ‘traditional’ fine arts, such as painting and sculpting. Educators encourage the use of processes like adire in artwork.

B- Identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places.

  o **Game-** ‘Spot That African Textile!’ Create a Power Point slide-show which compares an African textile, and another artwork. Students can vote by raising hands which work they think is the African textile and which is not. For instance, “The Kiss” by Gustav Klimt and “The Couple” by Kasobane (located in the Slide Show of Textiles Threads of Change Exhibit).

C- Demonstrate how history, culture, and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art.

**CONNECTING TO OTHER ARTS, DISCIPLINES, AND LIFE**

• **Content Standard #5:** All students will recognize, analyze, and describe connections among the arts, between the arts and other disciplines; between the arts and everyday life.

A- Explain how visual arts have inherent relationships to everyday life.

  o **Discuss-** Help students see that fabric is artwork. Fabric can be functional as well as artistic (clothing, bedding, and decoration). Explain that people create deep meaning and attachment to the images and symbols on the fabric.

B- Identify various careers in the visual arts.

  o **Discuss-** Explore textiles design, fashion design, embroidery artists, tailors, textiles factory worker, quilters, and dye chemists.

  o **Discuss-** Explain how visual artists are influenced by African art and textiles (Pablo Picasso, Faith Ringgold, Amedeo Modigliani, Keith Harring, and Henri Matisse).

C- Understand and use comparative characteristics of the visual arts and other arts disciplines.

  o **Discuss-** Compare the slow development and steps of bogolanfini with composing music and layering sounds.

  o **Discuss-** Compare the expressive nature of adinkra symbols (or kente cloth) with oral traditions of storytelling and song.
Discuss- Compare the feelings expressed by kente cloth colors with gestures that create feeling in dance (ballet, hip-hop, tap, jazz). For example, red in kente cloth represents warfare and may be paired with harsh strong and quick dance moves.

D- Identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum.

Additional content to consider

- Adire – Indigo textiles among the Yoruba
  - 10 minutes. Explains the making of indigo dye.
    - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kn_6zinf7c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kn_6zinf7c)

- A Dyeing Art – Indigo & Cola Nut Textiles
  - 7 minutes. Explains adinkra wax printing and stitch gathering techniques.
    - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG1zd3b7q34](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG1zd3b7q34)

- Le Bogolan Partie 2
  - 10 minutes. Shows full bogolanfini stencil painting process, though not in English.
    - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXBoU68VJhc&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXBoU68VJhc&feature=related)

- Royal Funeral in Ghana- Dancing
  - 1 minute. Shows a man dancing while wearing a bogolanfini wrapper.
    - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5VCRjMqa8g&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5VCRjMqa8g&feature=related)

- Exploring Africa
  - In-depth and informative MSU based website that explains many aspects of Africa including history, economics, politics, and the arts.
    - [http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/](http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/)