

DUSABLE MUSEUM FIELD EXPERIENCE LESSON

Objective:	To understand the significance of African civilization
Related Gallery:	<i>Africa Speaks</i>
Grades:	Middle School to Secondary School

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITY

- ▶ Let your students examine the cowrie shell. Ask them if they can identify the item or if anyone has seen this item before. If someone can identify the cowrie shell, continue to ask where the item was seen and how was it being used.
- ▶ After students have read the article on cowrie shells, guide a discussion on the historical background of the cowrie shell as it relates to currency and Africa's economic system. Pose the question of why it was important for someone to acquire cowrie shells. Ask about some of the characteristics of cowrie shells as money – widely accepted, limited supply, durable, portable, valuable, ornamental and difficult to counterfeit.
- ▶ Let the students complete the *Student Investigation Worksheet for Artifacts*. Discuss the responses to these questions: How was it discovered in other places away from Africa? How did the cowrie shell get to that area? What does this cowrie shell tell us about African culture? How is this information different from the way in which the 'common' image of African civilization is presented? What other systems (i.e. religious or social) exist(ed) in African communities?
- ▶ Read and discuss the article, *The Trouble with 'Tribe.'* Administer the pre-test before your students read the article and then administer the post-test.

DURING MUSEUM VISIT

- ▶ As the students visit the gallery, *Africa Speaks*, have them list some of the African ethnic groups represented and their African nation.
- ▶ Ask them to describe the artifacts on display and their functions.

POST-MUSEUM ACTIVITY

- ▶ Have the students read about African proverbs. Suggested are: **"Ashes fly back into the face of he who throws them; The fool speaks, the wise man listens; To try and to fail, is not laziness."** Ask students to collect wise sayings from family members. Devise a list of African American sayings whose meanings are similar to selected African proverbs, i.e. **"Think before you speak; What goes around, comes around; and, If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."** Allow students to match the proverbs either because the meanings are similar or have opposite meanings.
- ▶ Ask students to select one proverb. In an essay, ask students to state the proverb's lesson, then relate a personal experience they can attribute to what they learned from the proverb.
- ▶ Have students read various African folktales such as those involving "Anansi the Spider" or "Brer Rabbit" in the *Uncle Remus Stories*. Discuss the characteristic traits possessed by these animals and those that the students observed in the *African Speaks* gallery. Discuss the similarities between "Anansi" and "Brer Rabbit." Ask the students to research the tales of *Uncle Remus* and the historical era in which they were written. Ask the students to write an opinion on what "hidden" lessons were being taught to enslaved people who listened to the *Uncle Remus Stories* and other folktales.
- ▶ Ask students to bring in a daily newspaper. Have them locate the 'International News' section. Have them read and discuss the articles focused on African news.

- ▶ Have students draw an accurate map of Africa or distribute a map of Africa. Ask them to color in those countries represented by the artifacts seen in the gallery, *Africa Speaks*. Have them list the African ethnic groups in those countries and the languages spoken there.

LEARNING TO LOOK

STUDENT INVESTIGATION WORKSHEET FOR ARTIFACTS

Artifact:	Anything made by human workmanship.
Primary Source:	An object, document, or firsthand account from the time period under discussion.
Secondary Source:	A secondhand object, document, or account created by people who were not part of the past event. These sources are neither products of the event nor eyewitness reports.
Types of Sources:	drawings, photographs, three-dimensional objects, printed materials, manuscripts, and oral histories

Name of the Artifact: _____

As you examine this document, ask yourself these questions:

1. What type of source is this artifact?

2. When was the artifact made? (approximately)

3. Who made the artifact?

4. How was the artifact made?

5. Of what material(s) is the artifact made?

6. Is the artifact handmade or machine-made? Explain your answer.

7. How might this artifact have been used?

8. What is the purpose of the artifact?

9. Who used the artifact?

10. List three characteristics that you feel are important to know about the artifact. Please explain your answer.

11. Sketch a picture of the artifact.

12. What can you determine about the lifestyle of the people who used this artifact?
