

UNIT III

Community: What Brings People Together?

Suggested Grade Level: 4th – 6th

Unit Overview

Students will explore artistic expressions by Kenyan artists about their lives and communities. While looking at artwork from diverse African communities, they will explore the role of the artist within these communities. Students will then be encouraged to look deeply at their own communities and make art that expresses what is important in their lives and their communities. This unit includes three lesson plans that provide opportunities for students to explore community through writing and art making.

Lesson 1 asks: What is a community? In this lesson students will explore the idea of community through looking at artworks by contemporary African artists in Kenya whose artistic expressions focus on their own lives and the community. Students will make a painting inspired by the artwork and their own reflections on community.

Lesson 2 explores: What brings people together? In this lesson students will continue to look at how contemporary Kenyan artists have represented important aspects of their communities in their artworks. Students will create a clay tile that expresses their own most important reason to be a part of a community.

Lesson 3 looks at: How does a community represent itself? This lesson introduces the Asafo flags of the Fante people in West Africa. Students will be using felt to create banners or flags that represent their communities in some way. They will have a direct experience of the power of making art together in a classroom community.

UNIT III – COMMUNITY: WHAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER?

Lesson One

What is Community?

LESSON PLAN

In this lesson students will explore the idea of community. They will look at artistic expressions by contemporary African artists in Kenya about their lives and the lives of their communities.

Background Information

Refer to the **Study Guide** section of this lesson.

Objectives

The student will:

- Explore ideas of community and what a community is.
- Look at African artists and how they make art about their community.
- Make a painting that reflects their ideas about community in general or a specific community that they belong to.

Elements and Principles

color, composition, value, harmony, contrast

Technique

paint application and brushstrokes

Materials

map of Africa, sketchbook, pencils, canvas or paper, acrylic or other paint, brushes, water

Vocabulary (see glossary)

community, Harambee, Jomo Kenyatta, brushstroke, composition, texture

Engaging Students

Today we are going to be looking at artists and how they have explored the idea of community in their artworks. As we look at these artists and their art you should explore how your own communities are important in your life. What have you learned about the Kenyan artists who work at the hospital for kids in the program called *Healing through Art*.

Essential Questions

- What does community mean to these artists?
- Have you ever made art that has made you feel better about something?
- What are some of your roles in your community?
- Do you belong to any groups that help out the school or neighborhood?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your community?
- What are things that you have learned or done with people that you could not have accomplished alone?
- What are some of the stories important to people in your community?

Activity

1. The above questions can serve as guidelines and give students choices about what direction they take with their work. Maybe they would like to explore one of the questions or several of the questions further. Maybe they would like to record a significant story, event, or memory.
2. Students begin exploring their ideas about communities and what it means for them to be a part of a community through writing and then sketching. This becomes a proposal for a painting.
3. The teacher may want to demonstrate paint application, brushstrokes, color theory, composition and safety considerations. Students begin painting their compositions either directly or after transferring their sketches.

Reflection

Hang the students' paintings on a wall or line them up against a wall. Give each student an opportunity to talk about his or her work. Then, as a class discuss the work aesthetically and how the ideas are being expressed. What can be said about the community of student artists as a whole? What are the different communities being expressed? Have students write a reflection about what they have learned and their art making process.

New Mexico Visual Arts Standards/ Benchmarks

- 4A) Explore the influence of personal experiences, imagination and the dynamics of culture to works of art.
- 5B) Understand contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry.
- 5B.1) Demonstrate how history, art and culture can influence each other in making and studying works of art.

UNIT III – COMMUNITY: WHAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER?

Lesson One What is Community?

STUDY GUIDE

The artists discussed in this lesson live in Nairobi, Kenya. They work in a program called *Healing through Art* at the Kenyatta National Hospital. Artists from Kenyan communities make art with kids in the hospital. Jessica Gerschultz worked with these artists in the summer of 2003. She photographed their art and interviewed them to learn about the meanings of their art. This unit contains a compilation of Gerschultz' research with images of artists, their art and their words.

At the Kenyatta National Hospital, the artists and the kids that participated in the *Healing through Art* program have formed a strong community of their very own at the hospital. Through making art the children have been able to reconnect to their home communities, even if they have not been home in a long time. Through making art about their own communities at home the kids are able to connect to the people they love and the places they feel safe and happy. This process makes them feel better even though they are in a hospital. Have you ever made art that has made you feel better about something?

Many of the artists who have worked with the *Healing through Art* program make work about their own homes, lives, and communities. They

believe in the importance of people living and working together as well as taking care of each other. What have you done to take care of people in your community?

Kenya is a country in Eastern Africa with borders on the Indian Ocean, Somalia, and Tanzania. Kenya won its independence in 1963 and Jomo Kenyatta became its first president after leading the country in its struggle for freedom. Kenya has large urban cities and small rural communities in a country that is approximately twice the size of Nevada. Kenya is home to diverse wildlife, geography, and Mt. Kenya, the second highest mountain peak in Africa. Glaciers are even found on Mt. Kenya! The highlands in Kenya are fertile ground for rich agricultural production.

Life in Africa and the ideas that many people have about how to live in Kenya are reflected in the deeply rooted ideas of *Harambee*. When Jomo Kenyatta was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Kenya in 1963, he made *Harambee* the national motto for Kenya. It is a concept in Kenya, and many communities in African continent, that means *let's all pull together*. It is a reminder to people of the value of working together and the importance of taking care of each other. In the African culture, it is more important for people to

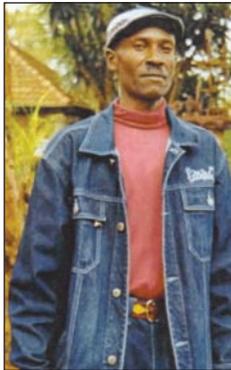
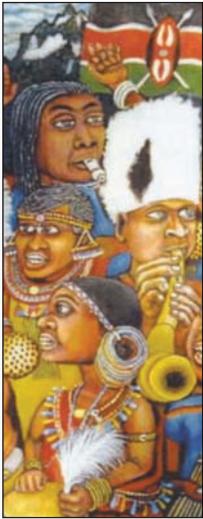
think of their communities than to think of themselves. What might life be like if people always thought about how to take care of each other? Actions can reflect the ideas of Harambee.

People do work in their communities to help each other, to make life easier for everyone, and to support each other.

Looking Carefully:

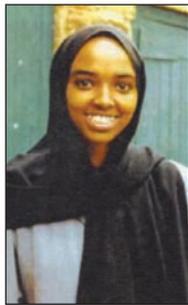
David Kimani, *Different Tribes but One People*

- What has your community or country been able to accomplish by pulling together and “singing in one chorus?”



Asha Hassan,
Rushing Towards the End

- How does this painting make you feel?
- If you chose a moment in your life and painted how that moment felt, what would it look like?



Henry Muhia Boni, *Untitled*

- What do you see in this painting?
- What is the environment like where you live?
- What is beautiful?



Mary Ogembo,
Going Back Home

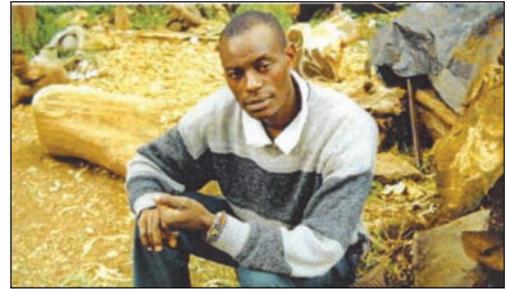
- What can we learn about the roles of women in this artist’s community through her painting?





John Ndungu,
Shanties

- What do you see in this painting?
- How does it make you feel?
- What is this artist saying about a home?
- What are the ideas being expressed about this community?



Anthony Wanjau, *Handstand*

- What are some of your most salient or favorite memories?

Resources

- 1 Gerschultz, J. (2004). *Healing through art: A study of cooperative art education in Kenya*. Masters of Arts Thesis. University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.
The images contained in this unit and the next are part of Jessica Gerschultz's Master's Thesis from UNM in 2004. Ms. Gerschultz was given permission to publish all the images in her thesis by the artists and she has given us permission to share all the images therein with the teachers attending this workshop.
- 2 Map of Africa

 UNIT III – COMMUNITY: WHAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER?

Lesson Two

What Brings People Together?

LESSON PLAN

In this lesson students will continue to look at how Kenyan artists have represented their communities and their experiences of being part of a community. They will look at how artists also work with each other to create artworks. Students will be looking at artworks by contemporary artists living and working in Kenya.

Background Information

Refer to the **Study Guide** section of this lesson.

Objectives

- Explore what brings people together to form communities (food, shelter, family, love, interests, skills, safety, protection, beliefs, lifestyle, income, etc.).
- Look at African artists and how they have expressed important features of their community.
- Create a clay tile that communicates their most important reason for belonging to a particular community of their own.

Elements and Principles

line, shape, texture, balance, unity

Materials

art visuals, map of Africa, sketchbooks or paper, clay, pastry rollers, clay tools, water, water bowls, plastic (grocery or garbage bags).

Vocabulary (see glossary)

Kiswahili

Engage Students

People come together to form communities for a variety of reasons. Students will continue thinking about their own communities and how they might like to represent them through an artwork. After looking at artworks by African artists, have students consider how they might give expression to their own ideas in their artworks.

Essential Questions

- What are some reasons why people come together? What compels you to be a member of a certain community?
- What are some key features or attributes to your community in comparison to other communities? What is important to your community? What do you depend on your community for? How does your community support you?
- Have students discuss what they have learned through the artwork about what it is like for these artists being part of a community in Africa. How might this be similar or different to students' experiences?
- Ask students if they have ever worked with other people to create an artwork? What might creating art with a community be like? How might this contribute to the work?

Activity

1. Help the students make the connections between their ideas of community and visual forms to be used on clay tiles. For example, they may choose single images or symbols (heart, circle, flower, house, lion, word). Encourage students to share ideas with their classmates.
2. Distribute clay to students. Have them flatten the clay into half inch slabs and cut the slab into tiles measuring 4 x 4 inches. If your classroom does not have a slab roller, this can be accomplished by using a pastry rolling pin or something of the like. Then students carve and sketch a visual that communicates their idea about community.
3. Have the students cut out circles, a size similar to a hole punch in paper, at the four corners of their slab. These holes are essential for the final assembly of the tiles.

4. When the tiles are bone dry, bisque them in the kiln. After the clay tiles are bisqued the students can either paint the tile or glaze and re-fire them.
5. Once the tiles are finished the students work collaboratively, with the guidance of the teacher, in arranging the tiles on the floor. After an arrangement is decided the tiles can be connected together by using cloth, rope or heavy string to connect the holes of one tile to another, and so on, until all the tiles are connected together like a quilt. This unified piece can be hung in the classroom (or public display for the school) for exhibit and discussion. Students may create a label to explain their work.

Reflection

Looking at the unified hanging of all the students clay tiles discuss the work aesthetically according to balance, unity, line, shape, size, texture. Then open discussion of the ideas that are being

expressed. What are the different reasons displayed in the work for people to come together as a community? What can be said about the community of student artists as a whole? What are the different community values being expressed? Have students write a reflection about what they have learned and their art making process.

New Mexico Visual Arts Standards/ Benchmarks

- 4A) Explore the influence of personal experiences, imagination and the dynamics of culture to works of art.
- 5B) Understand contemporary and historic meanings in specific artworks through cultural and aesthetic inquiry.
- 5B.1) Demonstrate how history, art and culture can influence each other in making and studying works of art.

UNIT III – COMMUNITY: WHAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER?

Lesson Two What Brings People Together?

STUDY GUIDE

Today we are going to be looking at artists and how they have explored the idea of community in their artworks. As we look at these artists and their art you should explore how your own communities are important in your life. These Kenyan artists work at the hospital for kids in the program called *Healing through Art*.

Looking at the art:

Michael Mbai, *Mother Oryx*

- What are your favorite stories that have been told to you?
- Have you learned anything from that story?
- How would you make an artwork that represented that story?



Kevin Oduor,

- What do you see in this sculpture? How does it make you feel?
- How did these boys who hunted give to their communities?



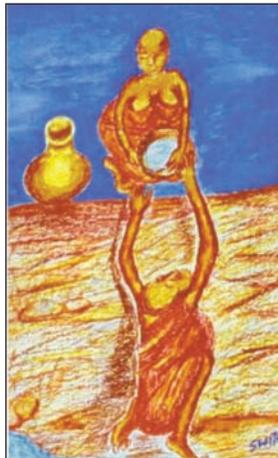
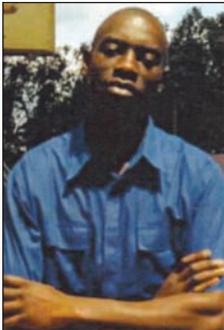
Joseph Opiyo, *Mende Na Watoto Wake*
[Cockroach and its Children]

- Does this artwork tell you something about what the artist believes in or what he values?



Swith Wesonga, *Two Helping Hands*

- What does this work say about how people work together in this community?
- What work do you do together with people in your community?



Justus Baba, *The Cranes*

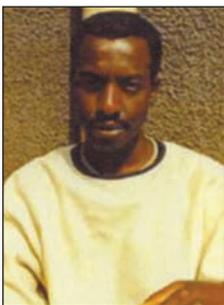
Is there an animal that could represent someone or something special in your life?

What would that animal be? What characteristics of that animal remind you of this person or thing?



Silver John, *The Guilt of a Beggar*

- What social issue does this painting address?
- What does this artist express about his beliefs through this painting?



Resources

Map of Africa

UNIT III – COMMUNITY: WHAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER?

Lesson Three

Community Representation

LESSON PLAN

In this lesson students will be using felt to create banners or flags that represent their communities in some way. Each student will work on their individual flag and then participate in a parade of communities with their flag. During the parade students will march/step/dance in a unique way that represents their community and creatively displays their community flag. Students will have a direct experience of the power of making art together in a classroom community and continue discussions about community. Students may wish to share some of their sketches or tell a story of some experience they have had. Through dialogue and sharing, all participants are actually deepening the *experience* of being part of a community.

Background Information

Refer to the Study Guide section of this lesson.

Objectives

- Examine how a community may represent themselves visually through art and the use of symbols.
- Look at how Asante people of Ghana communicate ideas about their community through the creation of Asafo flags.
- Create a flag that communicates an idea about their community.

Elements and Principles

color, value, line, shape, movement, contrast

Materials

Map of Africa, sketchbook, color felt, fabric, adhesive fabric tape or glue, an iron, scissors

Vocabulary (see glossary)

appliqué, community, Asafo flags, Akan people

Engage Students

While looking at flag images, open a discussion about how communities represent themselves and how they may do this through flags and banners. Look at how your community represents itself.

Essential Questions

- What are some stories important to people in your community? What are accomplishments of your community? What are some special or important events or celebrations in your community?
- How do you show that you identify with a community?
- Is there a particular way that you honor or celebrate members of your own family or those who care for you?
- What is the role of art in your community? What are significant artworks or art forms in your community?

Activity

1. Discuss design and composition as students choose their flag ideas and themes. Discuss how ideas may be expressed with symbols, such as the lion for strength or the circle for unity.
2. Students will use colored felt cut out and glued to make a flag that represents something important about their lives in their communities. When completed, students will perform with their flags (dance and move) in the classroom keeping in mind the characteristics of their community which the flag represents. Other fabrics may be substituted for felt.

Reflection

After flags and performances are completed have students write about their flags and the community represented.

New Mexico Visual Arts Standards/Benchmarks

2B) Use subjects, themes, and symbols when expressing ideas in art works.

4A) Explore the influence of personal experiences, imagination and the dynamics of culture to works of art.

4A.1) Create art in which design elements and principles in conjunction with subject, themes and content are based on personal experiences to create meanings.

UNIT III – COMMUNITY: WHAT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER?

Lesson Three Community Representation

STUDY GUIDE

Asafo flags

Asafo flags are created by the Fante people (see Fante) of Ghana. The word 'asafo' means 'sa' (war) and 'fo' (people). It refers to military organization, broken down into companies, originally formed to defend Ghana's coastline from attack by Europeans and from the inland Asante people. Its origins may go back to the arrival of the Portuguese in the 1470s. Asafo companies assume a very important role and have highly expressive art forms such as the flags.

There are also women's auxiliary companies headed by female officers. Asafo companies today have responsibilities that are extended to public works, education and community assistance in general. Each company fosters allegiance and pride. There are frequent challenges from rivals which express themselves in the many art forms associated with Asafo.

Asafo flags appear to be a combination of foreign and military influences, mixed with African oral traditions of communicating through proverbs and performance to create a unique art form of great visual power. The images on a flag are highly symbolic and combine to carry a message. Competing companies express their competition through the messages on their flags combined with performance.

Asafo flags were originally meant to be displayed in a performance. Most of these performance activities are accompanied by singing, dancing and drumming.



Elephant And The Crab

The mighty elephant is only felled with a crab.

When the crab gets into the trunk of the mighty elephant, the crab is able to kill the elephant. One with superior military equipment can be defeated with superior military strategy.



Frankaakitani - Flag bearer

The flag bearer is accompanied by a gunner and sword carrier to guard against being captured by the enemy.

<http://www.marshall.edu/akanart/asafo.html>

Asafo = "war people." These appliquéd patchwork banners combine the tradition of communication by proverb with military pomp and display. Flags would be created for the installation of a new

captain of a local militia company and would be displayed at festivals and funerals. Each unique flag would either depict an historical event, identify the company with an animal or image of power, or depict a proverb to boast, taunt or threaten other companies. The British flag was used in the canton until 1957 — since then the flag of Ghana is often substituted. The reverse side is appliquéd with the same image, usually matching very closely, less so with lettering.

Resources

Gerschultz, J. (2004). *Healing through art: A study of cooperative art education in Kenya*. Master's thesis. University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

<http://images.amazon.com/images/G/covers/0/50/027/684/0500276846.l.gif>

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Fon.html>

http://encarta.msn.com/media_461513549_761577443_1_1/Fon_Appliqu%C3%A9_Cloth_Makers.html



