

# ACT ONE: DRAMATIZING THE DUALA CANOE SCULPTURE

**S**tudents study the sculpture of an African canoe and create a list of detailed observations. They use this list to create a dramatic presentation depicting the significance of the canoe to the characters present on the canoe. Using tableau and other drama techniques, they gain understanding of the importance of the canoe to the African culture. The culminating activity will be the creation and dramatization of original African folktales.

## STANDARDS

### OHIO LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### Fourth Grade Learning Outcomes

##### *Reading*

Given a fiction/poetry text to read silently, learners will demonstrate an understanding of language and elements of fiction/poetry by responding to items in which they:

3. demonstrate an understanding of text by retelling the story or poem, in writing, in own words;
6. infer from the text;
8. respond to the text.

#### Sixth Grade Learning Outcomes

##### *Reading*

Given a fiction or poetry text to read silently, learners will demonstrate an understanding of text and elements of fiction or poetry by responding to items in which they:

1. analyze aspects of the text, examining, for example, characters, setting, plot, problem/solution, point of view, or theme.

##### *Citizenship*

6. Draw inferences about the experiences, problems, and opportunities that cultural groups encountered in the past.

##### *Writing*

The student will use the writing process to make the writing activities clear for the intended audience, as evidenced by the capacity to:

- b. exhibit a logical organization pattern that demonstrates a sense of flow and conveys a sense of completeness and wholeness;
- c. exhibit work choice appropriate to the subject, the purpose, and the intended audience;
- h. include sentences of varied length and structure.

### OHIO MODEL FOR THE ARTS

#### Sixth Grade

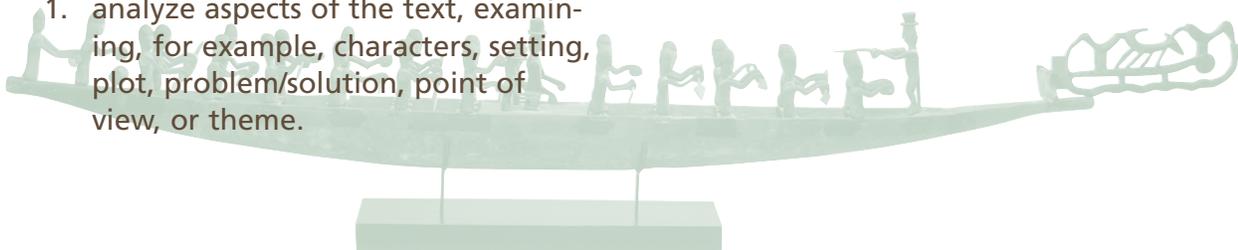
*Goal I – Historical, Cultural, and Social Contexts: Understanding the Role of the Arts in People’s Lives*

- a. Identify the impact that scientific and social events had on the ideas expressed through arts forms.

*Goal II – Personal Expression and Production/Performance:*

*Communicating Through the Arts*

- b. Provide written testimony about the importance of their work to society, others or as individual expression.



## A CANOE COMES TO LIFE

Duala, Cameroon

**TITLE** Canoe Model  
**DATE** 19th century  
**MEDIUM** wood, pigment  
**DIMENSIONS** 92½"  
**CREDIT** Museum Purchase:  
 Steckelmann  
 Collection, Gift by  
 special subscription  
**ACCESSION NO.** 1890.1561

**T**his sculpted wooden canoe features intricately carved male figures and painted black accents. The bow of the canoe is decorated with a beautifully carved design that includes an animal shape. All the figures, except for two, are seated and posed in a rowing position, although their oars or paddles no longer exist.

The canoe depicted is modeled on those used by the Duala people in important ceremonies, including canoe races. The detailed carved figures have painted black hats or skullcaps. The two figures wearing “top hats” might indicate they are the men in charge or Europeans. Two unusual figures in the center of the canoe have distinguished layered hats and these figures are proportionally smaller than the other rowers.



# INSIDE THE CULTURE: THE DUALA CANOE SCULPTORS

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE DUALA PEOPLE

Duala, located on the Wuri River, is the largest city in southern Cameroon and a bustling trading port. The people of Duala are fisherman, river traders and canoe builders. The Wuri River plays an important role in their rituals and ceremonies. Their ritual and sacred objects are an expression of their past experiences and commonly feature water (river/ocean) themes. African ceremonial creations are used to celebrate important events such as a plentiful harvest and rites-of-passage such as birth, death and the cycles of life.

Years ago, the first people in southern Cameroon were forest dwelling hunters and gatherers. These Bantu people lived in the Chad basin, which was the origin of many African civilizations. In the fifteenth century, European explorers found the coastal region of Cameroon and eventually trade developed. Germany annexed Cameroon in 1884 and built roads and public buildings.

During the nineteenth century many European missionaries worked in Africa. With the introduction of Christianity also came European culture, language and education. Cameroon is still divided today into “anglophones” (English-speaking people) and “francophones” (French-speaking people) due to the British and French colonial influences.



## THE HOME OF THE DUALA PEOPLE

Cameroon is located in West Africa, east of Nigeria. The country includes a rainforest in the southeast, the Sahara Desert in the north and a volcanic mountain range along the western edge. This geographic and climatic diversity contributed to a variety of cultures within Cameroon, which is sometimes called “Africa in miniature.”

After World War I, the part of Cameroon near Nigeria became British territory, while the rest of the country was French. The country gained independence in 1960, but the northern part of Cameroon joined with Nigeria and the southern portion joined with the French.



### **BEHIND THE ART: WHAT THE CANOE MEANT TO THE ARTIST**

This beautifully carved wooden canoe is an important piece of history as well as an impressive sculpture. It was probably used in religious ceremonies to show respect for ancestors. Water and water activities are important to the Duala people.

Wood was used for artwork primarily due to its availability but also because it is light, fairly strong and workable. Woodcarving has been used since early times, taking different forms according to the types and sharpness of the tools. Wood could also be painted using materials found in natural surroundings or left in its natural state and polished.

## DIGGING DEEPER: THE CROSS-CURRICULAR EXPERIENCE



This activity uses an African art object to demonstrate how artwork is an expression of the past experiences of a culture. Through the study of a carved wooden canoe, students imagine they are the characters in the canoe and use their knowledge of African history to create dramatic presentations using the theatre technique of tableau. The students will be introduced to African folktales and the elements of folktales. Students create and perform a dramatic presentation of an African folktale based around African cultures.

### MATERIALS

- video of canoe from DVD
- photo of canoe
- African folktales books or websites (see list after the Activity)
- hats (skullcaps and top hats)

### VOCABULARY LIST

- **tableau** – a picture “frozen in time”
- **folktale** – a story, often with legendary or mythical elements, made and handed down among people in a culture

### ESTIMATED TIME FOR COMPLETION

Three to four class periods

### SUBJECT AREAS

Language Arts, Theatre, Visual Arts and Technology

### ACTIVITY

1. Read an African folktale to the class (see suggested reading and website lists). Discuss how a folktale is a story that is fiction and is a symbolic way of presenting the different means by which humans cope with the world in which we live. Folktales concern people of royalty, common folk or animals who speak or act like people.
2. Discuss the elements of a folktale (simple story with a message or a lesson in it).
3. Working in small groups, students will select an African folktale from the suggested reading list or websites. Students may also want to search for additional folktales from other cultures on the Internet. Students will use the What is a Folktale? worksheet to analyze their folktale.
4. Using the DVD, introduce the art object (canoe) to the students and allow them time to write down some detailed observations about the canoe. Have students speculate why the model canoe was created or how it differs from other African sculptures. Share some historical information about the time period and culture in which the canoe was made. Little is known about why this canoe sculpture was created. Have students brainstorm why the model was made and what purpose it served.
5. Introduce tableau to the class. A tableau is a picture frozen in time. Give an example of a tableau using several students. Tell a small group

- of students that they are going to perform a tableau by freezing after they hear a given topic and instruct the other students in the audience to be very observant of what they see. The small group will need to use facial expressions and body language to express what they are feeling. For example, the principal just came over the speaker and announced, “No school tomorrow!” When you say “freeze” the small group of students will freeze in a pose that represents the emotional response to the statement. The audience will discuss what they see in the performers’ faces and body language and what emotions are projected.
6. After the tableau demonstration, look at the canoe artifact again. Have groups of students come up to the front of the class and imagine that they are in the canoe. Line the students up and place a hat on the students in front of the line and on one student in the middle of the line to mimic the hats of the people on the canoe artifact. Ask the students to close their eyes, and imagine they are on the canoe and think about what they would be doing, how they would be feeling, why they are there and where they are going. Give the students a minute to think and tell them that you are going to take an imaginary picture in ten seconds. Remind them to use facial expressions and body language. Say “freeze” and have the class observe the students.
  7. Choose one student who will pretend to be a television reporter. Have him/her use an eraser or a prop as a microphone and have him/her interview the other students asking them to explain their pose and what they are feeling.
  8. Repeat this process with the other students.
  9. After the entire class has had the opportunity to participate in a tableau, discuss how each character had a different story and reacted to the canoe scenario in a different way.
  10. For an extended experience, have one group of the students pretend to be the canoe characters before they got on the boat and then also after they arrived at their destination. From where were they coming? What did they find at their destination? Have audience members observe and discuss what they see.
  11. Working in small groups, have students use word processing or desktop publishing computer applications to write and illustrate their own African folktales.
  12. Have students determine the most important parts of their folktale and decide how to dramatize these portions of the folktale. They can select or make props, rehearse and perform for the class.

## AFRICAN FOLKTALES — BOOKS

Aardema, Verna. *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*. Published by Dial Books for Young Readers, 1975. Caldecott Award Book.

Aardema, Verna. *Who's in Rabbit's House?* Published by Dial Books for Young Readers, 1977.

Aardema, Verna. *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain: A Nandi Tale*. Published by Dial Books for Young Readers, 1980.

Aardema, Verna and R. S. Rattray. *Anansi Finds a Fool: An Ashanti Tale*. Published by Dial Books for Young Readers, 1992.

Aardema, Verna. *Misoso: Once Upon a Time Tales from Africa*. Ill. by Reynold Ruffings. Published by Knopf, 1994.

Brown, Marcia. *Shadow*. Text by Blaise Cendrars. Published by Atheneum, 1983. Caldecott Award Book.

Bryan, Ashley. *Lion and the Ostrich Chicks, and Other African Folk Tales*. Published by Atheneum, 1986.

Dadie, Bernard. *The Black Cloth: A Collection of African Folktales*. Published by University of Massachusetts Press, 1987.

Gerson, Mary-Joan and Carla Golembe. *Why the Sky Is Far Away: A Nigerian Folktale*. Published by Little, Brown and Co., 1992.

Haley, Gail. *A Story, A Story*. Published by Atheneum, 1970. Caldecott Award Book.

Kimmel, Eric A. and Janet Stevens. *Anansi Goes Fishing*. Published by Holiday House, 1992.

Kimmel, Eric A. and Janet Stevens. *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock*. Published by Holiday House, 1988.

Knutson, Barbara. *How the Guinea Fowl Got Her Spots: A Swahili Tale of Friendship*. Published by Carolrhoda Books, 1990.

Kurtz, Jane. *Pulling the Lion's Tail*. Published by Simon and Schuster, 1996. A 1996 Notable Children's Tradebook in the Social Studies.

Kurtz, Jane. *Fire on the Mountain*. Published by Simon & Schuster, 1994.

Lewis, Murphy. *Why Ostriches Don't Fly and Other Tales from the African Bush*. Published by Libraries Unlimited, 1997.

Medlicott, Mary, ed. *The River Went to the Sky: Twelve Tales by African Storytellers*. Published by Kingfisher, 1996. A 1996 Notable Children's Trade Books in the Social Studies.

Mollel, Tololwa, M. and Paul Morin. *The Orphan Boy: A Maasai Story*. Published by Clarion Books, 1990.

Rosen, Michael and John Clementson.  
*How the Animals Got Their Colors:  
Animal Myths from around the World.*  
Published by Harcourt, Brace &  
Jovanovich, 1992.

Seeger, Pete. *Abiyoyo*. A Reading  
Rainbow Book. Published by Simon  
& Schuster, 1986.

Steptoe, John. *Mufaro's Beautiful  
Daughters*. Published by Lothrop, Lee  
& Shepard, 1987. Caldecott Honor  
Book; Coretta Scott King Award, 1988;  
Notable Children's Book, 1987; Reading  
Rainbow Book.

Williams, Sheron and Robert Roth.  
*And in the Beginning...* Published by  
Atheneum, 1992.

### **AFRICAN AND WORLD FOLKTALES — WEBSITES**

AFRO-Americ@: Myths and Fables  
[http://www.afroam.org/children/myths/  
myths.html](http://www.afroam.org/children/myths/myths.html)

Folk and Fairy Tales from Around  
the World  
Tales of Wonder  
[http://members.xoom.com/\\_XMCM/  
darsie/tales/index.html](http://members.xoom.com/_XMCM/darsie/tales/index.html)

Stories from Around the World  
[http://www.MidTesol.org/ClassProjects/  
project1/](http://www.MidTesol.org/ClassProjects/project1/)

Stories to Grow By  
<http://www.storiestogrowby.com/>  
(click on "Folk & Fairy Tales From  
Around the World that Help Kids  
Grow")

# WHAT IS A FOLKTALE?

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## FOLKTALE CHARACTERISTICS

- Basic characters, usually good or evil
- May start “Once upon a time...” or “Long ago in a land far, far away...”
- May end “And they lived happily ever after”
- Story has only one main event
- Setting is not important to the story, same story could happen in another place
- Fast action plot
- Plot usually about justice
- Story may be told in poetic verse or rhyme
- Story may be told out loud
- Story told in a culture for many generations
- May also be called a fairy tale

## EXAMPLES OF FOLKTALES

- *Br'er Rabbit Stories*
- *Jack and the Beanstalk*
- *Cinderella*
- *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*
- *A Story, A Story*
- *The People Could Fly*

## ASSIGNMENT

Read a story from a book or website. Using the Folktale Characteristics list as a guide, decide if the story is a folktale. In the space below explain why the story is or is not a folktale.

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# ASSESSMENT

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

<p>This response demonstrates ability to perform an improvisation using the African canoe sculpture as an inspiration.</p>	<p>Comments and Suggestions</p>
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**4**  
**CAPABLE**

- The student is an active participant in all aspects of the performance.
- The student’s performance demonstrates an understanding of the importance of the canoe in African history.
- The student takes the performance seriously and includes the elements of eye contact with the audience, voice projection and assumes the role of his/her part of the performance.
- The student can communicate a folktale with knowledge and creativity.
- The student can compose a piece that includes the essential components of a folktale.

**3**  
**DEVELOPING**

- The student is a participant in the performance.
- The student’s performance is merely practiced parts instead of truly reflecting an understanding of the importance of the canoe in African history.
- The student participates in the performance and includes assuming the role of his/her part of the performance.
- The student can compose a piece with some of the essential components of a folktale.

**2**  
**BEGINNING**

- The student requires continual encouragement and assistance in order to participate in the performance.
- The student is onstage, but does not make the connection between the performance and an understanding of the importance of the canoe in African history.
- The student stands on stage, yet does not assume his/her role in the performance.
- The student can identify a folktale.
- The student’s folktale is incomplete and shows little knowledge of essential components.

**1**  
**NOVICE**

- The student will not go onstage or is absent.
- The student does not understand the elements of a folktale.
- The student shows no working knowledge of a folktale.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS AND EXTENSIONS

### SCIENCE

Using commonly found materials such as aluminum foil, clay or wood, have students create canoes that can support passengers. Pennies can be used as passengers.

### LANGUAGE ARTS

Pretend you are a Dualan on a canoe trip. Write a journal or personal narrative in first person point of view.

### MATH

Plan a canoe trip through Africa. Remind students that they can only travel through bodies of water. Using the map have students calculate the number of miles of the trip.

### SOCIAL STUDIES

Students can look at miniature, small or large objects from Egyptian, Chinese, Peruvian or other cultures that appear to be toys, games or symbols of life necessities. Discuss what they would leave behind for future people to discover about their time, place and life necessities.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRINT RESOURCES

Ayo, Yvonne. *Eyewitness Books—Africa*.  
New York: Dorling Kindersley, 1995.

### ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

African Art: Aesthetics and Meaning  
<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/dic/exhib/93.ray.aa/African.html>

Smithsonian Institution Libraries  
National Museum of African Art  
<http://www.sil.si.edu/Branches/nmfa-hp.htm>

Issues in African History  
<http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/history/giblinhistory.html>

Cameroon: A Little History  
<http://www.telp.com/cameroon/camh.htm>

Wood Carving  
<http://encarta.msn.com/find/Concise.asp?ti=025CD000>

AFRO-Americ@  
Myths and Fables  
<http://www.afroam.org/children/myths/myths.html>

Folk and Fairy Tales from Around  
the World  
Tales of Wonder  
[http://members.xoom.com/\\_XMCM/darsie/tales/index.html](http://members.xoom.com/_XMCM/darsie/tales/index.html)

Stories from Around the World  
<http://www.MidTesol.org/ClassProjects/project1/>

Stories to Grow By  
<http://www.storiestogrowby.com/>  
(click on “Folk & Fairy Tales From  
Around the World that Help Kids  
Grow”)