

TITLE: Yoruba Beaded Bracelets

Grades: K-3

TIME REQUIRED: 15- 20 Minutes

CONCEPT STATEMENT:

The student will create a beaded bracelet and examine the bead-making tradition of the Yoruba people of Nigeria and the Republic of Benin.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Learn about the bead-making tradition of the Yoruba people.
2. Create a beaded bracelet using a variety of glass beads and wire.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING CORRELATIONS:

Visual Arts

K.10 The student will use motor skills (e.g., pinching, pulling, squeezing, twisting, pounding, rolling, folding, cutting, modeling, stamping) to create two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art.

1.8 The student will develop eye/hand coordination by drawing and constructing.

2.22 The student will discuss the ways that the art of a culture reflects its people's attitudes and beliefs.

3.25 The student will examine the relationship between form and function in the artifacts of a culture.

MATERIALS:

1. Wire
2. Jewelry pliers or other small needle-nosed pliers
3. Glass beads of varying shapes, sizes and colors

VOCABULARY:

Mold - a frame on or in which something is formed or made.

Pattern - decorative design or ornamentation

Charm - something worn or carried on one's person for its supposed magical effect; amulet.

OVERVIEW:

For many people, beads have historically served as symbols of status, tools for the recollection of personal and communal history, protective charms, accessories, and as a declaration of belief. Beads

have been a trade item since early times. The Yoruba of Nigeria and the Republic of Benin were some of the earliest makers of glass beads in the region. The Yoruba people would use recycled glass from bottles and other objects to create new beads. They would begin by crushing the old glass into a fine powder. This powder was then heated to a temperature at which it would melt. The melted glass would be poured into molds made in the shape of beads. Once the glass cooled, the beads would have been taken out of the molds and incorporated into things like ceremonial clothing and artwork.

In the Yoruba culture, beads can represent temperament, empowerment, desire, wealth, and well-being. When threaded together beads stand for unity and togetherness. When encircling parts of the body (head, neck, arms, wrists, waist, legs, ankles, and toes) beads secure the spiritual essence of the person wearing them. Beads were originally made from shell, bone, wood, seeds, and clay. Later they were made from metal, ivory, glass, and stone.

VMFA Enrichment Activities:

Seek and find at the VMFA!

1. Royal Boots (Yoruba Culture), Object No. 92.148.1-2, African Galleries, Level 2 (<http://vmfa.museum/collections/art/royal-boots/>)
2. Crown (Yoruba Culture), Object No. 93.100, African Galleries, Level 2 (<http://vmfa.museum/collections/art/crown/>)
3. Beaded Sheath for Òrìsà Oko Staff (Yoruba Culture), Object No. 97.108, African Galleries, Level 2 (<http://vmfa.museum/collections/art/beaded-sheath-orisa-oko-staff/>)

All of these objects are from the Yoruba culture. The complex designs on each object are made using many beads. Can you identify some of the shapes or patterns made using the beads? (triangle, diamond, stripes, checkerboard etc.)

Download a VMFA gallery map here:

<http://vmfa.museum/visit/plan-ahead/gallery-maps/>

Literature in the VMFA Library Collections:

1. Drewal, Henry John. *Beads, Body, and Soul : Art and Light in the Yorùbá Universe*. Los Angeles : UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1998.
2. Pemberton, John. *African Beaded Art : Power and Adornment*. Northampton, Mass. : Smith College Museum of Art: 2008.

Other Enrichment Resources:

Website/s:

1. Yoruba Beaded Regalia:

<http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m12/activity1.php>

2. Bead-making in other parts of Africa:

<http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/migrations/beads/essay2.html>

3. How to make a disc bead (video): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtmR8Ib5z2s>

Children's Educational Literature:

1. Ayo, Yvonee. Eyewitness Books: Africa. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1995.

2. Croze, Harvey. Africa for Kids: Exploring a Vibrant Continent. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2006.

3. Murray, Jocelyn. Cultural Atlas for Young People: African. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1990.

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS:

1. Have the student begin stringing beads starting with a large bead. Use a length of wire longer than needed and using the pliers, bend one end into a loop, wrapping the tail around the length of wire two or three times in order to prevent the beads from falling off.

2. Encourage the student to create a pattern as they are stringing their beads. A pattern can be made by alternation or repeating various colors, shapes and sizes of beads.

3. When the student is finished stringing their beads have them put it on their wrist. Have an adult or volunteer take the unlooped end of the wire and feed it through the loop at the other end.

4. Loosely wrap the tail around the wire between the now interlocked loops and the final bead and, using the pliers, trim any excess wire. Be certain to leave room so that the bracelet can give and stretch as the student takes it on and off.

Closure:

1. How do you think the Yoruba people created the beads they used?

2. What could different beads mean in the Yoruba culture?

Find this and other resources online at www.vmf-resources.org

