

Dallas Children's Theater

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A Creative & Theatrical Resource Guide for Teachers

DCT Executive Artistic Director
and Director of Production Robyn Flatt

DCT on Tour Producer Sally Fiorello

Resource Guide Editor Marty Sherman
Resource Guide Layout/Design Kim Lyle

Play MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS
From the Book by John Steptoe
Adapted for the Stage by Karen Abbott
Cover Art Use licensed by the John Steptoe Literary Trust

DALLAS CHILDREN'S THEATER, one of the top five family theaters in the nation, serves over 250,000 young people from 100 zip codes, 40 cities and 12 counties each year through its eleven main stage productions, touring, educational programming and outreach activities. Since its opening in 1984, this award-winning theater has existed to create challenging, inspiring and entertaining theater, which communicates vital messages to our youth and promotes an early appreciation for literature and the performing arts. As the only major organization in Dallas focusing on theater for youth and families, DCT produces literary classics, original scripts, folk tales, myths, fantasies and contemporary dramas that foster multicultural understanding, confront topical issues and celebrate the human spirit.

DCT is committed to the integration of creative arts into the teaching strategies of academic core curriculum and educating through the arts. Techniques utilized by DCT artist/teachers are based upon the approach developed in Making Sense with Five Senses, by Paul Baker, Ph.D.

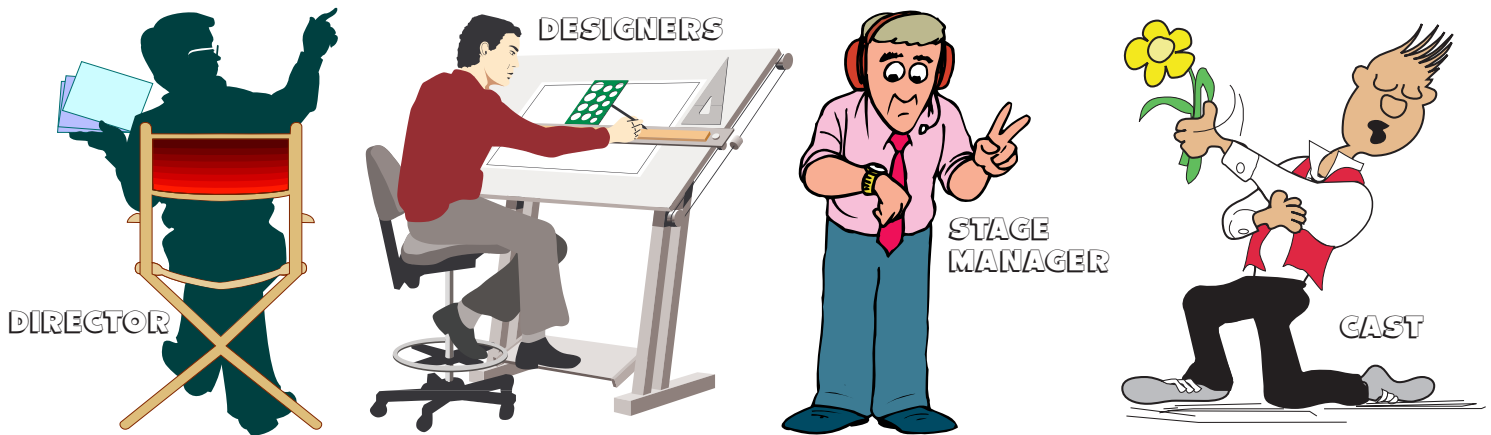
DCT founder and Executive Artistic Director, Robyn Flatt defines the artistic mission and oversees the operations of the organization, consisting of twenty-five full time staff members and more than 200 actors, designers, theater artists and educators.

**See page 17 & 18 for the TEKS that your field trip to
Dallas Children's Theater satisfies!**

Permission is granted for material included in this Resource Guide to be copied for use in the classroom

Curtains Up On Putting Together A Performance

Every DCT performance you see is the result of many people working together to create a play. You see the cast perform on stage, but there are people that you do not see who help before, during, and after every production.



Director

- Determines the overall “look” of the performance.
- Guides the actors in stage movement and character interpretation.
- Works with designers to plan the lights and sound, scenery, costumes and make-up, and stage actions.

Designers

- Plan the lights, scenery, costumes, make-up, sound, and actions to help bring the director’s vision to life
- There are also designers who work to create the posters, advertisements, programs and other media for the performance.

Stage Manager

- Before the performance, creates a cuesheet to guide the crew in getting things on and off the stage during the performances
- The stage manager uses this cuesheet during the performance to direct people and things on and off the stage at the proper times.

Crew

- Builds and operates the scenery, costumes, props, and light and sound during the performances

Cast

- Includes all of the performers who present the story on stage

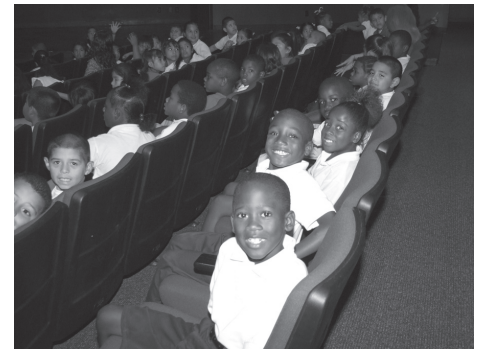
Audience

- That’s right! There can be no performance without you, the audience. The role of the audience is unique, because you experience the entertainment with the performers and backstage crew. You are a collaborator in the performance, and it is important to learn your role so you can join all the people who work to create this DCT production.

Curtains Up On The Role of the Audience

Watching a play is different from watching television or a sporting event. When you watch T.V., you may leave the room or talk. At a sporting event, you might cheer and shout and discuss what you're seeing. Your role as a member of the audience in a play means you must watch and listen carefully because:

- You need to concentrate on what the actors are saying.
- The actors are affected by your behavior; because they share the room with you. Talking and moving around can make it difficult for them to concentrate on their roles.
- Extra noises and movement can distract other audience members.



Are you ready for your role in this performance?

Check the box next to the statements that describe proper etiquette for an audience member.

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Share your thoughts out loud with those sitting near you. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wave and call out to the actors on stage. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sit on your knees or stand near your seat. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bring snacks and gum to enjoy during the show. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reward the cast and crew with applause when you like a song or dance and at the end of the show. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything or disturb other audience members while you are being seated. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Keep all hands and feet and items out of the aisles during the performance. |

Curtains Up After the Performance

Attending a play is an entertainment experience unlike any other. Because a play is presented live, it provides a unique opportunity to experience a story “as it happens.” Dallas Children’s Theater brings to life stories through its performances. Many people are involved in the process. Writers adapt the stories you read in order to bring them off the page and onto the stage. Designers and technicians create lighting effects so that you can feel the mood of a scene. Carpenters build scenery and make the “place” of the story become a real place, while costumers and make-up designers can turn actors into the characters you meet in the stories. Directors help actors bring the story to life and make it happen before your very eyes. All of these things make seeing a play very different from television, videos, computer games, or CDs and tapes of stories.

Hold a class discussion when you return from the performance. Ask students the following questions, and allow them to write or draw pictures of their experience at DCT.

1. What was the first thing you noticed when you entered the theater? What did you notice first on the stage?
2. What about the set? Draw or tell about things you remember. Did the set change during the play? How was it moved or changed? Was there any space besides the stage where the action took place?
3. How did the lights set the mood of the play? How did they change throughout? What do you think “house lights” are? How do they differ from stage lights? Did you notice different areas of lighting?
4. What did you think about the costumes? Do you think they fit the story? What things do you think the costume designers had to consider before creating the costumes?
5. Was there music in the play? How did it add to the performance?
6. What about the actors? Do you think they were able to bring the characters to life? Did you feel caught up in the story? What things do you think the actors had to work on in order to make you believe they were the characters?



- Draw a picture of what the audience might look like from the stage. Consider your work from the viewpoint of the actors onstage. How might things look from where they stand?
- Write a letter to a cast member telling what you liked about the character.
- Write how you think it might feel to be one of the actors. Are the actors aware of the audience? How might they feel about the reactions of the audience today? How would you feel before the play began? What about after the show ends?
- Which job would you like to try? Acting, Directing, Lighting and Sound, Stage Manager, Set Designer, Costume Designer, or another role? What skills might you need to complete your job?
- Choose a favorite story, and draw or use the computer to create a program cover design for a theatrical adaptation of your story.

CURTAINS UP ON THE AUTHOR

JOHN STEPTOE

John Steptoe was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1950. He began working on his first picture book, *Stevie*, when he was just 16 years old had it published in *Life* magazine, by the time he was 18. Mr. Steptoe studied art at the High School of Art and Design in Manhattan and was a student in the HARYOU-ACT Art Program. In his 20 year career, John Steptoe illustrated 15 more picture books, ten of which he also wrote. His books have won numerous awards, including the Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration, the Caldecott Honor, and the Milner Award voted by Atlanta children for their favorite author. While all of Mr. Steptoe's books deal with aspects of the African-American experience, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* was acknowledged as a breakthrough for bringing together African history and culture. The research he conducted in writing the book awakened Steptoe's pride in his own African ancestry, and he hoped his work would encourage children to feel pride in their own heritage. John Steptoe died in 1989, after a long illness.

For more information about John Steptoe, including some of his personal letters and drawings, visit: The deGrummond Children's Literature Collection on the University of Southern Mississippi Libraries' web site.

CURTAINS UP ON FOLK TALES

Teaching Lessons through Storytelling

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters is an African folktale. A folktale is a story handed down from one generation to another by word of mouth. Folktales are also often used to teach a moral or lesson to children. There are several types of folktales: myths, legends, fairy tales, and marchens. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* is an example of a marchen. Its characteristics include a magical land or fantasy setting, and involve an "underdog" who, with the help of magic, obtains a birthright. Generally this underdog character is asked to complete impossible tasks, but through the help of magic, things end up as "happily ever after."

Folktales are often told to children by their parents to teach them how to behave. These stories have been passed down through generations and are similar all around the world. Though the culture may differ somewhat, the message remains the same.

Consider these and other fairy tales, folktales, or marchens, and discuss the lesson or moral, that is being taught through them:

Pinocchio - telling lies is wrong

The Tortoise and the Hare - never give up, no matter what the odds

The Ugly Duckling - it's wrong to judge people from their looks

(more)

Then discuss:

What lesson do you think *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters* is trying to teach?

(people who demean others do not win in the end, you reap what you sow, pretty is as pretty does, beauty is in the eye of the beholder....students may find other lessons, too.)

Consider the following quotations:

“Is she as kind as she is fair? For beauty lives with kindness.” - William Shakespeare, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*

“Many persons have a wrong idea of what constitutes real happiness. It is not obtained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose.” - Helen Keller

“It is futile to judge a kind deed by its motives. Kindness can become its own motive. We are made to be kind.” - Eric Hoffer

Ask students to choose one of the quotes and allow them to write a response considering:

- Would Manyara really have been happy to be queen? Why or why not?
- Was Nyasha interested in being queen? What kind of a queen do you think she will make? Is she happy being queen?
- How do we judge beauty?
- Is *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters* really a story about beauty? Is it about the virtue of kindness? Can the two be separated? Can a person be truly beautiful if unkind?

CURTAINS UP ON GEOGRAPHY

Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters is set in the country of Zimbabwe on the continent of Africa.

Allow students to spend time with a world map or globe and locate the African continent and the country of Zimbabwe. Use the following questions to encourage students to infer:

- What kind of climate do you think Zimbabwe has? How would it compare to ours?
- What sorts of landscape might you find?
- What animals could be found in Zimbabwe?

Then allow students to visit a website to find answers to the following question:

- Where is Zimbabwe located on the continent of Africa?
- Is it north or south of the equator?
- What is the capital city of Zimbabwe? Describe the city.
- What sort of climate does Zimbabwe have? Is it warmer or cooler? Wet or dry?



- What are some neighboring countries?
- What is the primary language? What other languages are spoken in Zimbabwe?
- Name some animals found in Zimbabwe.
- What sorts of products are produced? What sorts of agricultural products are important?

Finally, encourage students to work together in pairs to research and report on one of these topics relating to Zimbabwe:

- Geography
- Language
- Games
- Wildlife
- Art
- Fashion

Ideas for reports might include:

Designing and producing an informational brochure describing what you've learned

Creating a travel poster for a trip to Zimbabwe

Pasting a collage with photos of fashions or art

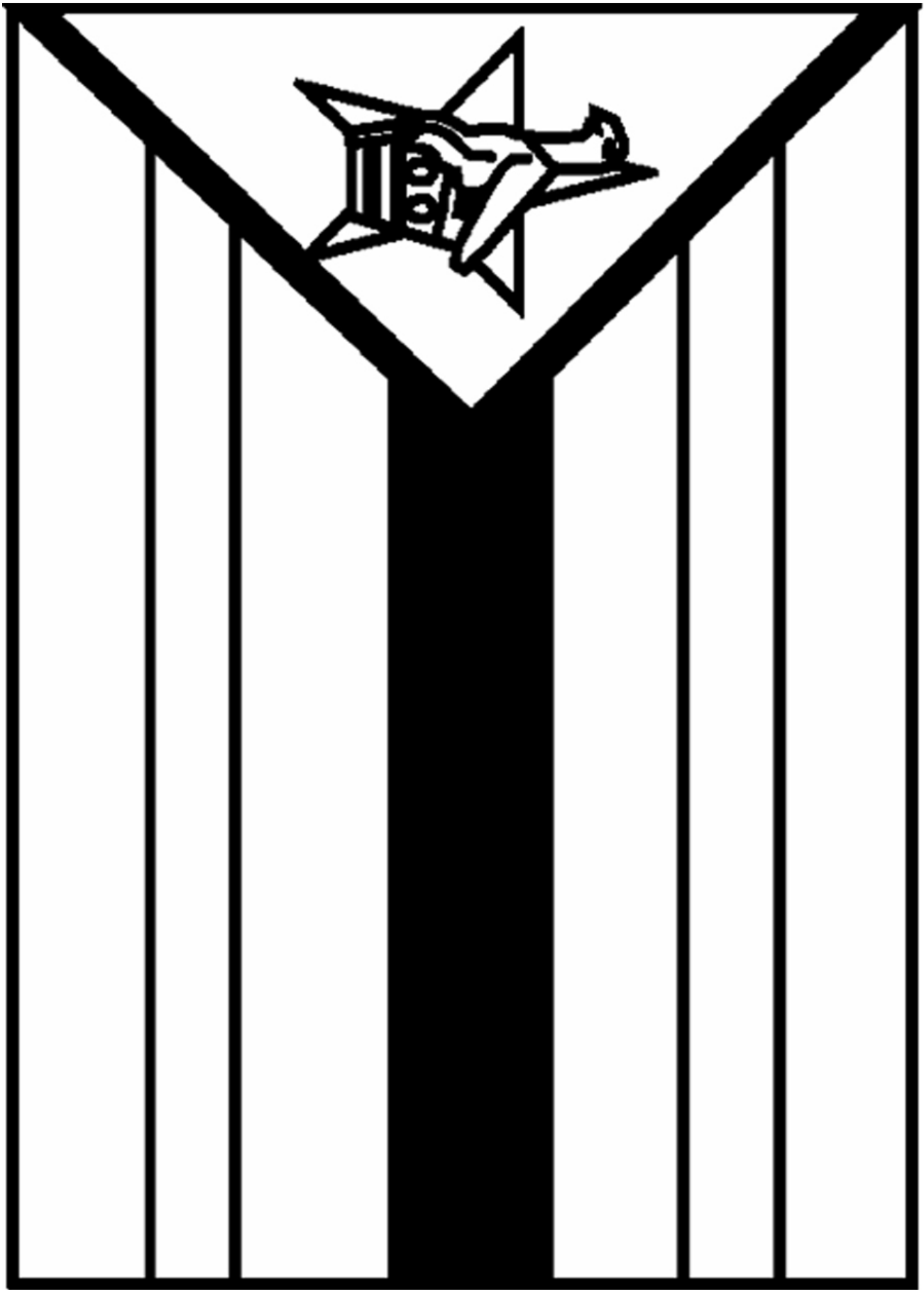
Making one of the games you learned about and sharing it with your class

Try these sites for more information:

www.geographia.com/zimbabwe

<http://www.afroam.org/children/discover/zimbabwe/zimbabwe.html>

(The flag on the next page can be used with primary students as a coloring activity. Older students can research the meaning of the colors and symbols in the flag and compare and contrast them with the U.S. flag.)



CURTAINS UP ON AFRICAN CULTURE

GAMES

Make and Play a Mancala Game

Some historians believe that Mancala could be the oldest known game in the world. The word “Mancala” is translated to mean “to transfer,” which is the object of the game. In the game, the players move playing pieces from one bin to the next in an effort to be the player with the most pieces when the game ends.

Mancala is still a very popular game with children and adults, nobles and commoners, and is educational as well as fun. It combines strategy with simple counting, so it’s simple enough for everyone to play but challenging as you learn strategy.

Most Mancala boards are made from simple wood with stone pieces, but in ancient times the wealthy played on boards carved and covered with gold. Their playing pieces might be gems or crystals.



Try your hand at Mancala with a simple game you can make yourself.

You will need:

- 48 small objects, such as buttons, beans, stones, seeds, or small paper clips
- A Mancala board, which can be made from an ice tray or egg carton
- 2 players

Choose an ice tray or egg carton to use as your Mancala board.

If you use an ice tray, you will need to designate just six of the squares as “bins” and one at the end as your “kalaha.” You can easily mark your kalaha with colored tape or by putting a square of colored paper in the bottom. If using an egg carton, each player will have six “bins,” but you’ll need a cup or bowl for your kalaha.

Gather your 48 objects. Each player starts with 24.

Here are the rules:

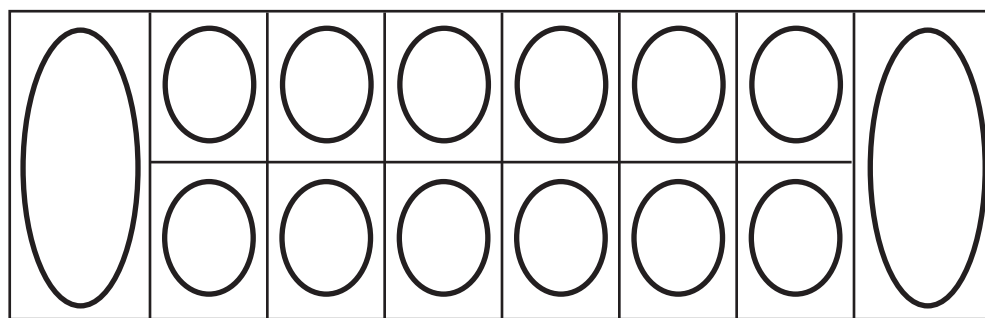
Place the board between you and your opponent. Each player takes 24 pieces and places four of them in each of the six “bins” on your own side of the board. The larger holes at the end of the board are “kalahas” which remain empty at the start of the game. During the game, the players are allowed to move only those pieces on his or her side of the board. You may move any of those pieces, but you are not allowed to move pieces from your opponent’s side of the board.

Choose a player to go first. That player then scoops up all the pieces from any bin on his side of the board. Moving to the right, the player drops one piece in each bin as it goes along the board, including the kalaha if you come to it. If, after you’ve dropped a piece in the kalaha, you still have pieces in your hand, continue to put them in the bins on you opponent’s side. If you reach kalaha on the other side, skip it, and continue to your side. (You don’t want to put pieces in your

opponent's kalaha.) If your last piece falls into your own kalaha, you get another turn. If not, it's your opponents turn.

The object of the game is to be the player with the most pieces in the kalaha. When either players' six bins are empty, the game is over. The player that still has pieces in bins places them in the kalaha, and both players count them. The one with the most pieces wins.

Try playing the game once through so you can see how it works. You'll find through practice that with strategy, the game can be quite a challenge.



MANCALA BOARD

LANGUAGE AND NAMES

Many of the words and names used in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* are of the Shona language spoken in Africa.

Remind students of these examples from the story, either by asking them to match the names to their meanings or through a discussion with the group.

- Nyasha-mercy
- Manyara-ashamed
- Mufaro-happy man
- Nyoha-snake
- Chuma-wealth
- Rudo-love
- Betserai-help me
- Tichawonna-we shall see

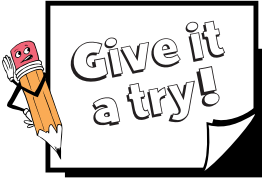


Create a bulletin board entitled "What's In A Name?"

Make books with baby names available for students or allow them to search the internet and find the origin and meaning of their own name. Encourage students to ask their parents to tell the story of their naming, and let them share it with the class. Finally, provide newspapers, magazines, scissors, glue, colored pencils, crayons, and markers, so students can create a collage using their name and its meaning. Display the collages and stories on the bulletin board.

ART

Try your hand at one or more of the following crafts inspired by African culture. Older students should be encouraged to research the history, design, and use of the item.



An African-styled Drum

You will need:

2 styrofoam, plastic, or paper drink cups

White glue

Masking tape

White tissue paper

Brown watercolor or thinned tempera paint (strong brewed tea will also work)

Black tempera paint or permanent marker

Paintbrush

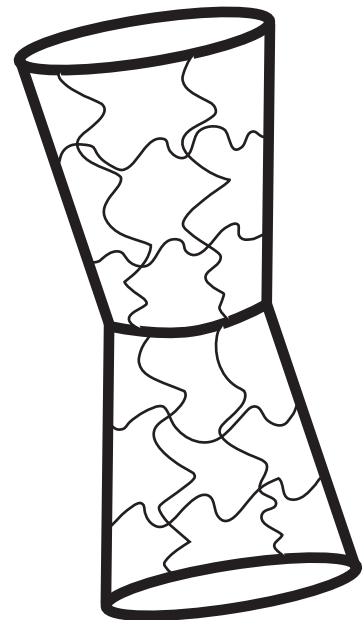
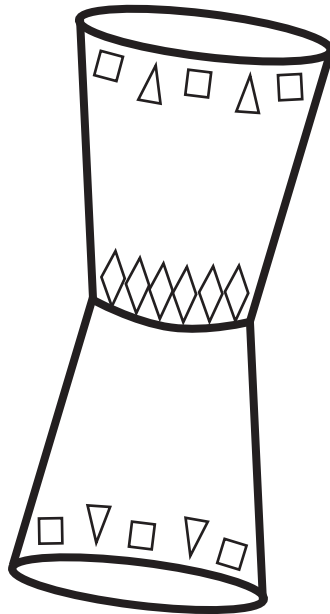
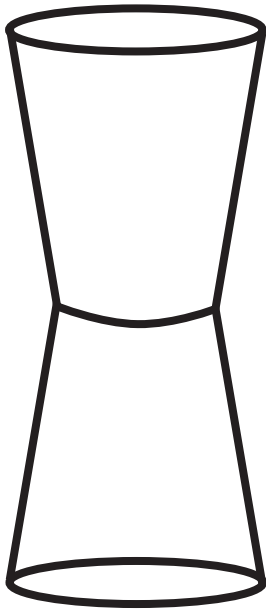
Glue the cups bottom to bottom, and let them dry completely.

Glue small strips of the white tissue to cover the sides of the drum.

Cover the top and bottom of the drum with masking tape strips.

Paint the entire drum with paint or tea.

Draw or paint geometric shapes around the top, middle, and bottom of your drum



ART

An African Mask



- You will need:
- Large pieces of sturdy cardboard (the sides of an old box work well)
 - Strong scissors
 - Brown tempera paint
 - White, red, green, and black paint to decorate
 - Yarn, string, raffia

For design ideas try:
http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~bcr/African_Mask_Portraits.html

Allow students to draw a design for their masks on paper before cutting into the cardboard. Remind them that they will be cutting out the pieces so they'll want to keep their shapes simple.

Draw the eyes, nose, and mouth onto the cardboard. For raised features, you will need to trace and cut each piece more than once, and glue them together before placing them on the mask.

Cut holes for eyes.

Once you've glued your pieces to the mask and they dry, paint the entire mask brown. When the mask is dry, you can use your colored paints to decorate the mask.

Punch holes on either side of the mask, thread long pieces of raffia or string through the holes, and tie them at the front of the mask.

If you'd like to carry your mask, you can make "handles" with cords on each side of the mask.



ART

African Patterned Cloth

African textiles are as varied as the countries within its borders. The people use wool from both sheep and camels, and fibers from bark and plants to weave cloth for tents, clothes, and for carrying. While cloth today is often made in factories, many Africans still use the traditional methods of weaving and use many techniques for patterning their cloth.



For younger students:

Kente cloth strips

Kente cloth is native of Ghana, another one of Africa's countries. It is woven with strong geometric patterns, and its colors are used to symbolize matters of importance. Strips of kente are always woven with cotton threads and are sewn together to make cloth. The Kente cloth is worn at celebratory ceremonies to respectfully show African heritage.

You will need:

Tempera or poster paint in the colors listed below

Red - Life and Blood

Blue - Innocence

Green - Mother Africa, Mother Earth

Black - People and Unity

Gold - Strength and Fortune

Paintbrushes

Long strips of white butcher paper about 6" wide

- Allow students to design geometric patterns of stripes, squares, diamonds, triangles, etc. on the paper strips.
- Encourage students as they paint to keep their colors vivid and well separated. Remind them of the importance and significance of color in Kente cloth.
- When the painted strips have dried, use a black marker or black paint to outline the shapes for added emphasis.
- Display the strips together, and create a class Kente cloth.

For older students and bolder teachers:

Tie-dyed cloth

Note: While this activity can be fun and educational, it is not for the faint of heart in the classroom. It is recommended that you have extra adults helping and plenty of coverings for clothing, counters, and floors. It is best to give it a try before you attempt it with your students if you've never used the technique.

You will need:

Clean, dry, unbleached muslin or t-shirts (for the very brave)

Fabric dye (cold water dye is recommended for dying with young children)

Rubber gloves

Newspaper

String (cotton kite string works well or rubber bands, if the students are able to tightly bind a rubber band)

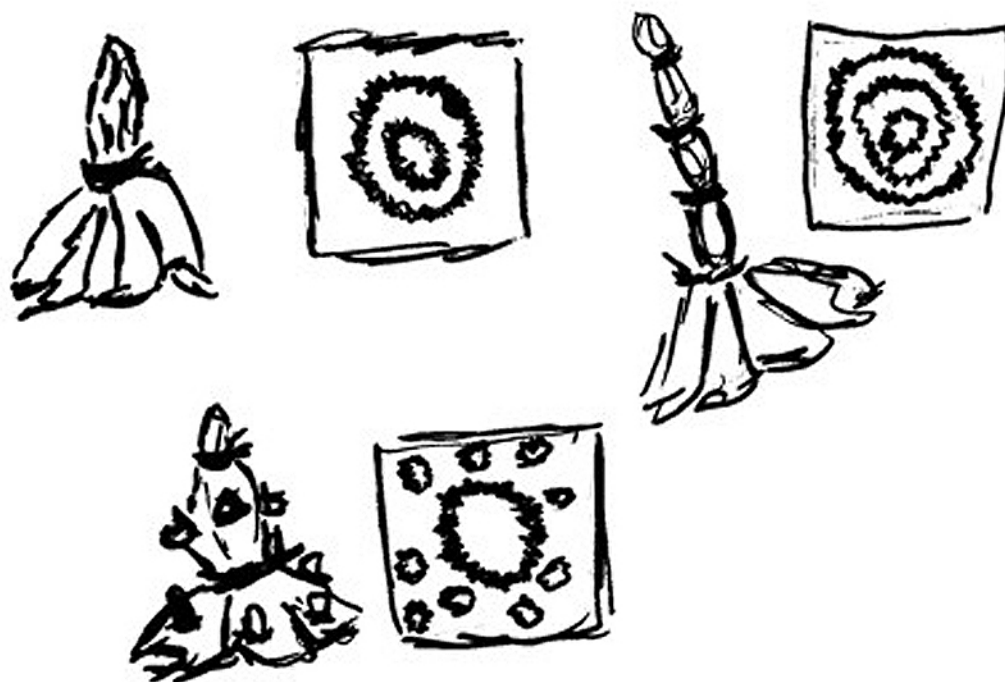
Follow the manufacturer's directions for preparing your cloth or shirt before dyeing. Allow students to tie their cloth using one of the techniques shown.

Follow the dye instructions carefully, and be certain to use rubber gloves when you dip your cloths.

If your cloths or shirts need ironing, it is recommended you use an old iron or one you may not care to use again.

Be sure to read the washing instructions on the dye you use, and let parents know how to wash the tie-dyed garments, too!

Fabric Binding Techniques:



CURTAINS UP ON SUGGESTED READING

More books by John Steptoe:

Uptown

Train Ride

All Us Come Across the River

My Special Best Words

Jeffrey Bear Cleans Up His Act

Daddy Is a Monster...Sometimes

Marcia

All the Colors of the Race

Outside Inside Poems

The Story of Jumping Mouse

Creativity

Baby Says

More African stories:

Who's In Rabbit's House and *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* - both books by Verna Aardema with Leo & Diane Dillon, illustrators

The Village of Round and Square Houses - Ann Grifalconi

Hot Hippo - Mwenye Hadithi, Adrienne Kennaway, illustrator

On the web:

<http://www.bu.edu/africa/outreach/index.html>- Boston University's African Studies Outreach Program offers wonderful resources and lesson plans for teachers of students from elementary through high school.

www.vituesproject.com/index.php - This site lists 52 virtues and contains strategies for teachers to promote goodness in character.

www.namesite.com/index.php - You'll find an indexed resource for African personal names.

www.geographia.com/zimbabwe A great reference for studying the country and culture of Zimbabwe.

www.elf.org/mankala/Mankala.html - Access this site for an interactive mancala board game.

T.E.K.S. satisfied by MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS

110.2 - English Language Arts and Reading, Kindergarten.

- * K.13 - Reading/culture. The student reads or listens to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures.
 - o A - Connect his/her own experiences with the life experiences, language, customs, and culture of others.
 - o B - Compare experiences of characters across cultures.

117.4 - Theatre, Kindergarten.

- * K.1 - Perception. The student develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment, using elements of drama and conventions of theatre.
- * K.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
 - o A - Begin to identify appropriate audience behavior.
 - o B - Respond to dramatic activities.
 - o C - Demonstrate awareness of the use of music, creative movement, and visual components in dramatic play.
 - o D - Observe the performance of artists and identify theatrical vocations.

110.3 - English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 1.

- * 1.16 - Reading/culture. The student reads or listens to increase knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of cultures.
 - o A - Connect his/her own experiences with the life experiences, languages, customs, and culture of others.
 - o B - Compare experiences of characters across cultures.

117.7 - Theatre, Grade 1.

- * 1.1 - Perception. The student develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment, using elements of drama and conventions of theatre.
- * 1.4 - Historical/cultural heritage. The student relates theatre to history, society, and culture.
 - o B - Identify diverse cultural dimensions in dramatic play.
- * 1.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
 - o A - Identify appropriate audience behavior.
 - o B - Respond to and begin to evaluate dramatic activities.
 - o C - Identify the use of music, creative movement, and visual components in dramatic play.
 - o D - Observe the performance of artists and identify theatrical vocations.

117.10 - Theatre, Grade 2.

- * 2.1 - Perception. The student develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment, using elements of drama and conventions of theatre.
- * 2.4 - Historical/cultural heritage. The student relates theatre to history, society, and culture.
 - o B - Identify diverse cultural dimensions in dramatic play.
- * 2.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
 - o A - Identify and apply appropriate audience behavior.
 - o B - React to and begin to evaluate dramatic activities.
 - o D - Observe the performance of artists and identify theatrical vocations.

117.13 - Theatre, Grade 3.

- * 3.1 - Perception. The student develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment, using elements of drama and conventions of theatre.
- * 3.4 - Historical/cultural heritage. The student relates theatre to history, society, and culture.
 - o B - Reflect historical and diverse cultural influences in dramatic activities.
- * 3.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
 - o A - Evaluate and apply appropriate audience behavior consistently.
 - o B - Evaluate simple dramatic activities and performances.
 - o D - Observe the performance of amateur and professional artists and begin to compare vocations in theatre.

117.16 - Theatre, Grade 4.

- * 4.1 - Perception. The student develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment, using elements of drama and conventions of theatre.
- * 4.4 - Historical/cultural heritage. The student relates theatre to history, society, and culture.
 - o A - Explain theatre as a reflection of life in particular times, places, and cultures.
- * 4.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
 - o A - Identify and apply appropriate audience behavior at performances.
 - o D - Compare theatre artists and their contributions.

117.19 - Theatre, Grade 5.

- * 5.1 - Perception. The student develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment, using elements of drama and conventions of theatre.
- * 5.4 - Historical/cultural heritage. The student relates theatre to history, society, and culture.
 - o A - Relate theatre to life in particular times, places, and cultures.
- * 5.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
 - o A - Analyze and apply appropriate audience behavior at a variety of performances.
 - o D - Analyze and compare theatre artists and their contributions.

117.34 - Theatre, Grade 6.

- * 6.1 - Perception. The student develops concepts about self, human relationships, and the environment, using elements of drama and conventions of theatre.
- * 6.4 - Historical/cultural heritage. The student comprehends the relationship of theatre to history, society, and culture.
- * 6.5 - Response/evaluation. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
 - o A - Analyze and apply audience behavior at all performances.
 - o D - Compare selected occupations in theatre.