



GRADE 1 ARTIST: KATE RONÉ

**AFRICAN ARTS:
Calabash Bowls**

OVERVIEW

The children will be learning about how the people of Morocco, Africa made bowls from dried gourds; they will learn about African-style decorative motifs. They will create a papier-mâché bowl and paint it. The design painted onto the bowl will be inspired by patterns used in African decoration.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn sculptural skills in making a papier-mâché bowl.
- Students will use pattern and design in decorating their bowls.
- Students will discuss the expressive qualities of color (how color can affect mood).
- Students will learn about the traditional use of the Calabash bowl in African culture.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Calabash bowls are made from near-spherical calabash gourds that are cut in half. The gourds are dried and then patterns and designs are put onto the bowls. The Africans scratch, burn, and paint the designs onto the bowls. These gourds can be very large, round and are used to carry many things. The women carry these bowls on their head when traveling. In Morocco, on the northwestern coast of Africa, calabash bowls have bases attached to the bottom of the round gourd.

MATERIALS

One (1) paper bowl and cup per student.
(Should be about the same size)

Cut up newspaper strips (for 20 kids use
about 8 newspapers cut into strips)

2 1/2 gal. Liquid Starch (available at
Walmart) or Elmer's Art Paste: 1 small box
per class of 20 students. The powder can be
pre-mixed and stored in plastic containers.
(Art Paste is available online at *www.dick-
blick.com* or through other online art
suppliers.)

Tempera paints

Acrylic gloss varnish

Paintbrushes, Markers

Scissors (optional)

Wax paper, paper

RESOURCES

Rodriguez, Susan. *Culture Smart!.* West
Nyack, N.Y.: Parker Publishing Company.
2000.

Terzian, Alexandra. *The Kid's Multicultural
Art Book, Art & Craft Experiences from
Around the World.* Charlotte, Vermont:
Williamson Publishing Company. 1993.
p. 102

Trowell, Margaret. *African Design: An
Illustrated Survey of Traditional Craftwork.*
N.Y.: Dover Publications. 2003.

VOCABULARY

Pattern: in design: a repeated decorative design,
for example, on fabric a zigzag pattern, a regular
or repetitive form, order, or arrangement a pre-
dictable pattern of behavior.

Repetition: 1. repeating of something: an act of
doing something again 2. something the same as
before: an event or situation that is the same as
one that happened previously.

Varnish: a solution of a resin in oil or spirits,
applied to a surface to give it a protective gloss. A
coating of varnish, applied to something to give it
a protective gloss.

Papier Maché: sheets of paper pulp and glue stuck
together in layers, usually onto a frame or mold,
used to make various objects such as figures,
boxes, bowls, and masks.

Radial Symmetry: symmetry of circular objects:
symmetry in which something can be divided into
two identical halves by a line or plane passing
through a central point or axis at any angle.

Bilateral Symmetry: sameness of right and left
sides: symmetry in which an imaginary plane
divides an object into right and left halves, each
side.

INTRODUCTION

Talk about Africa and the natural materials African tribal people use(d) to make their tools. Explain how gourds were used for creating calabash bowls. Show students pictures of African calabash bowls, and the way people carry them on their heads.

How do we carry things today and what objects do we use to carry these things? What do you carry with you to school everyday?

What is a pattern? Where do we see patterns? How can we make patterns with different shapes? Through drawing or using cut out shapes, design a repeating pattern that you could use for your bowl.

How will you choose colors for your design? What does color mean to you and how does it make you feel. Does blue paint on walls calm people down? Restaurants like McDonald's and Burger King use yellow, red, and orange colors. Orange is said to make us feel hungry and yellow to make us feel happy. Red makes us hurry to make a decision.

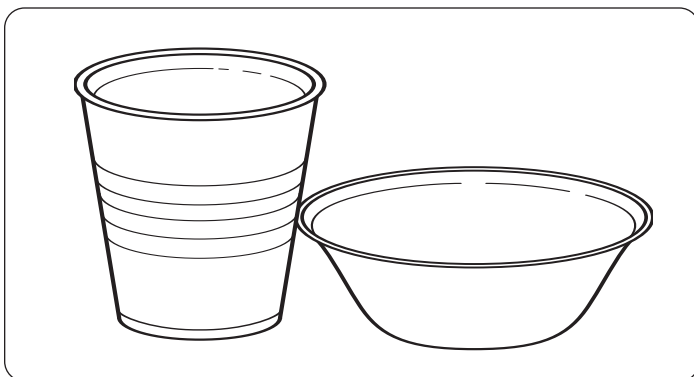
STEP BY STEP

Day 1

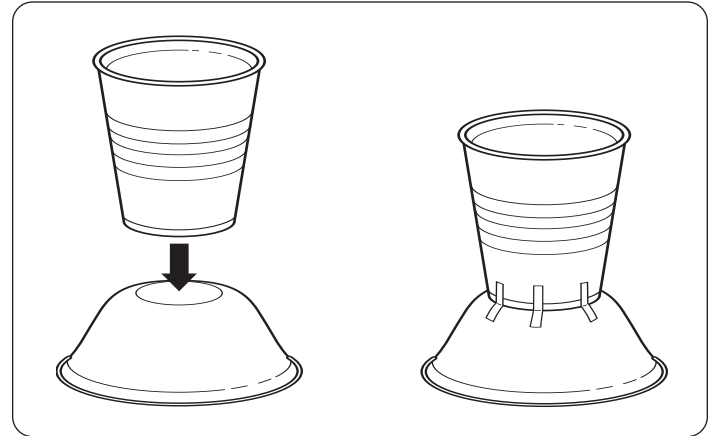
1. Show students pictures of calabash bowls and people carrying them.

2. Prepare materials:

Put liquid starch diluted with water or prepared art paste into bowls for each group of kids. Cut strips



of newspaper and distribute to each group. Cover tables with newspaper. Give each child or student pair one bowl and one cup. Note: Students can work together or on their own, to create a bowl.



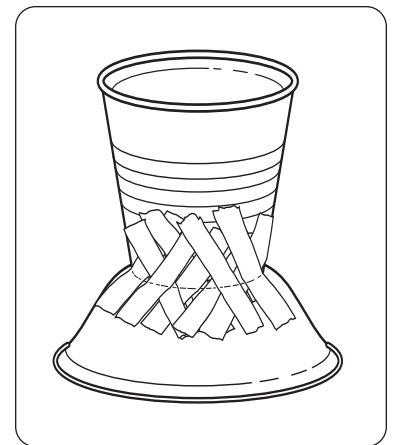
3. Connect the bowl and cup.

Place the bowl face down on the desk covered in newspaper. Tape the cup to the bottom of the bowl by setting the cup directly in the center. Use a few pieces of tape to hold the cup in place atop the bowl or, if students are working in pairs, have one student hold the cup in place and the other begin to secure it with papier-maché.

Ideas for team work:

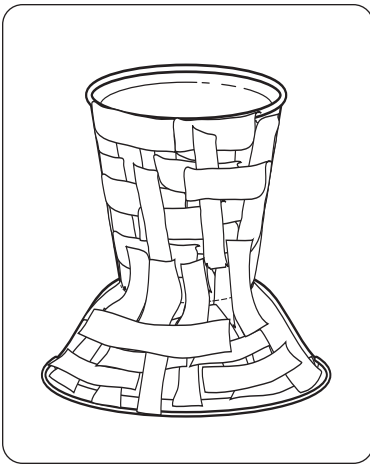
have one student hold the cup in place atop the overturned

bowl. The other student places paper around one half of unit, covering seam of cup and bowl with several layers of paper. Students can switch roles.



4. Demonstrate the papier-maché process.

Remind students: Do not lift up the bowl and cup once they have started to papier-maché. The two will tear apart, unless they are lifted up together, supporting the bottom. Newspaper strips are dipped into the liquid starch, dripped off, and laid smoothly across the connection of the cup and bowl. Be sure that all areas of the cup/bowl con-



nection are more or less evenly covered and evenly sturdy once bowl is dry. Use a criss-cross method to form a strong connection between cup and bowl. (For example place end of piece of paper on bowl and wrap paper diagonally, at a 45 degree angle upward and

toward bowl.) Reinforce seam of cup and bowl unit with many layers of papier maché and use extra sheets of paper at cup/bowl seam to strengthen. Wrap paper around seam in criss-crosses. Be sure to keep the edges of the newspaper smoothed down throughout the papier-mâché process. Cover all areas of the bowl and the sides of the cup with papier-mâché. Keep the bowl face down on the table until the underside of the cup/bowl unit has been completely covered in paper mache.

During the lesson

The liquid starch/art paste can get everywhere if there is not instruction on how it should be used. Ask students to gently dip newspaper strips into mixture and lay strips on bowl. Ask them to move very slowly when they hold the wet strips and to be sure that they work over newspaper or whatever material protects their desks/workspaces.

If students' hands are very sticky, they can be continually wetted during the making of the bowl. If they are wet and touch the glue, it will not stick to their hands. You may want a water bowl on each table for students to wet their hands.

During the papier-mâché process, the teacher or adult assistants can help with smoothing the newspaper strips flat onto the bowls. If students finish quickly, they can add a second layer of papier-mâché to make their bowl stronger.

Students will need help with painting their patterns and keeping the space between their shapes similar.

Note: No papier-mâché needs to be put inside the cup—when the calabash bowl is complete the cup opening will be the base of the bowl/cup unit with the cup opening face down.

5. Set the bowls to dry preferably on a plastic surface or wax paper, so they can be removed easily after they dry. If the bowl is dry enough, flip it over and papier-mâché the inside. If not, papier-mâché the inside of the bowl on another day.

Day 2

6. Cover the dry bowls in a coat of black paint. Allow paint to dry completely before decorating (usually within 1-3 hours). The paint acts as a base for the designs that students paint onto the bowls.

7. Define pattern and repetition.

Show students designs and patterns used on calabash bowls and in other African art. Talk about repetition and what makes a pattern. Have the class design some patterns together by telling the teacher what shapes to draw on the board.

8. Students can also practice designing patterns with markers and a sheet of paper.

9. When ready, begin decorating the bowls with a pattern. Patterns can be painted on both the inside and outside of the bowls.

10. After the paint dries, coat the decorated area of the bowl with Acrylic varnish (or diluted elmers glue) and let dry. The varnish dries clear and glossy, and will keep the surface of the bowl smooth.



Notes

Children handling bowls during lesson: Bowl and cup unit should not be picked up during papier-maché/gluing process. This may cause the newspaper to tear, seams to split, or the bowl and cup to come apart. Keep the bowl face down on the table until the underside of the cup/bowl unit has been completely covered in papier-maché. Parental assistance is a big help during this project. While some student pairs have no trouble completing the project, others need extra help. 1 parent or adult assistant for every 5 students is ideal.

Concluding the lesson

Cleaning up:

Allow 10-15 minutes for clean up. The bowls that held the glue and newspaper that protected the desk can be thrown away or recycled. Put extra newspaper strips back into a bag. Wash hands.

Post-project discussion:

Students can be asked how they plan to use their bowl and what they will put inside. Talk about color choices, the steps taken to make the bowls, or show examples of pattern and repetition in their designs.

Variations:

The students could lengthen the lesson by practicing patterns before they paint their bowls. They could use markers and design a pattern on a sheet of paper with shapes. Using cut out shapes they could move them around to create different designs.

The lesson could be used to teach symmetry or color. The shape of the bowl is an example of radial symmetry.

The colors used to paint the bowl could be put into the order of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple) radiating out from the center, or in toward the center.

Students can focus on creating a pattern, not only with shape but with the colors they use to decorate their bowls. For example, they could start with green going down and yellow across; or the colors could be alternated yellow across, red across, yellow across, red across.

STANDARDS

- 1.1 Learn about patterns and design to decorate the bowl.
- 2.3 Develop sculptural skills to create a papier-mâché bowl.
- 3.1 Recognize and discuss the design of everyday objects from various time periods and cultures.
- 3.3 Look at and discuss African art from various times and places.
- 4.1 In post-project discussion, students talk about their works of art using vocabulary learned during the class.
- 4.2 Describe what is seen: Look at students' bowls and those in pictures. Describe how the bowls are decorated and discuss the expressive quality conveyed by their decorations.
- 4.4 Using vocabulary learned in the lesson or appropriate art vocabulary, students give specific reasons why they like a particular work of art they made.

NOTES

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