

Proverbs from Ghana

Lesson plan by Amy Barsanti

Overview: Students will explore traditional Akan proverbs and the Adinkra symbols associated with them. They will make connections to familiar proverbs and sayings, and will create their own symbols for them.

Essential Questions:

What can proverbs teach us about cultures?

How are our familiar proverbs similar to and different from those in Ghana?

Grade Level: 4

Content Area: Language Arts/ Reading Literature

NC Standards:

L.4.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language and nuances in word meanings. B. Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages and proverbs.

L.4.9 Compare and contrast the use of similar themes and topics and patterns of events in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

Materials:

- Slides: [L5 Proverbs in Ghana](#)
- Chart paper for recording ideas
- Index cards
- Styrofoam pieces recycled from meat trays or fast food containers
- Poster paint
- White construction paper or cardstock

Suggested Length of Time: three, 40-45 minute sessions

Procedures:

Session 1 (40-45 minutes)

1. Ask students if they know any proverbs. If they are unsure, give examples from the list below or from your own experience. Record student responses.
2. Help students devise a working definition of a proverb, being sure that they include that they are short and give advice or a generalization. You may also

want to help them understand that proverbs can include features that connect to the cultures from which they originated.

3. Explore some of the proverbs on the list and ask students what they think they mean. Guide students to generalize that many proverbs are based on historic features, like jobs and activities of the past, but are still relevant.
 - “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”.
 - “Don’t count your chickens until they are hatched”.
 - “Actions speak louder than words”.
 - “Beggars can’t be choosers”.
 - “An apple a day keeps the doctor away”.
 - “A friend in need is a friend indeed”.
 - “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”.
 - “Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise”.
4. Have each student write and illustrate a proverb on an index card. Display the cards for reference in the next session.

Session 2 (40-45 minutes)

1. Review the students’ proverb index cards from Session 1.
2. Explain that you will be exploring some proverbs from Ghana.
3. Show the Slides, encouraging students to discuss what they think the proverbs mean and how the symbols represent the proverbs. Slide 1 provides information about Adinkra symbols.

Session 3 (40-45 minutes)

1. Revisit cards and slides as needed, and explain to students that they will be creating their own Adinkra-style symbols for an American proverb. Remind the students that the symbols are representations and not literal depictions.
2. Once a student has completed a design, have him/her copy it in pencil on a piece of styrofoam, preferably recycled. Pushing too hard on the pencil will poke holes in the styrofoam, and not bearing down hard enough will leave gaps in the lines of the design, so it may take more than one try.
3. Demonstrate how to apply a small amount of poster paint to a design using a paintbrush or cotton ball, making sure the paint is smooth and without blobs or pools. Then place a piece of construction paper or cardstock on the painted styrofoam. Press gently and evenly to all edges of the design. Then peel the paper off of the styrofoam and allow it to dry. The styrofoam designs can be used more than once.
4. Trim and display the completed designs and accompanying proverbs like banners.

Product- Adinkra-like symbol wall hangings

Extension Options:

- Explore proverbs from other cultures, and connect them to familial ones.
- Put the designs together to make a quilt-like bulletin board display.

Resources:

Linguist Staffs: [THE VERBAL ART OF AKAN LINGUIST STAFF. • The Cultural Encyclopaedia](#)

Goldweights History: [Expedition Magazine | The Asante Gold Weights](#)

▶ Akan Proverbs And Their Meaning