

## **Exploring Ghanaian Royal Stools** *Lesson plan by Alicia Butler*

**Keywords:** Ghana, Royal Stools, Adinkra symbols, 3D Sculpture, Sketching, Construction, Symbolic Elements

**Overview:** In this lesson, students will learn about the cultural significance of Ghanaian royal stools, study the symbolic elements and patterns, and create their own 3D royal stool sculptures using mixed media. Additionally, students will develop skills in using paper towels and toilet paper rolls, scoring cardboard for curved elements, and gaining inspiration by designing the stool in honor of someone they admire.

### **Essential Questions:**

- How do artists use symbolic elements and patterns to create Ghanaian royal stools to express cultural values and narratives?
- What is the cultural significance of Adinkra symbols in the context of Ghanaian royal stools, and how have these symbols been traditionally incorporated into the design of the stools?
- How does the design of a Ghanaian royal stool represent the personality or significance of the honored person?
- How does building a 3D structure/ stool contribute to the expression of identity, and how can using colors and decorative elements enhance the overall meaning and impact of the stool?

**Intended Grade Level:** 4th-5<sup>th</sup> grade

**Intended Content Areas:** Visual Art

### **Standard Alignment with NC Standards:**

#### **Visual Art-**

V.1 Use the language of visual arts to communicate effectively.

V.3 Create art using various tools, media, and processes safely and appropriately.

#### **Social Studies-**

*5.H.1.6 Explain the significance of national symbols and traditions from various perspectives.*

*1.1.9 Make inferences from information in sources.*

#### **ELA-**

*RI.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text explicitly states and when drawing inferences from the text.*

## Materials

### Introductory visuals/ articles/ slides

- [Resource Slides for Classroom Use](#)
- [See/Think/Wonder Chart](#)
- Informational resources about Ghanaian royal stools

### Sketching materials

- Paper
- Pencils
- 11x9 or 12x18 sketch paper

### Building Materials

- [Cardboard Technique Visual](#)
- Cardboard sheets (small boxes and small pre-cut pieces of cardboard work well)
- Paper towel and toilet paper rolls
- Scissors
- Egg cartons
- Masking tape and Duct Tape
- Yarn
- Glue (hot, stick, and liquid) \*\*\*If you use hot glue, consider your student's age and maturity level. You may be able to let them use the hot glue themselves, but be sure to provide gardening gloves or something similar to prevent burns.
- Pencils, erasers
- Rulers
- Paints or markers
- Decorative materials (fabric, beads, tinfoil (metallic paper), etc.)

**Suggested Length of Time:** 5-6 class sessions (45 minutes each)

## Procedures

### Day 1- Introduction/ Brainstorming

#### Introduction:

- Share history and art slides with examples of Ghanaian royal stools.
- Students can complete the See, Think, Wonder Chart during the introduction.
- Discuss the importance of royal stools in Ghanaian culture.
- Ask students to share their initial thoughts and observations.
- Provide information about the history and cultural significance of royal stools in Ghana.
- Discuss the symbolic elements and patterns commonly found on these stools.

#### Sketching (20 minutes):

- Distribute sketch papers (9x11) and instruct students to fold them in half to create four areas for four different sketches for their royal stool. \*\*\*Consider allowing students to work in studios/small groups\*\*\*

- Introduce the idea of honoring someone they admire and designing the stool with that person in mind. This person could be famous or someone in their daily lives.
- Encourage them to incorporate symbols and patterns inspired by Ghanaian culture or the person they are choosing to honor

## **Day 2: Design Development (45 minutes)**

### **Review (10 minutes):**

- Recap the importance of Ghanaian royal stools and the symbolism behind their designs.
- Discuss the inspirational component of designing the stool in honor of someone. Provide examples on the board, including ornamental symbols or design components.

### **Design Development (30 minutes):**

- Have students refine their sketches, adding more details and thinking about the 3D aspects of their sculptures.
- Discuss the significance of symbols and curved elements in design.
- Introduce the scoring cardboard technique for achieving curved elements (scoring can be achieved with scissors and a ruler).

### **Peer Discussion (5 minutes):**

- Students share their designs with a partner, explaining the symbols, curved elements, and the person they are honoring.

## **Day 3: Building the Stool Structure (45 minutes)**

### **Materials Distribution (15 minutes):**

- Provide cardboard sheets, towels, toilet paper rolls, scissors, rulers, and glue.
- Instruct students to cut and assemble their cardboard into the basic stool shape.
- Demonstrate the scoring technique for curved elements.
- Introduce the cardboard Techniques Visually and go over each technique.

### **Stool Construction (25 minutes):**

- Guide students in building the 3D structure of their royal stools, utilizing paper towels and toilet paper rolls for added support.
- Discuss cutting techniques for creating tabs to fold and glue and attaching 2D cardboard pieces perpendicularly.
- Encourage students to use scoring to achieve curved seats or curves within symbols.

### **Reflection (5 minutes):**

- Ask students to reflect on the challenges and successes in building their stool structures.

## **Day 4, 5, 6: Constructing, Painting, and Decorating (45 minutes)**

**Materials Distribution (10 minutes):**

- Provide building materials. Students will likely need more time for construction.
- Provide decorating materials like tempera paints, markers, paintbrushes, and decorative materials.
- Instruct students to complete the construction of the stool and ensure the design is solid (not flimsy).
- Once construction is complete, students can paint and decorate their stool sculptures.

**Artwork Creation (30 minutes):**

- Encourage students to use colors and patterns inspired by Ghanaian art or the person they intend to honor with their stool design.
- Emphasize attention to detail in the decorative elements.

**Reflection (5 minutes):**

- Have students reflect on their choices regarding color and decoration, connecting it to the cultural context and the person they are honoring.

**Finishing Touches (15 minutes):**

- Allow students to add any final touches to their stool sculptures.

**Gallery Walk (20 minutes):**

- Arrange the completed stool sculptures for a gallery walk.
- Students walk around, observe, and appreciate their classmates' creations.

**Class Discussion (10 minutes):**

- Lead a discussion about the diversity of symbols, curved elements, and the stories behind the stools, emphasizing the richness of individual expression within the cultural context and personal connections.

**Wrap Up- 10 min.****Optional Extension Activities:**

- Students can create a Google slide including:
  - Picture of stool
  - Artist or Studio Name
  - Material List
  - Honored PersonThe artist's statement relates the stool to the person of honor.  
The slides can be assembled into a slide presentation and shared with the school community.

**Resources:**

-  [Queen Yaa: Saves The Golden Stool | Kusoma | Kids Learning](#)

- Historical Overview of the Traditional Ghanaian Seats - <https://www.macrothink.org/journal/index.php/ijch/article/download/20319/15718>
- Art Forms in Ghana: The Stool - <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/just/article/view/244546/231291>
- Prestige Stool | Akan peoples - <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/314978>
- Historical Overview of the Traditional Ghanaian Seats - [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363925474\\_Historical\\_Overview\\_of\\_the\\_Traditional\\_Ghanaian\\_Seats](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/363925474_Historical_Overview_of_the_Traditional_Ghanaian_Seats)
- The Stool and Asante Chieftaincy- <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3335615>