



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2024 Volume I: Myth, Legend, Fairy Tale

Catch the Spark

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Introduction

Poetry was the subject of the first Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute seminar I participated in spring of 2023. As a fellow in the *Poetry as Sound and Object* seminar led by Yale English Professor Feisel Mohamed I had the opportunity to research the poetry of Langston Hughes at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscripts Library at Yale University. I could access his drafts and see the development of his oeuvre over time through these primary documents. The unit I wrote for the seminar, *The Dream Keeper's Quest* was designed for 8th grade visual arts students. During last spring's seminar I created a commonplace book with drawings with copies of paintings by Michelangelo of the Sistine Chapel. Commonplace books were kept during the Victorian period as repositories comparable to collections in Wunderkammer or museums but were particular to the interests of the author. (1) I chose to create a commonplace book following the traditional pedagogical method in Western art of learning by making copies from masterworks. I never signed the book but kept it as a place to exercise technique. It was inspired by the children's book of poetry Langston Hughes wrote for children, *The Dream Keeper* that was illustrated with prints by the artist Brian Pickney. I chose this poetry text because it was written for children and was accompanied by artwork.

As an undergraduate student at New York University I received a book of poems by the Comparative Literature Professor Ipek Celik. Inside of the book, *Early Poems* by William Carlos Williams, Professor Celik wrote: "Dear Kasalina, Thought a little poetry could help out on the way..." This poetry in this book of poems evokes visual images. At the time the focus of my BA studies was literature and it foreshadowed my work in the *Myth, Legend, Fairytale* seminar led by Associate Professor Marta Figlerowicz of Comparative Literature at Yale in 2024. I have found themes of cyclicity and morphology in the readings in the seminar especially meaningful in the development of this visual arts unit for students in grades 3 - 4.

I continue to learn about literature and art as I develop my visual arts pedagogy. When classes completed this June, I began a daily schedule to develop my technical skills as an artist. Every day I dedicate time to using different materials. These materials include: watercolor pencils, watercolor paint, charcoal, acrylic paint, experimental mixed media and block printing. I have a growth mindset about learning. I hope my attitude is a spark that encourages students in the art classroom to be excited about materials. As part of this art discipline I have had insights that relate to this unit, regarding visual art and poetry. The catalyst for this unit is a

collection of folktales by the Sociologist Ernest Balintuma Kalibala. Kalibala introduces these African folktales with a dedication “for the children of America from whose racial inheritance these stories were taken.” (1)

I first read the writing of Kalibala as an MA student at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. I read his work while researching collections of African art in museums in the global north for my thesis on Baganda Art from Uganda, Africa. Kalibala was a PhD graduate in Sociology from Harvard University. He also spent time teaching in the American South at the Tuskegee Institute. As I completed my thesis I read the dissertation, *The Social Structure of the Baganda Tribe of East Africa*, that he submitted on May 24, 1946 and had it digitized remotely. (2) During this research I also found through the Schomburg Center for Black Research database online that he wrote to W.E.B. DuBois, also a Sociology PhD graduate, and the first black African American PhD student at Harvard about an article about Uganda he read in the magazine *The Crisis*. (3) Kalibala responded with great interest in the connections he saw economically regarding cotton and personal knowledge having been born in Uganda that he wanted to share. (4)

During the *Poetry as Sound and Object* seminar I visited the Schomburg Center. There I visited a mosaic memorial by the artist Houston Conwill dedicated to Langston Hughes. Under this memorial the ashes of Hughes are interred in a book shaped urn near the entrance. (5) The memorial is a cosmogram. A cosmogram is geometric representation of the universe. (6) Hughes’s breakthrough as a poet came when he was just 17 when he wrote *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*. (7) I found through research that Langston Hughes once visited Uganda during a trip to Africa in 1923. (8) In *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* by Hughes the flow of human blood is compared to the great African rivers of the Nile, Euphrates, Congo, and the great American river of the Mississippi on which many black people were sold into slavery. These ancient rivers are like bloodlines that Hughes saw connecting him to Puerto Rico where Arturo Schomburg, the Afro Hispanic founder of the Schomburg was from, Africa and North America. (9) Schomburg as a young student was told that black people had no history. He made it the mission of the Schomburg Center to be a focal point of cultural life and learning. (10) It is neither a museum, nor a library, but a vital intersection within Harlem, New York City of many contributions of black history.

Knowledge of the origin of the Nile in East Africa was limited for Europeans during the mid-nineteenth century. The Scottish explorer David Livingstone believed that unicorns could be found at the source of the Nile. (11) When I visited Uganda in 2018 one of the places I went to was the source of the Nile in Jinja, Uganda. Seeking the source of the Nile brought the British to Uganda. In Uganda the British first encountered and were surprised by the highly organized Baganda Kingdom. (12) Black people who were brought on the Middle Passage had everything taken away from them materially and their ties of kinship were undermined to dehumanize them. (13) I can see the rivers connecting to the veins of black people who died in the ocean during the Middle Passage and also into the Pitts Rivers Museum, Oxford and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge in England. In these museums sacred bundles containing the umbilical cords of the Bakabaka of Baganda (Kings of the Baganda) have been displaced during the colonial disruptions of the past century. Each sacred bundle is the spiritual twin of the soul of the Kabaka (King of Baganda). Hughes wrote his seminal poem connecting the ancient rivers to the history of black people long before he visited them in person. He must have had an deep-rooted cultural memory within connecting him to past generations, even through bondage.

I installed an interior door next to a low wall within my artist studio in the first semester as an MFA student at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 2016. When this door was opened by a visitor to the studio audio was programmed to play the voices of my parents welcoming me home and describing their lives. Passing through this door the visitor put on a virtual reality headset and then could see and interact with drawings I embedded

in the program. At the time I was in the midst of reading the PhD dissertation *The Psychological Aesthetic and Creative Aspects of the Visual Arts in Uganda*. (14) This primary art historical text was written by my uncle George Kagaba Kakooza who was an artist, educator and head of an art school at Makerere University during a pivotal point in Uganda's history after independence that was a time of great hope and also violence.

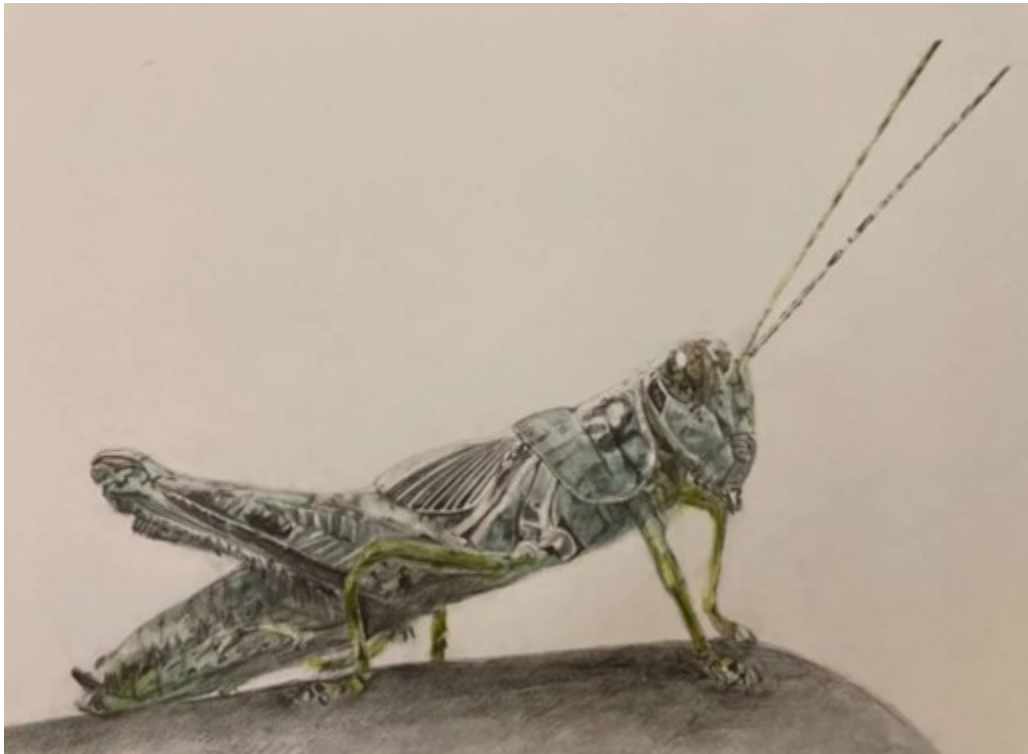
I presented my MFA thesis at Makerere University in Uganda in April 2018 and continued onto MA studies in Art History and Art Archaeology at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. While in Uganda I visited one of my grandfather's homes. I found materials such as photographs and books that the caretaker said he wanted me to have. Under his bed I also found a box of handwritten papers written in cursive by him that recalled commonplace books we studied and created in the *Poetry as Sound Object* seminar. Along the way I found many written records which informed my understanding of Baganda collections that were displaced abroad in museums. My grandfather, Omwami Musa Mukooza named me before I was born. My name is the female version of my uncle Kakooza's name within our clan which is the Ente Clan. This fall my nephew whose middle name is also Kagaba returned Kakooza's dissertation to Kakooza's son who is also an artist, sculptor and professor of art. I belong to the sub-clan of the Ente Clan, the cow without a tail through my father, Jamson Sulemani Lwebuga-Mukasa, MD, PhD. A cow without a tail is rare in herd and considered sacred. It is one of more than 52 clans in Baganda which center around the Kabaka who is the head of all the clans. The Ente clan traditionally were the Royal Ironworkers for the Kabaka. When my father returned to visit my grandfather to get my name the civil war in Uganda had just ended in 1986 and the area was still recovering.

As an MA student I read *Sir Apollo Kaggwa Discovers England* an account of a trip taken for the coronation of King Edward VII in 1871. (15) Walking through the British Museum in 1871 Katikirro Sir Apollo Kaggwa and his Secretary Ham Mukasa observed:

Different articles from our country, some had been given by Sir H.H. Johnston, who had given a great many things, and other Englishmen: The Rev. J. Roscoe had given a great many, and others too had given things from our country of Uganda. (16)

Kattikiro (Prime Minister) Sir Apollo Kaggwa was sent by Kabaka Daudi Chwa II. There were other representatives who had been sent to England during the reign of Kabaka Muteesa I as envoys during the 1860's to meet Queen Victoria. (17) On reading this description objects at the British Museum I reflected that Kaggwa and Mukasa took care to note that Englishmen had given the materials from Uganda to the museum. This made me pause and I decided to retrace their steps by taking a research trip in the summer of 2019 to England. On the first half of my trip I spent time looking at the objects associated with Kaggwa and noticed that a Royal Drum from Baganda was in the collection. This set off alarm because I knew that type of drum is culturally significant and I began research of museum collections. I collected information about objects in person and through email correspondences throughout 2019 to 2020. I began a comprehensive enquiry across museum collections in Europe and the United States to see where materials from Uganda are located. I found contested materials such as the royal bundles and other royal drums. I intuited that there was much more. I wanted to continue onto to a PhD because the scope exceeded the number of materials I could arrange to visit. Around this time, I also attended a presentation at the French Embassy in New York City about *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics* by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy. (18) This report caused a reignition of enquiry around materials in museum collections from the continent. I realized what Kaggwa and Mukasa had noticed in 1871 was part of a huge iceberg of African cultural history and memory embedded in objects and human remains within museums in the global north. The significance of Kakooza's work became apparent as I found his artist folder at the Smithsonian National

Museum of African Art and saw his 20-foot-tall sculptures in Uganda. Like Hughes I had a sense work that there was much behind doors that I could find a way to open into a deep space with history that stretches out like the universe. Museums like the British Museum flourished England during the Victorian colonial period. Other African countries such as Nigeria have contested materials in museums and had important restitutions especially of Benin Bronzes some which were returned to the Oba of Benin in 2023. (19)



Grasshopper, 2021, Watercolor Pencil, By Kasalina Maliamu Nabakooza.

Abruptly in the spring of 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic ended in-person classes and museum research visits. I finished my thesis remotely in Guilford, Connecticut. In 2021 I published an article, *The Thinkers*, in the *African Arts Journal* published by MIT Press. (20) I called for restitution of culturally significant materials and human remains which I had encountered in museums to the Kabaka of Baganda. This article was the culmination of my MFA and MA graduate independent research using primary literature, artwork and material culture.

My primary method of expression as an MFA was illustration. The pandemic was a period of frustration and growth. On one hand everything stood still and yet I had extensive time to read, contemplate alone, talk with others, listen to music, and make art. While spending time during the pandemic at home I observed and drew what I saw in the garden near wetlands. We planted many flowers and there varieties of dragonflies, butterflies, leaf bugs, spiders and praying mantises. One sunny day I saw an exquisite blue and green grasshopper about to be caught in a web with huge golden flecked eyes and it became the subject of the watercolor drawing above.

As I was reading the book *Albrecht Dürer* by Christof Metzger I saw a print from 1515 of a Rhino. (21) I thought the fantastical armour of the rhino with an extra horn drawn by Dürer reminded me of a unicorn with beautiful interlocking scales like the grasshopper I saw. I reflected that he had never seen a rhino and had to imagine it. Perhaps like me he had looked into the garden and seen a beautiful grasshopper and been inspired by it. I also admired his artwork, *The Great Piece of Turf*, a watercolor from 1503 which is a finely detailed botanical study of an everyday observation. (22) It reminded me that great things can be ephemeral, and are not

necessarily always far away or monumental. Great subjects may be right in the every day world in front of us. I wrote a story about a grasshopper and a rhino from this drawing envisioned as a children's book. It is a story about an angry rhino with tiny eyes who so surprised by a speeding grasshopper flying its eye. The rhino charges into a tree. It turns around to find the culprit and sees no one. And then it hears a tiny song. Bending its head, it calms down to listen to the song of the grasshopper and falls asleep.

This July another German watercolor came to my attention as I did my daily art practice. The watercolor is from a 1561 tournament book and shows two knights on horseback. (23) What I found curious was that the horses were wearing costumes that had horns on them. Then I remembered the rhino by Durer also had a small spiraling horn that reminded me of a unicorn horn. The lessons in this *Myths, Legends, and Fairytales* unit are whimsical. They are inspired by folktales about animals, real animals like rabbits and imagined ones like unicorns. Wakaima, a primary figure in the folktales collected by Kalibala is a clever rabbit who creates ingenious methods for navigating the world. Wakaima is culturally specific and would be recognized by children in Uganda. Br'er Rabbit is an African diasporic trickster figure who would be recognized especially by people coming from West African countries. A unicorn like Br'er Rabbit or Cinderella is an accumulation of many stories which have spread geographically and evolved overtime with no specific single origin but many. My students come from many cultural backgrounds. I feel that rabbits will be familiar animals in a North American context. I have observed students K - 8 have drawn unicorns frequently. I think the whimsy of unicorns can galvanize students' artistic creativity because they are beyond the ordinary world.

The process of active learning in this unit will cause students to share stories that they know. It will also encourage students to communicate with others. Communication has been a challenge for students isolated and learning remotely from home during the pandemic. I teach students K-8 at a neighborhood school which promotes equal access to education. Students primarily come from Hispanic minority backgrounds that are economically disadvantaged and frequently have been affected by trauma in many forms outside of school, especially gun violence. Every student has a rich experience to share. This unit is structured to encourage their voices to be at the forefront of their education using humour, literacy and art.

Wunderkammer, the German word for cabinets of curiosities were the precursors to museums. (24) These collections were created during the Enlightenment in Europe as a view of the world constructed through objects such as automatons or horns that were supposedly from unicorns. (25) When I drew the grasshopper I imagined designing a metallic automaton like the *Automaton in the Form of a Crayfish* designed by the German artist Hans Schlottheim. It has a shiny protective shell that moves which animated within. (26) The sacred bundle represent the twin of the Kabaka. It is the soul that affects our world and animates our interactions. In the story of *Wakaima and the King's Cow*, the rabbit has a beautiful cow with horns that sparkle. (27) Other animals are envious and wonder how the little rabbit had such a fine cow. So fine they believe it belonged to the King himself. When Wakaima perceives this, he tricks them into doing futile tasks and watches them from afar. He drives them away in terror by banging a drum to call the King's army to come when they fail. The sparkles of the cow's horn remind of the ironworking of the Ente clan which is represented by a sacred cow. The lion in the story exclaims, "How could I take the spark to the King when I could not even catch it?"(28) Contested materials are like the coveted King's cow. I think that there is a spark animating certain materials and people which you have to have insider knowledge to perceive. The story of the Wakaima and the King's Cow ends happily with a feast. All the animals who threatened to steal the cow have run away into the forest. Wakaima invites all of his friends and they have a wonderful meal together.

Lesson Plans With Strategies and Objectives

Unit Summary:

The objectives of this unit are to teach students how to tell stories visually through model making and sculptures. Students will reflect on how to analyze and deconstruct folktales, myths and legends through visual art. Students will also learn how interviewing family members can generate new connections for storytelling about origins. This unit is centered mainly around the collection of African folktales by Ernest Balintuma Kalibala that was first published in 1946. Students will make wearable capes from textiles, make clay sculptures, create unicorn puppets and design dioramas for storytelling.

Lesson Plan I : Storytelling Cape

The anchor of the first lesson is for students to relate personal experiences to make art. The enduring understanding is that students will enter the role of storytellers and artistic creators. This July it occurred to me that I can sign my artworks as NAK in homage to my uncle Kakooza who signed artworks with the name KAK. Spoken aloud NAK sounds like the English word knack which means an innate or learned skill at doing something. Knack also has a silent letter k in it which reminds me of my first name which is Kasalina. In the past I kept a commonplace book and did not sign it. Using this signature is a development in my artistic life where I mark myself as the creator of an artwork with a reference to another artist I was formed by. Ideally students will present stories to each other using their artwork and will learn about how to utilize the qualities of materials to enhance their artwork. Students will create wearable capes that like superheroes in myths. The goal is to empower students with wearables that they will design with their names. The essential question is how does art help understand ourselves?

Procedures:

1. Students will create wearable art that encourage them to tell stories and be creative.
2. The objective is that students are able to make a cape with their name that they design to set the stage for the unit.
3. After completion student can see themselves as artists and storytellers.

Evaluation:

The learning target is that students develop a work of art based on observations of surroundings. (VA:Cn10.1.3)

Extension:

Advanced students can create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions. (VA:Cn10.1.4)

Lesson Plan II : Wakaima and Br'er Rabbit Clay Figures

The anchor standard of lesson 2 is relating cultural understanding to deepen understanding of art. In the second lesson students will make clay rabbit figures. The enduring understanding is that students will connect the story of Wakaima and the Clay Man with Br'er Rabbit in the story *Tar Baby*. Both rabbits playing tricks on another character get stuck in scarecrow like figures which trap them as they struggle to extricate

themselves.(36) The second lesson introduces Wakaima from the African folktale collection by Kalibala and links it to Br'er Rabbit in the African diaspora. The essential question is how does art help us understand different cultures and history?

Procedures:

1. Students will make clay figures of rabbits as they are introduced to folktales with Wakaima the rabbit and Br'er rabbit.
2. The objective is that students make meaningful cross-cultural connections between the stories and the artworks they create with clay.
3. After completion the students will be able to describe how the rabbit symbolizes a trickster animal character in the folktales they heard.

Evaluation: The learning target is that students recognize that art changes depending on the time and place in which it was made. (VA:Cn11.1.3)

Extension: Advanced students can make inferences about the time, place and culture in which an artwork was made.(VA:Cn11.1.5)

Lesson Plan III : Soft Unicorn Puppet

The anchor standard of the third lesson students is developing artistic ideas. Students will make soft unicorn puppets. The enduring understanding of this lesson will be for students to learn how artists can experiment with form. The teacher can introduce the connection between Wakaima and the King's Cow to the whimsical figure of the unicorn which is broadly appealing and like Br'er rabbit has become an iterative figure in stories beyond a single specific cultural origin. Last year I observed puppets were popular with third grade students. The idea for this unit started there and this year when a student expressed interest in a soft puppet I began to consider the material qualities of lessons. A 4th grade student knocked on my classroom this past June and shared a robot made outside of class and requested that it be displayed for other students to see in the art classroom. That day kindergarten students responded to it spontaneously creating wearables like a crown and bracelet out of paper and a drawing of the robot. Later in the day I gave the 4th grader a robot I had left over from teaching at the STEM summer. Unicorns are usually bright and colorful and it is an opportunity to use visually appealing and tactile materials that excite students and cause them to be engaged like the response they had to a robot. The essential question is how do artists decide what direction their work will go in?

Procedures:

1. Students will listen to a retelling of Wakaima and the King's Cow animated by the instructor with animal puppets and do drawings inspired by the story.
2. Students will look at examples of unicorns in artworks and picture books and design their own with a blueprint drawing.
3. Students will choose mixed media materials and be guided in construction of a soft unicorn puppet.
4. The objective is that students will be inspired to experiment with new materials as they create unique unicorns.

5. After completion students will have an individualized puppet that they can use to enact a play.

Evaluation:

The learning target is that students will create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of processes and materials. (VA:Cr2.1.3)

Extension:

Advanced students can explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches. (VA:Cr2.1.4)

Lesson Plan IV: Create a Setting for a Play

The anchor standard for the 4th lesson is refining and completing artistic work. The enduring understanding is that artists refine their work from reflection. In this lesson students will make individual dioramas with boxes for play acting with their puppets. The first and last lesson are inspired by lessons from the book, *Collage Workshop for Kids*, by Shannon Merenstein.

Procedures:

1. Students will design dioramas to create a setting for the puppets in storytelling.
2. The objective is to teach students about how a background helps tell a story or artwork.
3. Students will be able to create a world for their puppet to help develop their sense of space and ability to describe stories through artwork.

Evaluation:

The learning target is that students elaborate artwork by adding details to enhance emerging meaning. (VA:Cr3.1.3)

Extension:

Advanced students can enact a play using the puppet from lesson 3 b attaching it within their diorama for display in classroom and also write a few sentences that describes what is happening in their story. Students will be able to revise work in progress based on feedback from peers. (VA:Cr.3.1.4)

Conclusion

An insight from the *Myths, Legends and Fairytales* seminar I gained was how much stories influence our lives. For example, after we read the *Metamorphoses* by the Roman author Ovid I began to realize its impact more often in the world. During research I learned that the English playwright Shakespeare was influenced by Ovid and motifs of art during the Renaissance also appeared in his writing. (29) Visiting a garden center this June in Connecticut I saw a plant pot shaped like a unicorn. It reflected with comedic ordinariness of something extraordinary within daily life echoing from the Renaissance to today. This summer while doing charcoal

drawings I recognized a scene from the *Metamorphoses* in a painting by the artist Titian of *The Death of Actaeon*, from 1559 - 1562, located in the National Gallery, London. (30) I chose to draw the figure of the goddess Diana in charcoal because of the painting's atmospheric values. In the description of the painting in the book *The History and Techniques of The Great Masters: Titian*, I found a link between poetry and visual art. According to Titian his paintings were mood poems.

The belief was held in the classical world that painters and poets shared basically the same functions was taken up again during the Renaissance, poets being referred to as articulate painters, and painters as mute poets. (31)

About a month before my father passed away in his sleep in October 2023 he said he was proud of me for the publication of my unit *The Dream Keeper's Quest*. He was a pulmonologist who dedicated his research to the impact of environmental air pollution on black neighborhoods in Buffalo, New York from truck traffic on the Peace Bridge. This spring I read the play *Enemy of the People* written by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen in 1882. (32) The play made me reflect on how telling the truth can be complicated by economic and political interests.

As Minister of Education of Uganda, Kalibala set a precedent for restitution of materials from Cambridge to the Uganda Museum in 1961. (33) I referred to this historical event as evidence that restitution to the continent was possible in my article, *The Thinkers*. (34) Like Wakaima beating the drum, it was a message communicating within Uganda and across the African diaspora regarding the materials contained in museums abroad. In June 2024 Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology restituted materials to Uganda and made a pledge to return more. (35)

There is a description in the first chapter of the book *Imaginary Animals*, by Boria Sax about how imaginary animals like unicorns relate to "ideas about life, death and time," and that the fantastic "extends to every single creature, from the dragonfly to the dragon." (37) During the development of this unit I corresponded with the Yale Professor Nicole Sheriko, Assistant Professor of English about puppetry. Sheriko shared a wealth of ideas regarding how this unit can be expanded to relate to animal masks in African storytelling traditions and the materiality of puppets in discussion of unicorns. A watercolor drawing of my grasshopper can undergo topographical transformations that metamorphose in the mind from crustacean automaton to rhinoceros to a unicorn and into a knight's horse or a cow without a tail. There are many opportunities for interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange throughout this visual arts unit.

Reading List for Teachers

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Reading List for Students

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Tichenor, Austin. "Pop-up Shakespeare: Every Play and Poem in Pop-up 3-D." 2017.

Materials for Classroom Use

- Textiles
- Acrylic Paint
- Styrofoam trays
- Table Covers
- Tempera Paint
- Cotton
- Felt
- Glue
- Scissors
- Erasers
- Pencils
- Drawing Paper
- Airdry Modelling Clay
- Clay tools
- Rulers
- Googly Eyes of Various Sizes
- Pom Poms

- Assorted Thread
- Metallic Fabric
- Pipe Cleaners
- Popsicle Sticks
- Cardstock Paper
- Small Rectangular Cardboard Boxes
- Tape

Notes

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18. Kiwanuka, M.S.M. Uganda's Famous Men: Muteesa of Uganda. East African Literature Bureau, 1967, 46 - 48.
19. [Felwine Sarr](#), [Bénédicte Savoy](#). "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics," Ministère de la Culture, 2018.
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23. Metzger, *Albrecht Dürer*, 488.
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Appendix on Implementing District Standards

This visual art unit meaningfully implements the school district's academic standards because students will through creation of wearables, clay sculpture, dioramas and use puppets explore other identities and express their unique voices through art. The objectives of this unit are to teach students how to tell stories visually through model making and sculptures. Students will reflect on how to analyze and deconstruct folktales, myths and legends through visual art. Students will also learn how interviewing family members can generate new connections for storytelling about origins. This unit is centered mainly around the collection of African folktales by Ernest Balintuma Kalibala that was first published in 1946. In *Wakaima and the Clay Man* (1946), the sociologist Ernest Balintuma Kalibala introduces the African folktales with a dedication "for the children of America from whose racial inheritance these stories are taken." The performance of stories empowers

students to make meaningful connections to their work and to communicate their ideas with other students through playacting. Students will gain understanding of other cultures through learning new animal folktales and storytelling.

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