



## Folktale Through African Art

Guide for Curriculum Unit 93.02.04  
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In this unit I will bring together the study of African folktale and African art. Students will be exposed to original artwork when they visit the Yale Art Gallery's African collection. But they will first study folktales and other stories from West Africa. By hearing and reading these stories they will be introduced to many new cultural and religious beliefs, such as spirits inhabiting nature and possessing special powers. Once the students become familiar with these, they will go to the gallery with some knowledge and background of the culture that created the works of art. They may even be able to find some of the characters from the stories depicted in the sculpture. The type of sculpture we will be concentrating on are masks and statuettes. The masks were worn as part of elaborate costumes and used in ceremonies, rituals, and dances to dramatize the myths and tales of a certain tribe's history or cultural beliefs.

By participating in this unit, students in grades three through five will be exposed to the sculpture and stories of three African cultures. They will read and listen to the stories and then participate in many different arts activities. The three cultures are from West Africa: the Bambara of Mali, the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria, and the Ashanti of Ghana. I have limited my choice of cultures to West Africa because that is the source of most of the African sculpture at the Yale Art Gallery. Students who participate in this unit will express their own ideas through many art forms— visual arts, dance, drama, and creative writing.

(Recommended for Visual Arts, Grades 3-5; and Social Studies, or Literature for junior and senior high students)

### **Key Words**

*Art Masks*

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