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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1998 Volume III: Art and Artifacts: the Cultural Meaning of Objects

African Art and Aesthetics

Guide for Curriculum Unit 98.03.02
by Val-Jean Belton

This unit is specifically designed for Introductory Art Classes at the High School level. The intent of this unit is to introduce students to African art and aesthetics.

This unit examines the background history of African art. In this interdisciplinary approach to teaching, the meaning of African art and aesthetics is revealed through the methodologies of analyzing art objects: description, deduction, and speculation. Teaching strategies includes class trips to the Yale Art Gallery, where students will study and observe the permanent African art collection.

The art objects analyzed include:

"Ibeji" Twin Statues (19th c.) Yoruba Civilization, Nigeria.

"Sowo Wui Helmet" (20th c.) Mende Civilization, Sierra Leone.

"Aron Etoma Mask" (20th c.) Temne Civilization, Sierra Leone.

Included in this unit are the objectives, the elements of African art aesthetics, student drawing handouts of the objects, and an annotated bibliography. The goal is for student to get a clearer understanding of how aesthetics influences African art.

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