

IT'S A SMALL WORLD: GLOBALIZATION IN AMERICA AND AFRICA

THE THEME - GLOBALIZATION

Globalization - "The process by which individuals and groups in geographically separate societies are becoming increasingly interconnected through space by such means as communications media (books, television, the internet, etc.) or physical travel."

While this may seem to be a simplistic definition to a complex idea, our goal is to examine globalization as it pertains to this kit. We want the students to learn through the objects.

SUPPORTING THE THEME: THREE MAIN IDEAS

We have divided the kit into three sections or main ideas, each pinpointing a particular aspect of globalization that can be studied in terms of certain artifacts.

1. Recycling
2. Meeting the demands of a global market
3. Transculturation

OVERVIEWS

For each of the three sections we provide the teacher with a topic overview. These are in the Teacher's guide. We also list the object/label numbers to indicate which objects fall under that section. There are general questions you can ask your students about the objects.

THE OBJECTS AND THEIR LABELS

Each object has a label identifying what it is. There is a number on the object or on a bag the object is in that corresponds to its number on the label. The labels are for both teacher and students. In some cases, there are questions on the label about a particular object. You notice that many of the objects come from Kenya. This is because Kenya is traditionally known as an African country hospitable to outside traders. They can easily get into Kenya and are able to get merchandise out of Kenya smoothly. As a result, Kenya has become the marketplace for the rest of Africa. Traders from East, South, and parts of Central Africa bring their goods to Kenya to be sold. "Made in Kenya" is put on an object because that is probably where it was purchased. It is possible that it was actually made in another African country - another lesson in globalization! Kenya certainly produces its own goods for the outside world; we just want you to keep this concept of Kenya as a marketplace in mind when you look at the objects.

WORLD VOICES: A TEACHER'S NEWSLETTER

World Voices is a museum of Anthropology publication designed for teachers. In each issue we deal with a different anthropological topic. We have included two back issues with sections pertaining to aspects of this kit. These are in the Teacher's Guide.

World Voices, November 1998, Vol. 4/No.1 addresses folk recycling

OVERVIEW

SECTION ONE: RECYCLING (OBJECTS/LABELS 1-9)

Our definition of recycling has to do with "folk recycling" which is when the local culture sees potential in industrial refuse and transforms it into another item that may be very different from its original function. The objects in this section make apparent the Western influences that have reached many parts of the globe. "Local" and "global" are so intertwined that it becomes difficult to tell where one begins and the other ends.

Folk recycling is a worldwide, highly creative process - It is the recognition of potential in unexpected opportunities. There is a worldwide market for these items due to collectors and tourists who appreciate the creative brilliance in the novel use of an old, often familiar discard. Both adults and children recycle for a variety of reasons.

Folk recycling of materials from outside cultures for use by members of the local culture provides an alternative and cheaper source of goods for poor people -

Much of what is produced in the West is designed to become trash. It was created with a limited lifespan and is more expensive to repair than to replace. The United Nations estimates that two percent of the people in cities of non-industrialized countries make a living from the discards of the richest ten to twenty percent. Recycling provides economic improvement for: those who scavenge for the materials, clean/prepare them for use, turn the discards into new items, and market the newly created items to local people.

Critical Thinking

1. Do you recycle? Have you ever used something intended for a specific function and changed the use of it to suit your needs?

2. How do these objects illustrate globalization?

3. (Do this before recycling discussion as a motivating activity) What can you learn about the people who made these objects? Are they rich or poor? Are they children or adults? (Note to the teacher - We often think that a recycled toy or car or radio made by a child is charming. The point we miss is that the children are making their own toys and these are reproductions of items they may have never actually have but they desire).

CORRESPONDING OBJECT LABELS

1. ZULU WIRE BASKET - SOUTH AFRICA

Colorful telephone wire creates the fluid patterns Zulu weavers achieve with traditional grasses.

2. BRASS GOLD WEIGHT - GHANA

Brass bathroom taps and doorknobs imported during colonial occupation were melted down and recast using traditional techniques. Today, artisans use old plumbing and any scrap brass as a resource.

3. KEROSENE LAMP - KENYA

Because of deforestation, wood as fuel is scarce in many parts of Africa. European style kerosene lamps, rather than a luxury, are a necessity but are often too expensive for the poor. Open wick kerosene lamps like this one take the place of expensive European lamps. Even though the brightly painted outsides become sooty with use, the colors help with marketing through their appeal to customers.

4. TEA STOVE - KENYA

African deforestation has affected fuel supplies for cooking stoves. Larger versions of this tiny tea warmer represent appropriate technological responses to energy deficiencies because they use energy efficient designs. This used to be a can that held oil for a car but was creatively converted into something that can meet the needs of the people. Do you think this object originated in Kenya? Why or why not?

5. WIRE BICYCLE - KENYA

Children, especially little boys, are fascinated by the latest inventions, particularly those involving transportation. They create clever versions of planes, buses, bikes, cars, trucks, tractors, and canoes. The real life counterparts of these toys will probably always be beyond their reach.

6. SANZA (THUMB PIANO) - KENYA

Thumb pianos are instruments found in various forms over much of Africa. Early on recycled materials became musical instruments for local use. Today, their popularity has spread over the world. They appear as collectibles as well as instruments in some contemporary Western music.

7. TONGS - KENYA

Tongs are used to put pieces of charcoal on a fire or to remove something that is hot. These tongs are recycled iron. People recycle all types of scrap iron such as components of broken cars that are too expensive to repair. Instead of letting the iron rust, they melt it down for another use.

8. FEMALE DOLL - COTE D'VOIRE (IVORY COAST)

This doll is made from plastic shopping bags.

9. NECKLACE - SOUTHERN AFRICA

Aluminum pots were melted down to make metal beads for this necklace. Aluminum is a popular color and has an important symbolic association with water. The artisan has also crafted beads from animal finger bones and horn.

OVERVIEW
SECTION TWO: MEETING THE DEMANDS OF A GLOBAL MARKET
(OBJECTS/LABELS 10-16)

Travel is an important component of globalization. During World War II, people of different cultures interacted with each other more than in the past, due to Americans being stationed in various countries, people from other countries enlisting and going overseas, etc. People became exposed to traditions, foods, and artwork unlike their own. Due to speedier transportation, tourism increased. The trend has accelerated into the 21st century. People who rely upon the tourist trade for their livelihood (such as artisans) observed that knowing the consumer's taste was the key to success. Artisans were able to pick up on the tourist's cultural tendencies. Tourists are drawn to the "exotic" and yet there has to be some conformity to the tourist's cultural preferences or something about the object should remind them of home. Indigenous peoples involved in the tourist trade shrewdly marketed the traditional objects to satisfy the need. They created or marketed something that was exotic enough where tourists felt they were "chic" or "hip" yet somehow grounded the object in the familiar. Tourists have their own assumptions of what African art is or should be. Often, artisans will craft what they know the tourists expect or want to see even if it does not follow traditional cultural patterns.

Critical Thinking

1. How do you think these objects appeal to the tourist's taste for the "exotic"? How do you think they appeal to a tourist's sense of the "familiar"?
2. Western definition of African art - "An object made by an African artist and used in tribal ceremonies."
African definition of art - "An object that corresponds to tribal artists rules and concepts, that has the ability to cure, place cures, to instruct, and to protect individuals and communities, and is rarely produced by one individual."
Discuss why there may be such a discrepancy between these two definitions.
3. How did globalization play a role in the making of these objects?

CORRESPONDING OBJECT LABELS

Object 10 is no longer in the kit, but the label can still be used as a point of discussion.

10. MASAI MASK - KENYA

Traditionally, the Masai people of Kenya and Tanzania do not use masks. Yet the Masai and their neighbors recognize the tourist assumption that all African groups use masks and their fascination with masks. Therefore, these groups have adapted their merchandise accordingly.

11. PERFUME BOTTLE - NORTH AFRICA

The tradition of perfume and perfume bottles is associated with the French. This artisan is accommodating European tastes, yet the decoration on the bottle suggests a North African design.

12. PAINTING - KENYA

Except for decorating the outside of houses, painting on a flat surface (two-dimensional art) is not a tradition in Africa. However, it is a Western tradition and this painting style appeals to many visitors to the continent.

Another nontraditional characteristic is the artisan's signature on the painting. Traditional African artisans did not sign works of art but collectors from other parts of the world like to have the artist's signature on their purchase.

13. PANITED MUG - ZIMBABWE

The artisan has depicted an African scene. He cleverly chose a mug as his canvas because he knows that many tourists can relate to a mug and use them a lot. Notice the signature on this object as well. (See 11 for an explanation).

14. CARVED WOODEN FIGURES - NIGERIA

Globalization often brings about significant changes in lifestyle.

Today, fewer Africans depend solely upon traditional ways of making a living. Many people have had to respond to the global market in order to support their families.

Look at the two objects. How do you think women's roles have changed in parts of Nigeria?

What about these objects suggests that women still perform some traditional roles?

15. OSTRICH EGGSHELL EARRINGS - ZIMBABWE

(DO NOT WEAR THESE)

In spite of the multitude of rich cultural traditions Africa has to offer the world, the first images to come to a person's mind when thinking about Africa are animals. In reality, there are few people in Africa who are in close daily contact with wild animals and there are Africans who never see wild animals unless they go to the zoo. Some African groups have ostrich eggshell jewelry throughout their history. However, the painted animal on the earring has the tourist in mind.

16. EBONY MAKONDE CARVING - TANZANIA

Although ebony carving is a Makonde (an ethnic group) tradition, it had a stigma attached to it. Carvers were considered lazy because their work took time away from farming which was believed to be a more important pursuit. In the 1950's and 1960's tourism increased in Tanzania creating a market for carvings. At this time, many Makonde artisans merged their traditional style with new forms that appealed to the consumer. The carving style was rooted in elongated forms but became more pronounced due to tourist preference for this "look". The Makonde people are now well known worldwide for their carving skills.

There is a mistaken notion among tourists that ebony is black. It is actually a dark brown. To satisfy the customer's view of ebony, some artisans glaze the carvings with boot polish.

OVERVIEW
SECTION THREE: TRANSCULTURATION
(OBJECT/LABELS 17-20)

"Acculturation" refers to when a culture internalizes or incorporates aspects of other cultural traditions into their own. Quite often, we view America as the culture that brought traditions to other groups and the focus is on how our commodities and ideas are prevalent among other groups. This assumes that the giving is a "one way street" with America giving and everybody else taking. We use the term "transculturation" because Africa and other cultures worldwide have given a lot to American culture and have contributed to what we have today. Transculturation implies a two way street. The profound influence African culture has had on America is beyond the scope of this kit. However, we illustrate a few examples with objects in the kit.

Critical Thinking

1. Westerners find it amusing when they see an object from their own culture used in the "wrong way" in another culture. For instance, some **Turkana (Kenya)** men make earrings from a red plastic car light reflector. Look at the objects from this section of the kit and the mask from section 2 and observe how Americans "recycle" ideas. Do you think the behavior of the Turkana men is different from what Americans do to African objects?
2. Discuss how transculturation assists in the process of globalization.
3. Transculturation is not a new phenomenon. Historically, African culture has had a deep impact upon American culture and vice versa. European Americans relied upon the expertise African slaves brought with them to America in areas such as animal husbandry, rice cultivation, knowledge of medicine, and metal work. Slaves taken to South Carolina were instrumental in introducing techniques in boat building, hunting, and fishing. Furthermore, certain American cultural practices illustrate that African culture not only survived the Atlantic slave trade but flourished in America where transplanted Africans recycled the ideas and beliefs of their homeland, while also modifying them to meet the needs of a new location and new cultural influences (i.e. - Native Americans and European Americans). Those ideas were

not forgotten but were handed down from generation to generation.

Have students research some of these topics:

- African American cowboys in the U.S. and the connection
- African American contributions to the famed wrought iron that adorn homes in New Orleans and Charleston
- African rice cultivation in the Americas
- Burial practices among some African Americans in the Southeast that indicate African roots
- Fractals in Africa
- African American quilts
- Bottle trees in the Southeast
- Basket making techniques

To learn more about some of these topics, we suggest the book AFRICANS IN AMERICAN CULTURE, edited by Joseph E. Holloway. Indiana University Press, 1990. Other topics are discussed in the book that we have not listed here. After reading the book, you could offer it to the students as a source if you think it is appropriate.

CORRESPONDING OBJECT LABELS

17. KENTE CLOTH STRIP - GHANA

Traditionally, Kente cloth was worn by chiefs or important officials in Ghana. It was woven into strips similar to the one in the kit and then the strips were sewn together. In America, the Kente patterns are used for a number of decorative purposes. Here we see it printed on cloth and made into a hat. In some American homes people upholster their couches with the pattern. Printed Kente cloth is used to make book bags and suspenders. In America, its use is not limited to important officials but is worn by anyone who wants to wear it. Sometimes people wear it only on special occasions.

Kente cloth's meaning has also changed. In America, it often symbolizes African-American solidarity. It also represents an awareness of connections to the homeland.

18. AFRICAN PATTERNED CLOTH

This cloth was woven in England, sent to Cote D'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) to be printed, and sold in West Africa, the U.S., and even Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The cloth illustrates the influence that African styles have upon American fashion.

19. AKUABA DOLL - GHANA

This doll is traditionally associated with fertility among some cultural groups in Ghana. Due to the international market, these dolls have become a well known symbol outside of Africa. When we consider the doll's traditional meaning and then look at the picture on this label showing an object from America, we can see the changes the doll has undergone.

20. MASAI NECKLACE - KENYA

Tourists buy these necklaces and "recycle" them as picture frames.