A STUDY GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

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Ochammi is an educational cultural development organization that aspires to promote healthy holistic lifestyle and cultural competency in collaborative ventures with other organizations or independently through African Arts.

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About OCHEAMI

About the Artists

Ocheami is led by Kofi and Amma Anang. Kofi Anang was born in Eastern Ghana. He performed with the National Dance Ensemble of Ghana for many years, and settled in Seattle in 1978. Here he met his wife Amma, and they formed the ensemble Ocheami to showcase the vibrant performing arts of Ghana.

About the Program

In Ghanaian history, the Ocheami (pronounced oh chee AH mee) was an important figure in the ancient courts who spoke on behalf of the King. The group Ocheami uses the arts to speak for the cultural legacies of this West Africa country. Led by Kofi and Amma Anang, Ocheami’s programs and residencies engage audiences of all ages.

Through pulsating rhythms, exuberant dances, sweet harmonies and fascinating stories with serious lessons, Ocheami offers a loving invitation to experience the world through Ghanaian eyes.
The Country

Ghana, located on the coast of the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, is one of the most prominent nations of sub-Saharan Africa. In 1957, it became the first Black-rulled African country to achieve independence from colonial rule. The capital of Accra is found on the southern coast, near other large cities such as Sekondi/Takoradi and Cape Coast.

The People

Ghana is a multi-ethnic country with an estimated 50 tribal groups speaking as many languages. Because of this diversity of languages, and the lack of sufficient majority to suggest an indigenous language as the national tongue, Ghana has selected English as the official language. Government proceedings and education are conducted in English, however, primary schools have begun to integrate major regional languages into their curriculum. Many of the ethnic groups have subdivisions which resulted from years of war and domination. The Akan is actually a confederation which includes the Asante, Fante, and nine others. Two other major ethnic groups in Ghana are the Ewe and Ga. Kofi Anang is a member of the Ga ethnic group.

The members of ethnic groups have historically lived in close proximity. With urban migration increasing the populations in Ghanaian cities, ethnic divisions are becoming less significant and a concern for maintaining traditional customs and heritage is growing.
The Landscape

Ghana is divided into ten administrative regions, most of them named for predominant ethnic groups, that fit within one of three main geographical zones.

1) The Coastal Zone, including the Western, Central, Eastern, Volta and Greater Accra regions are home to the Ewe, Ga, Fante and numerous small kingdoms based primarily on trade. This zone relies on fishing and international trade through its port cities.

2) The Forest Zone, including the regions of Brong-Ahafo and Asante. It is here where the Akan live. This zone tends to have large kingdoms based on agriculture. Farm products are shipped via rail to the coast.

3) The Northern Savanna, including the Northern and Upper regions, is home to the Dagomba, Gonja and Mossi groups. This is the poorest land of Ghana, and the savanna is a broad expanse of land with few rivers, mountains or cities.

ACTIVITY

Have students use the map of Ghana in the Handout section to locate the three main geographical regions. Then ask students to research the following questions:

• What might be some reasons why the Northern Savanna is the poorest region?

• Why are so many cities located on the coast?

• How do the geographical regions affect the types of trade goods exported from Ghana?

Æ EALRs: Geography 1, 3 / Economics 1.1
Background Information

History

Before the colonial era in Africa, political boundaries were based exclusively on ethnic divisions. The boundaries of kingdoms ebbed and flowed with the results of war with neighboring ethnic groups. With the advent of European colonial power, the boundaries became fixed based on geographical considerations independent of ethnic patterns. These divisions were beneficial to certain ethnic groups favored by the new rulers. In the case of Ghana, the current borders were only established in the late 19th century, combining four separate territories: the Gold Coast (the Coastal Zone), the Asante Kingdom (the Forest Zone), Togoland (currently part of the Volta region) and the Northern Territories.

During the British occupation of the Gold Coast, the Asante Kingdom became very powerful by trading in slaves with the British. In the mid-19th century, however, the British turned against the Asante, burning the capital of Kumasi and claiming their land. In 1900, a British official attempted to assert his authority by demanding the Golden Stool, the symbol of Asante unity and power, be surrendered to him. In response to this action the Asante declared war against the British, but were defeated and the Asante king exiled.

After World War II a nationalist movement led by Kwame Nkrumah agitated for Ghanaian independence. After protracted agitation, Ghana was finally granted independence on March 6, 1957 with Nkrumah as the first president. The independent Ghana was named for the ancient kingdom of Ghana.
In the late 1960s and 1970s, Ghana experienced serious political instability. The military would stage a coup and the people would protest. After some time, the military would concede, and return power to a civilian government, but would overthrow it a short time later.

A coup in 1979 brought Jerry Rawlings, an Air Force lieutenant to power. Ultimately he resigned his post and gave the reigns of power to a civilian government. The situation in the country deteriorated to the point that, in 1981, he staged yet another coup. His was a populist, anti-colonial revolution aimed at eliminating corruption and achieving economic self-reliance. In 1992, Rawlings was officially elected president of Ghana under a new constitution. He was reelected in 1996 and will complete his term as president in the year 2000.

**ACTIVITY**

Both the United States and Ghana were once under British colonial rule before becoming independent nations. Chart the similarities and differences in historical experiences of people in these two countries as a result of being former British colonies.

**EARLs:** History 1, 2 / Civics 1.1
Music and Dance in Ghanaian Societies

There is no concept for “pure” music in Ghana; each dance, each piece of music and the words to its song are inseparably linked to its function. For example, the word Kpanlogo is the name of a song performed for the recreational dance of the same name which is accompanied by the Kpanlogo drum piece. The drums for each ethnic group are tuned to the tonal characteristics of that group’s language and are played to correspond to speech patterns of that language. In certain drumming traditions, words are encoded in the drum patterns. Sometimes these are the words of the particular song or memorized phrases that provide a way of remembering the drum patterns. In the Asante tradition, appellations (tributes) are played to former kings on the atumpan or talking drums. The dancer is called upon to match this drum-word interaction by matching the rhythms of the drum patterns with appropriate movements, to begin and end on cue, and to change sections when the master drummer signals such a change.

In Ghana, music and dance are more than a creative process, an expression of self or a demonstration of skill. Music is part of everyday life that is organized to fill the social function of expressing group consciousness. Public performances take place when a group of people or community come together for specific purposes:

1) leisure or recreational activities

2) performing a religious ritual such as praising the gods, honoring an ancestor or appeasing a dead relative with whom there has been a quarrel

3) public ceremonies such as marriage, installation of a new chief, destooling (dethroning) a chief, or funerals

4) regular festivals such as Homowo “hooting at hunger” (harvest festival) and planting festivals

5) Durbar, a celebration where the chief meets his people
There are certain occasions that are particular to a given ethnic or linguistic group, such as the Homowo festival of the Ga. Others will involve people from different ethnic groups. The Durbar, for example, is a ceremony of state in which a ruler brings officials under his rule together to pledge loyalty to the kingdom.

The meaning and significance attached to communal activities in Ghana, as in the rest of the continent, is so ethnically-bound that it is easy for those unfamiliar with the traditions to neglect the "why" of the performances. Organized games, festivals and religious ceremonies have numerous functions including:

- Historical narration which recounts the history, historical values and morals of a people through song and dance.

- Social control which is exercised through special festivals where people can openly criticize those in authority, and insult people who have wronged others or misbehaved. This also includes occasions that serve to correct wrong-doing, involving chiefs, spirits, ancestors or dead relatives.

- Praise which includes the singing of praise songs for heroes, rulers, gods, friendly neighbors and good harvests. These activities affirm loyalty to traditional leadership and customs.

- Proper behavior which is encouraged through cooperative and collective activities which strengthen social bonds within the community.

- Assuring the success of a hunt or harvest which is done with animal calls, imitations, feasts and related rituals.

- Assuring the safety of river crossings which takes place by paying homage, through music and dance, to spirits which inhabit rivers.

The function of dances can be different from the purpose of the occasion at which it is performed. For example, a hunter's dance at a funeral, rather than getting ready for a hunt, may serve to honor a deceased hunter. Likewise, including a recreational dance like kpanlogo in a ritual may serve to maintain the momentum of that ritual.
Characteristics of Dance in Ghana

Dances in Ghana follow one of a limited number of patterns:

1) free dance done, in a spontaneous fashion, by all those who wish to participate

2) dances in particular spatial patterns and designs performed by small groups of 2 to 4 people

3) mass dances where an entire community is organized to carry out the same dance simultaneously.

In addition, there are four types of dance patterns: circle dances, line dances, horseshoe shapes and serpentine dances. Although each dance has certain prescribed movements, there is still room for a range of individual variation. The purpose and function of a dance defines the range of variations that are permissible, as does the drum language.

Visual elements of dance are often just as important as the dance itself. Costumes, body paint, facial make-up and masks help define the meaning of a dance and reinforce its cultural importance. Particular costumes may be associated with specific occasions and used only at those times.

The location for performance is important. Within its cultural context, a dance would never be presented in a concert-type setting. Since it is considered the expression of an entire community, a performance would occur in a courtyard, village square, private home, mausoleum, market place, or any other location that serves to underscore the meaning. Concert settings are being used, however, to preserve and share dances for the education of people within and outside of Ghana.
Background Information

Game Songs as Culture in Ghana

In Ghana, games are forms of public performance that invariably involve singing and, at times, dance-like movements. They also embody important cultural values, from proverbs to moral teachings to practical hints on fitting into the social fabric. These sorts of games have an important instructive function in the lives of children. For example, a popular Ghanaian game has children pass stones in a circle while singing. As the song’s tempo increases, so does the speed of stone passing. Since the aim is to keep going as long as possible, cooperation is needed.

ACTIVITY

Sansa Kroma is a stone passing game of the Akan people. The song tells the story of an orphan hawk who snatches chicks for food because he has been left to fend for himself. The words of the song remind Akan children that if they are orphaned they will not be alone, but will be taken in by a relative or other family in their village. This is an example of a singing game which shares moral values of the community as well as physical task lessons. Teach the singing game using the recording or transcription found in Let Your Voice Be Heard! Songs from Ghana and Zimbabwe, pp.17-19. What lessons can children discover in this song and game? Suggestions are given for rhythmic patterns to be added, as well as dance steps that can be used to complete the musical experience.

EALRs: Arts 1 & 4; Communications 1, 2 & 3
Understanding Stereotypes

People from Africa feel that many Americans have erroneous concepts about the continent of Africa and the people who live there. These stereotypes perpetuate false assumptions. But, people in Africa have stereotypes about life in America as well.

American Stereotypes of Africa

1. Africa is a country.

Africa is the world’s second largest continent (after Asia) comprised of 53 countries (as of 1996).

2. Africa is a huge jungle.

Tropical rain forests (or jungles) account for only about 5% of African land. Most of Africa is savanna grassland. There are also mountains that can become snow covered, and a number of very large cities.

3. Africa is still an uncivilized “dark continent”.

Africa was only “dark” (meaning unknown and uncivilized) to a small number of uninformed European explorers. Arabic traders, seafarers from India and the Africans themselves thought otherwise. During the Middle Ages, large city-states were already well-established in West Africa, and large democratic federations characterized much of Central and South Africa. Africa has never been “uncivilized”. Even the most technologically simple societies possess elaborate social systems, including kinship, religion and rules of law.

4. Africa is full of elephants, giraffes, lions and rhinoceroses.

Many of these animals are endangered species. Most of these animals are originally from the central and eastern parts of the continent and now live on protected game preserves.
Pre-Program Activities

African Stereotypes of Americans

African students at American universities have reported that they had some of the following images or assumptions about America, largely drawn from American television and movies.

1. All Americans are rich.

American television, newspaper, movies and exports help to create an image of a hugely wealthy land, where a large proportion of its citizens are rich. The Americans portrayed on popular television shows are disproportionately from the wealthiest strata of the society.

2. Americans do not tolerate laziness.

Americans are seen as high-pressure achievers who have no room for a leisurely approach to work. It is even feared that laziness is against the law. The traditional African work-style, based on the seasons, offers more leisure and vacation time. As cities grow, this is gradually changing.

3. America has too much freedom.

Free speech, political democracy and the rights of the individual seem so highly valued in America that many Africans attribute such ills as crime, juvenile delinquency, pornography and rape to too much freedom.

4. Americans do not respect the elderly.

Because the elderly are highly revered in traditional African societies, most Africans find it disturbing how Americans care for and respect their parents and grandparents. Nursing homes, in particular, are seen as institutions indicating a disrespect for the elderly.

5. Most Americans carry guns.

It is widely believed that, not only do most Americans carry guns, but that they will use them at the slightest provocation. This is a perception encouraged by television and the movies.

ACTIVITY

Use the list of stereotypes that Ghanaian students have about Americans to find evidence that supports these ideas. Look at magazine ads, catalogs, newspapers, television and internet sources. Then look at the list of stereotypes that Americans have about Africans and try to discover where support for these ideas come from. Does the media have a responsibility to make sure that images of Americans and Africans are accurate?

EALRs: Arts 2, 3.2 Communications 1, 4
Pre-Program Activities

Naming Activity

Throughout southern Ghana, children are often given names corresponding to the day of the week on which they were born. In addition, they may be given family names, nicknames or other names. An elaborate ceremony takes place within days of the birth in which the entire community offers wishes for good health and celebrates the giving of “life” to the child. The day names used by Akan, Ga and other peoples are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY OF BIRTH</th>
<th>GIRLS (pronunciation)</th>
<th>BOYS (pronunciation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Akosua (ah KO su ya)</td>
<td>Kwesi (KWEY see)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Adwoa (ah JO wa)</td>
<td>Kojo (KO jo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Abena (ah BEH na)</td>
<td>Kwabena (kwa BEE na)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Akua (ah KWEE ya)</td>
<td>Kweku (KWEY koo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Yaa (YAH)</td>
<td>Yaw (rhymes with jaw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Afea (ah FEE ya)</td>
<td>Kofi (KO fee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Amma (AHM mah)</td>
<td>Kwame (KWAH mey)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have the students find out on what day of the week they were born. Use the above chart to have students determine their “day” name in Akan. On the day of the performance, have the students make name tags to wear for the performance using their Akan name. Can they determine on what day the performers were born?

EALRs: Geography 3.3 / History 3.1
Pre-Program Activities

Introduction to the African Continent

Many people continue to speak about Africa as if it were a country rather than a continent of many countries. Ask children what things they know about Africa. Make a list. Ask specific questions if needed such as:

- Are there cities?
- Are there deserts?
- Are there mountains?
- Are there sources of water such as lakes and rivers?

Use a map of Africa to help the children reconsider their list. How many statements that were made are true? Count the number of countries (as of 1996 there were 53).

*EALRs: Geography 1, 2*

Introducing Ghana

Use the map of Africa to locate the country of Ghana. Then, utilize the map of Ghana found in the Handout section of this guide to show the students that even though it is a small country, it is divided into regions. In each region of Ghana, many different languages are spoken. What languages do we speak in Washington? In the United States? (There are probably well over 40 languages spoken in Washington). In Ghana, there are over 50 languages spoken, six of which are used for official purposes. The national language, however, is English, just like in our country.

*EALRs: Geography 1, 2*
Extensions for Learning

Instruments of the Tradition

In many places of the world, musical instruments are made from resources that are available in the country. Visit the website for the Ghanaian Embassy in Washington, D.C. There you can watch a slideshow on tourism to see what types of resources can be found in Ghana.

<http://www.ghana-embassy.org> (lasted accessed 8/11/99)

What would you expect the instruments to be made of? Look at pictures of traditional instruments in the resource books or on the Handout page to compare your results.

Resource Books


ณาEALRs: Geography 1, 3 / Economics 1 / Arts 2
Extensions for Learning

Proverbs

Proverbs are used to help guide the life and decisions of many Akan people. Each proverb can be stated simply by using the symbol which represents it. Below you will find proverbs with descriptions of their symbols. Ask the students to consider the proverb and what it might mean. After sharing the meaning with them, have them create a picture of what the symbol might look like.

Discover proverbs from other cultures. Compile a book of wisdom from these cultures which can include symbols, art work and children’s intrepreations.

Power is like an egg—when held firmly, it does not break. But when held loosely, it falls from your grasp and shatters into pieces.
Meaning: Suggests that it is necessary for one to keep a firm grip on power.
Symbol: Man holding an egg

The knot that is tied by a wise man cannot be untied by a fool.
Meaning: The leader has a right to his position by virtue of his superior wisdom.
Symbol: Wisdom knot

While other trees lose their leaves, the palm tree’s leaves will always remain fresh.
Meaning: A wish for long life and prosperity.
Symbol: Blooming palm tree

Although the rain wets the leopard’s spots, it does not wash them off.
Meaning: Whatever happens, a person’s true nature never changes.
Symbol: Leopard

From Boateng, F.A. Asante. 1996. The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.

>>&EALRs: Writing 2 / Reading 2 / Arts 4
Adinkra Cloth

Adinkra is the traditional mourning cloth of Ghanaians. Unlike the brightly-colored woven kente, adinkra is hand-stamped in sombre colors usually on russet brown or white cloth. The stamps that are used are cut from pieces of calabash with palm leaf handles. The dye is made from the bark of the badie tree to which etia or iron slag is added, and the mixture boiled to the consistency of tar. In this state, it is called adinkra aduru.

The cloth is stretched and anchored to the ground with wooden pegs. The stamps are dipped into the adinkra aduru and then printed on the cloth.

The origin of adinkra is in dispute. There are at least fifty designs in constant use by adinkra makers. Any Ghanaian, whether of royal lineage or not, may wear adinkra. It is being used for clothing that is worn at times other than funerals as well.

Use the designs found in the Handout section to cut adinkra symbol stamps from potatoes or styrofoam trays. You may use cloth or crinkled brown butcher paper for your printing surface. Tempera or acrylic paint in black or brown produce excellent results. Experiment with designs that can be created by combining adinkra symbols, or use a traditional approach of one symbol at a time.

To find more adinkra symbols and their descriptions try the following website:

<http://www.ghana.com/republic/adinkra/symbols.html>
(last accessed 8/17/99)

 وعدLRs: Arts 1, 4
Anansi Stories

One of the best known Ghanaian folktale characters is Anansi the spider. These spider tales describe how Anansi uses his cunning to trick others, but is often outwitted by meeker characters who are perceived as easy to fool. Anansi is a character we recognize as having human virtues and vices, but often lacking the moral sense to choose between them.

Read several Anansi stories to your students. Discuss the characteristics of the stories and compare how different artists illustrate Anansi. Then ask students to write and illustrate their own Anansi stories.

Anansi Stories


Trickster Tales

Compare the Anansi stories to trickster tales from other cultures.


For more information about trickster tales see:


EALRs: Reading 2 / Writing 2 / Arts 1, 4
Books on African Songs and Games


Books on Instrument Making and Playing


Children’s Books About Ghana and Its People


ADINKRA SYMBOLS

Osham ne nsoromma
The Moon and Star
A symbol of faithfulness

Gye Nyame
Except God
A symbol of the Omnipotence and immortality of God

Sankofa
Go Back and Fetch It
It is no taboo to return and fetch it when you forget; you can always undo your mistakes

Funtunfunafu
Two Crocodiles With One Stomach
Sharing one stomach yet they fight over food; jealousy

Dwenimen
Ram’s Horn
It is the heart and not the horns that leads a ram to bully; concealment

Nkyin ky in
Changing One’s Self
Each person can play many roles by changing their path
**Resources**

- **Squeeze Drum or Talking Drum** can imitate the tones of language.
- **Shekere**s are made from calabash gourds.
- **Pretia** can be played with hands or sticks.
- **Apentemma** is played with the hands.
- The **Gankogui or Nnawuta** bell can play two tones.
- The **Dawuro** is also called the banana bell.