

African Art and Personal Adornment Introductory Lesson: Exploring Beauty

African Art and Personal Adornment
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Students will explore the concept of beauty through discussion and writing.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to examine enigmas of beauty from a cultural perspective.
2. Students will be able to analyze and discuss the concept of beauty.
3. Students will be able to write a personal interpretation of beauty.

MCF Curriculum Standards and Benchmarks

Fine Arts

- ART.VA.3.MS.1 - Form and defend judgements about characteristics and structures to accomplish commercial, personal, communal, or other purposes of art.
- ART.VA.4.MS.3 - Analyze, describe, and demonstrate how factors of time and place influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.

English Language Arts

- ELA.9.MS.1 - Explore and reflect on universal themes and substantive issues from oral, visual, and written texts.
- ELA.12.MS.3 - Develop critical standards based on aesthetic qualities, and use them to explain choices in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing, and representing.

Reference:

Newman, Cathy. "Enigma of Beauty." National Geographic Magazine, (January, 2000) pp. 94-121.

Materials:

- writing paper
- pencils
- presentation board
- rubber cement
- pictures from National Geographic Magazine or a collection of pictures representing diverse perspectives of beauty in cultural contexts.
- [\[Teacher Sample Set #1: Student Responses\]](#)

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Introductory Lesson: Exploring Beauty (continued)

Procedure:

1. Mount pictures on presentation board with rubber cement.
2. Define and discuss the meanings of “enigma” and “cultural perspective.”
 - *enigma*: anything that is puzzling or baffling; something hard to understand or explain.
 - *cultural perspective*: the attainments and activities of any specific period, race, or people, including their arts, beliefs, traditions, etc.
3. Discuss how these words connect to the concept of beauty. Beauty is sometimes considered an enigma because of different cultural perspectives.
4. Students will think about what beauty means to them based on prior knowledge and experiences. Discussion will follow. Ask questions such as:
 - What is beauty?
 - Is beauty the same for everyone?
 - Are there different kinds of beauty?
 - What are some of the changes people go through to achieve beauty?
5. Give students the opportunity to write their interpretations in a paragraph.
6. Ask for volunteers to share their interpretations with the class. See: [Teacher Sample Set #1: Student Responses
7. Show students the visuals from National Geographic Magazine or your pictures representing beauty in cultural contexts. For each picture discuss:
 - How the person has adorned himself/herself.
 - The purpose of the adornment.
 - How these customs of adornment compare to our ideas about beauty in this culture.
 - Why those customs may be difficult for us to understand or explain.
8. Ask students to think about what they have learned about beauty. Allow them to revisit their paragraphs. They should reread what they have written and make additions and/or revisions. For example, they could write about what they learned about beauty after viewing and discussing the visuals. They could write about how their preference of beauty compares to another, etc. To facilitate the process ask:
 - Has your idea of beauty changed? Why? Why not?
 - What can you add about beauty based on personal adornment from other cultures?

Assessment:

- Did students demonstrate their preferences of beauty in writing or through discussion by explaining their choices based on aesthetic qualities?
- Did students observe and compare visuals of personal adornment to their own ideas of beauty?

Lesson Designed by:

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Introductory Lesson: Exploring Beauty

Teacher Sample Set #1: Student Responses

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These first draft samples are from students at Levey Middle School, Mrs. Adrienne Douglas' art class. Students wrote them before viewing the broadcast.

Beauty, My Own Perspective
By Michael Soave, grade 8

Beauty, what is beautiful? I can't say, exactly; but I know what is beautiful to me. Beauty is really a point of perspective. Like reality, no one can say what is beautiful or not, or what's real or not. I know what I like though: a dark rainy day, just staying inside listening to the sound of the rain. A starry night under a full moon next to a lake where it's peaceful and quiet; where all you can hear are the crickets chirping. Seeing a purple and orange sunset while you're in your secret spot where all you have is your thoughts to keep you company.□

Everyone has his own vision of beauty, something truly beautiful to them. Something they keep to themselves down deep. It could be a special thing that when they see it they know it's beautiful to them. Beauty is anything you want it to be. It's your own perspective.

Beauty
By Elliot Slaughter, grade 7

Beauty is very universal and sometimes rare. Life is beauty. Death is beauty in the eyes of a grim man or woman. Love is beautiful in my eyes. Tears are beautiful, especially when people are happy crying. The color of someone's eyes is beautiful.□

But, who am I to say what is beautiful and ugly? I believe a person that others call ugly can be the most beautiful person in the world. A simple poem can be the more beautiful than the most popular girl at school. Who are we to say what is ugly or beautiful? All of the universe can possibly be a part of a gigantic, boisterous sound and sight of beauty. Most things in my eyes are pretty, but few things, to me, are beautiful.

Beauty
Jennifer Montgomery, grade 8

Beauty is something that you are attracted to and not always something that the majority feels is attractive. You may ask, "How can something be beautiful that most people aren't attracted to?" Well, usually you think of an attractive female when you think of beauty, but beauty goes way beyond that. Sometimes the simplest things in life are beautiful. A good example is babies being born. That is a beautiful thing. When I think of babies being born, I think of the next generation leading our world.□

Now, I am not saying the appearance of the human race is not beautiful. In my opinion, some people are more beautiful on the outside, but everyone is beautiful on the inside. Everyone has a gift or talent to offer that no one else has and that is beautiful. It is only human nature to feel you have to be beautiful on the outside. Think about it. When you first meet someone, what can you

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Teacher Sample Set #1: Student Responses (continued)

first judge them on? Their appearance of course! I do feel that America's society has tried to define beauty and make it look a certain way. Think about Barbie. Is she fat? Short? Does she have short hair? No! That influences girls at a young age to feel that, that is beauty. Not only girls, but also boys feel that girls have to look a certain way. Because of this standard, many people especially women suffer.□

Like Mrs. Douglas said, "Who says so? Who says beauty looks a certain way?" Did God want beauty to be defined the way it is? Is it actually that important to be beautiful on the outside. It is sad to say, but in this day and age, yes it is. But, I don't think God intended for it to be that way.

Beauty

By Ryshell Talmadge, grade 7

What is beauty? That is a question that is hard to answer. To me, beauty comes from within, no matter if you're black, white, orange, or purple. Some people, especially women, always want plastic surgery, lyposuction, and any other surgeries to make themselves more attractive. If they are fat, they want to get lyposuction. If their chest is too small, they get implants. If I get fat over the years, (hopefully not) I will leave myself the way that I am.□

Some men and women, always want to be like everybody else. So, they go and spend all of their money trying to be somebody that they're not.□

You can be beautiful and also ugly at the same time. When you appreciate the way people are, you are beautiful. When you talk about people and tease them about the way they look, that is what makes you ugly. Like I said before, beauty comes from the inside out; beauty comes from within. Everybody is beautiful!

Beauty

By Kirsten Jordan, grade 7

Beauty is a loveable thing. Everyone has something beautiful about them. Some people may not be beautiful on the outside and may be beautiful on the inside. Or, some people may be beautiful on the inside and not on the outside. I don't think people should be judged "not beautiful" by the way they are born. Just because you're born a certain way doesn't mean there's nothing beautiful about you. But if you tell a person that they're beautiful all the time they can get "bigheaded." That's when it starts to mess with their personality. I can tell someone is beautiful by the way they carry themselves, not just what's on the outside. Beauty can be made. But when you try too hard to make beauty, you can end up not beautiful. Someone might think they're ugly and want to get a makeover to become beautiful. But does beauty like that really make you what you are? I think not. After you make sure you are beautiful on the inside, then I think you can start worrying about the outside. You make beauty what it is.

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