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# **Africa**

## *Fun Projects for World History*

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# History, Language Arts, Art - *Ancient Africa*

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# History, Language Arts, Art - Ancient Africa

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

*This collection of nine enrichment activities was designed to complement existing curricula and expand the understanding of ancient African civilizations. Studies have confirmed that using our hands helps us retain information. So, if you are looking for creative and simple, yet stimulating and exciting projects to spark learning, take the next step toward a highly engaging encounter.*

*There is truly nothing more stimulating than combining a hands-on activity with a subject being studied. Regardless of a learner's age, learning by doing will help maintain their interest, help them better retain information, and foster a desire to learn now and in the future.*

*In this collection, there are a total of nine hands-on projects and writing activities. To enhance the complete learning experience using this collection, character and setting development statements as well as extensive vocabulary lists are provided. A general materials list, detailed instructions, and extensive activity suggestions are provided for the nine projects that focus on the collection theme.*

*As an educator with 18 plus years of teaching and product development experience, it is my personal goal to encourage young people to be creative. Each of the activities included in this collection are based on actual artifacts representative of ancient African cultures. A conscious effort was made to develop activities that are made from readily available materials, yet result in stunning end products. Although having a wonderful end product is desirable, an essential part of learning is the process of creating something. A young person will gain a greater appreciation for the skills required by the ancient Africans when they accomplish an activity.*

*It is my heartfelt desire that both teacher and student will find the nine activities in this book a wonderful journey of creativity. Jean Henrich*



# AFRICAN Kings in Focus



## *History African Kings*

# History, Language Arts, Art - Ancient Africa

## AFRICAN KINGS IN FOCUS

Africa has a long history of being led by tribal kings. The kings led their people by maintaining traditions, overseeing religious rites, leading warriors into battle, and maintaining vast empires.

The kings of Africa were considered living gods. Even today, the royal households of Africa are viewed by their people as sources of stability and wisdom since they carry on the traditions and practices rooted deep in the past. African kings of the past were absolute rulers who maintained complete power over their people. They were both the spiritual and political authorities.

### THE KINGDOM OF KUSH

In ancient Africa, the kingdom of Kush which was located in the southern part of Nubia was considered a well-established empire. Egypt was conquered and ruled during the rule of King Piankhi and his brother King Shabaka who succeeded him. What few people realize is that these kings of Kush founded the 25th ruling dynasty of ancient Egypt. Shebiku, Piankhi's son, became an Egyptian pharaoh.

African kings, like those of the western empires and far eastern empires, were often surrounded by great wealth - ivory, gold, and elaborately carved furniture filled their residences.

In the sixth-century AD as trade increased with Muslims traveling from distant lands, the stories of the great wealth of African kings spread throughout the known world. An Arab geographer by the name of al-Ya'kubi wrote that Ghana's powerful king (who ruled numerous smaller kings) had great wealth due to Ghana's gold mines.



## AFRICAN KINGS IN FOCUS

### THE KINGDOM OF AKSUM

Aksum was another African kingdom. During the third and fourth centuries AD, the great rulers of Aksum encouraged a thriving trade with Egypt and the Roman Empire. Archaeologists have discovered that such trade items as olive oil, wine, glass, crystal, frankincense, myrrh, and various metals such as brass, copper, silver, and gold were being imported and exported. Both the Greeks and Romans sought frankincense and myrrh that was obtained from trees that grew in the mountains around Aksum. Historic records indicate that Aksumite kings actually issued gold coins to assist in the trade of goods. They encouraged their people to develop their skills in ivory carving, ceramics, metalwork, and glass making. They even had special *stelae*, or stone pillars, made to mark their tombs.



### ROYAL REGALIA

As with most royalty, kings would display their power and influence in what they wore. Royal regalia played a significant part in the roles played by African kings. These items ranged from specially woven materials with special symbols, as well as masks, stools, staffs, crowns, drums, wooden pipes, drinking cups, fly whisks, belts, hats, umbrellas, and decorated boxes. Since African kings were regarded as “gods,” everything that they came in contact with took on special powers and significance.



# History, Language Arts, Art - Ancient Africa

## AFRICAN KINGS IN FOCUS

The following are some of the different African regalia and their significance in particular cultures:

**Yorubua** - The Yorubua king's beaded crown was designed to hide and shield the identity of the king. As a living god, the beaded crown also protected those to whom the king might direct his view. The crown incorporated many symbols including such elements as birds, which symbolized the mystical powers of women; interlacing patterns that symbolized the interconnectedness of the rulers' ancestors; and elephants that symbolized the power and longevity of the king.

**Luba** - Luba rulers had a special stool called a *caryatid* which was the most important symbol of Luvian leadership. The stool was used to keep the feet of the ruler from touching the ground, preventing him from becoming ill. It was believed by the Lubians that if the king was well, then so too would be the Luvian people.

**Asante** - Asante kings wore beautifully woven items referred to as *kente* cloths. During their reign, Asante kings would discuss with the royal weavers a new *kente* cloth design that would symbolize their rule. The pattern that was created would then be associated with that king's reign.

**Benin** - The Benin king, or *oba*, would commission a stylized brass head and other special objects from the previous ruler which were then placed on special altars in the royal palace. It was believed that these objects would serve as a means by which family members could ask the spirits for good health and wealth for the Benin kingdom.



# History, Language Arts, Art- **Ancient Africa**



## AFRICAN KING WRITING RECIPE

**DIRECTIONS:** Follow the steps listed at the bottom of this page in order. Use the words provided under the different categories to help you write your paragraph. If you would like, add your own words to the categories. If appropriate, you may use more than one word from each column. Additional character development statements and details for characterization can be found on pages 118 - 124.

### CLOTHING

Dressed in silk  
Covered in jewels  
Cap speckled with  
gold  
Sandals  
Leopard skin cape  
Gold bracelet

### DUTIES

Military chief  
Religious leader  
Chief of justice  
Overseer of the empire  
Listening to officials

### DAILY ACTIVITIES

Making appointments  
Settling disputes  
Listening to reports  
Collecting gold nuggets  
Making treaties  
Conducting ceremonies

### LEADERSHIP TRAITS

Brave  
Decisive  
Sensitive  
Courteous  
Fearless

### COLLECTIONS

Animal skins  
Glass beads  
Gold nuggets  
Ivory  
Precious stones

### FAVORITE FOOD

Barley  
Cocoyams  
Hippopotamus  
Melon  
Pomegranate

### **STEPS**

1. Indent and write one sentence introducing your character by name. (Use your own words for this step.)
2. Write one or more sentences describing the king's clothing.
3. Write several sentences describing the king's duties.
4. Write one or more sentences describing his daily activities.
5. Write one sentence describing his leadership traits.
6. Write one or more sentences describing his collections.
7. Write one sentence describing his favorite food.