

African Maths



Key Stage 1 Education Workshop
Support Notes for Teachers

Workshop structure

The session consists of gallery-based activities which will enable the pupils to explore different mathematical themes within the context of African culture.

- \$ **Introduction:** The session opens with a general introduction to Africa and the African galleries at the British Museum.

- \$ **Gallery Activities:** The group will then split into two smaller groups each of which will work on a mathematical activity relating to objects in the gallery.
 - 1) **African Beadwork** - pupils will begin by looking at the range of beadwork on display in the gallery and finding out how and why this beadwork is used and what it means to the people who make and wear it. The pupils will then have an opportunity to create their own beadwork patterns drawing on patterns employed in Southern African beadwork. There will also be an opportunity for the pupils to handle beadwork objects.
 - 2) **Mancala** - pupils will begin by looking at examples of Mancala boards in the gallery and finding out about the history of this African board game. The pupils will then be introduced to the rules of the game before having an opportunity to play the game in pairs. There will also be an opportunity for the pupils to handle some African Mancala boards.

- \$ **Plenary:** The session closes with a chance for the pupils to share what they have been doing with the rest of the group and to reflect on what they have learned during the session.

Important Note: Object Conservation

During the course of the workshop the pupils will be handling a range of replica and real objects. Some of these objects are drawn from the collection of the Department of Ethnography and the Department of Education at the British Museum. The Museum would, therefore, very much appreciate it if pupils attending the workshop could wash and dry their hands before the start of the session to help conserve the objects being handled. We recommend that pupils also wash their hands after the session, particularly if they are due to go straight into their lunch break.

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Key themes covered by this workshop are beadwork, Mancala (an African board game), counting, number patterns and number strategies.

Before the day of your visit you may like to talk to the pupils about some of these key themes. The pupils could think about the different materials that beads can be made from (such as wood, glass and metal) and the different ways that beads are used (as jewellery on necklaces and bracelets, sewn on to clothing or as decoration on objects). The pupils could also think about different board games and the equipment and rules needed to play each game. The workshop will involve mathematics and pupils could think about counting, patterns and thinking ahead when tackling a mathematical activity (for example what will be the next step in a pattern sequence or how many will you need to count on to end up at a particular number or square when playing a board game).

You may like to use an atlas or world globe to locate Africa. The workshop will refer to different areas and countries within Africa and you may like to talk to the pupils about the different countries that make up the continent of Africa.

African objects in the British Museum

There are many objects from Africa on display in the British Museum.

A good starting point is the COMPASS website at www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/compass where you can search for objects from Africa in the Museum collections.

There is a children's COMPASS website at www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/childrenscompass

Below are a few key galleries which you may like to include as part of your visit.

Gallery 24: The African Gallery

Mancala board (Case 12)

Carving of a king playing Mancala (Case 12)

Beadwork from South Africa, Kenya, Algeria, Nigeria and Sudan (Case 11)

Clothing incorporating a range of shapes and patterns, colours and shapes (Cases 8, 9 and 10)

Gallery 68: The Money Gallery

African currency (Case 8, Panel 3, objects 18 - 23)

African currency (Case 9, Panel 1, objects 1 - 9)

African currency (Case 17, Panel 2, object 32)

African currency (Case 19, Panel 2, objects 1 -18)

Follow-up activities

Back at school the pupils could create and record patterns based on the patterns they have seen in the African gallery. Some good examples of beadwork patterns from different parts of the world can be accessed on COMPASS using the search word *beadwork*. Mancala boards are often highly decorated on the outside and the pupils could design their own Mancala boards thinking about what shape they want their board to be and the patterns they will use to decorate it.

Curriculum Links

National Curriculum for Maths at Key Stage 1

MA2 Number and Algebra

Problem Solving: *develop flexible approaches to problem solving and look for ways to overcome difficulties.*

Communicating: *use the correct language, symbols and vocabulary associated with number and data.*

Counting: *count reliably up to 100.*

MA3 Shape, space and measures

Problem Solving: *try different approaches and find ways of overcoming difficulties when solving shape and space problems.*

Communicating: *use the correct language and vocabulary for shape, space and measures.*

Understanding patterns and properties of shape: *describe properties of shapes that they can see or visualise using the related vocabulary.*

Contact Details

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Please quote the reference *African Maths Key Stage 1 School Workshop* in all enquiries.