
*Material Assemblages*

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| **Introduction**  |
| These three images are headdresses from Myanmar worn by Akha women. The Akha people are an ethnic group that live in the mountains of Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and the Yunnan Province in China. They are known for their colorful traditional dress, which includes distinctive headdresses worn by both men and women. The headdresses of the Akha people are an important part of their cultural identity and are often worn during festivals, ceremonies, and other special occasions. They are also highly valued as traditional works of art and have become popular collectibles among tourists and collectors.Headdresses hold significant importance in Akha culture, with girls starting to wear them during mid-adolescence. In the past, women wore headdresses every day, even while sleeping, but now they are reserved for special occasions. Over time, a woman adds more ornaments to her headdress, resulting in intricate designs. The style of headdress can communicate whether she is married or not.It is typically made of a cloth base decorated with silver coins, beads, and embroidery. The design and style of the headdress can vary depending on the region and sub-group of the Akha people. The headdress is often topped with a large, ornate silver ornament which symbolizes wealth and status.Akha men also wear headdresses, which are typically made of a woven cloth base decorated with silver ornaments, coins, and beads. The headdress often features animal horns or antlers, which are believed to bring strength and power to the wearer. The design and style of the headdress can vary depending on the region and sub-group of the Akha people. |
| **Indiana Standards Connections:** **7.3.3** *Describe and compare major cultural characteristics of regions in Africa, Asia, and Southwest Pacific.** ***Examples:*** *language, religion, recreation, clothing, diet, fine arts, family structure, and traditions*

**GHW.1.1** *Use maps, timelines, and other graphic representations to identify and describe the location, distribution, and main events in the development of culture hearths in Asia, Mesoamerica, and North Africa.** ***Examples:*** *Irrigation-based civilizations; Rainforest; Land-based civilization, pastoral societies*

**GHW.6.3** *Map the spread of innovative art forms and scientific thought from their origins to other world regions. Analyze how the spread of these ideas influenced developments in art and science for different places and regions of the world.** ***Examples:*** *Italian Renaissance and the growth of egg tempera paintings and frescoes, chemistry of oil paints (1500s); European Renaissance and the development of scientific ideas (1600–1800); England and the Industrial Revolution and its diffusion (1700–present); compare and contrast the spread of Asian, African and Latin American art forms (1900s–present); development of twentieth century music (jazz, etc.) in North America (1900s–present); east Asian anime and video gaming competitions.*

***ES.4.1*** *Students examine historical and contemporary economic, intellectual, social, cultural and political contributions to society by ethnic or racial group(s) or an individual within a group.* ***S.2.1*** *Define culture and identify the material and non-material components of culture.* | **Compelling Question(s):** * What can textiles and clothing reveal about a person’s cultural identity, individual expression, and social status?
* In what ways do Akha people use clothing to express resistance, pride, or belonging?
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| **Lesson Objectives:**   Students will:  * Explore the headdress of the Akha people that live in mountains of Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and the Yunnan Province in China.
* Understand how textile patterns, techniques, and materials communicate cultural identity and status.
* Reflect on the historical and symbolic significance of Southeast Asian garments.
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| **Materials**  |
| * Map of Asia
* [Headdresses- W2W Website](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/headdresses.html)
* [Akha Headdress- Simon Fraser University Museum](https://www.sfu.ca/archaeology/museum/exhibits/staff-pick/akha-headdress/the-akha-tribes.html#main_content_text)
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| **Learning Plan**  |
| **Activities** 1. Ask students to closely observe the three headdresses. Prompt them to describe each item:
* What is it made of?
* How many different materials do you notice (e.g. coins, yarn, cloth, metal, coins)?
* How are these three headdresses similar and different from each other?
* What patterns do you notice in all three headdresses? (They can indicate that all three have coins, or metal adornments, a combination of fabrics, and yarn.
* What might these design choices suggest about the wearer’s design choices suggest about the wearer’s identity, community, or social role?

Ask students to record their observations in a worksheet or sketch journal to deepen attention to detail.1. Explain the use of the Akha headdress to students using the [resources provided](https://www.sfu.ca/archaeology/museum/exhibits/staff-pick/akha-headdress/the-akha-tribes.html#main_content_text). Introduce the Akha people using maps and visuals, discuss their presence across national borders (Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, China).

Show how headdresses reflect accumulated meanings across a woman’s life, highlighting coins and other elements of the headdress as indicators of social status, marriage, or generational inheritance.All the items create an assemblage of cultural elements that reflect a person’s status in Akha society. 1. Trace Akha migration routes and discuss how colonialism, state violence, and land disputes have influenced their movement and cultural practices.
* What role does cultural expression (like dress or adornment) play in maintaining identity under political pressure?
1. In class, encourage students to discuss how headdresses reflect a combination of personal, regional, and political influences.
* How do you represent your personal style and identity through your clothes, jewelry, or hairstyle?
* Do you personalize what you wear? Why or why not?
* Where do you draw inspiration from (family, social media, religion, tradition?
* Is your style more individual or representative of a group/ community?
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| **Assessment Suggestions**   Assess students in class participation, discussion, and notes from their observation of the headdresses. |
| **Extensions** Encourage students to explore textile traditions from other region and compare it to Southeast Asian textiles. They can create a short presentation or poster comparing both traditions, addressing techniques, materials, cultural and spiritual meanings, and historical context or trade influence.Students can bring to class a personal item (photo or object) that represents their identity and share its story with the class. |

Headdresses Activity Possibilities

Some of the best opportunities for education are *integrative*—meaning that students are able to make connections across disciplines to reinforce the knowledge that they are developing. For example, they may be learning about Renaissance Italy in World Studies at the same time that they read Dante’s *Inferno* in English class while also studying Botticelli in Art. Feel free to combine and adapt some of the ideas across disciplines and standards to best suit your particular context. You can also collaborate with other teachers at your school or supplement the resources provided by contacting your librarian.

**Note: The following ideas are meant to give general guidance for teachers to include artifacts and other material culture in their classrooms. They are not meant to be treated as comprehensive activities or lessons that are one-size-fits-all for any classroom. They should be personalized to best fit the needs of a teacher’s individual context in accordance with prior student learning, student abilities, available resources, and any curricular guidance.**

**Art**

**Visual Arts – Responding:**

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| **Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work****Enduring Understanding: Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed throughout engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.** **Essential Question(s): How do life experiences influence the way you relate to art? How does learning about art impact how we perceive the world? What can we learn from our responses to art?**  |
| **VA:Re7.1.1a** | Select and describe works of art that illustrate daily life experiences. |
| **VA:Re7.1.6a** | Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value. |
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| **VA:Re9.1.5a** | Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society |
| **VA:Re7.1.Ia** | Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences. |
| **VA:Re7.1.IIa** | Recognize and describe personal aesthetic and empathetic responses to the natural world and constructed environments |
| **VA:Re7.1.IIIa** | Analyze how responses to art develop over time based on knowledge of and experience with art and life |

**Visual Arts – Connecting:**

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| **Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.** **Enduring Understanding: People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.** **Essential Question(s): How does art help us understanding the lives of people of different times, places, and cultures? How is art used to impact the videos of a society> How does art preserve aspects of life?**  |
| **VA:Cn11.1.1a** | Understand that people from different places and times have made art for a variety of reasons. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.2a** | Compare and contrast cultural uses of artwork from different times and places. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.3a** | Recognize that responses to art change depending on knowledge of the time and place in which it was made |
| **VA:Cn11.1.4a** | Through observation, infer information about time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.6a** | Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.7a** | Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses |
| **VA:Cn11.1.8a** | Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity |
| **VA:Cn11.1.IIa** | Compare uses of art in a variety of social, cultural, and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.IIIa** | Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society. |

*Students can be asked to consider how art reflects time periods, beliefs, cultures, traditions, etc. In exploring the Akha headdresses, students are examining how items such as this reflected class and stature in Akha society and why such items were seen as a reflection of women’s identity. Students could also explore how luxury items have changed over time; how different cultures use art, artifacts, and props to demonstrate their interests, beliefs, and stature; how such items demonstrate social capital; etc. Students can discuss why animal products are so commonly used in fashionable items like the ostrich egg cup and the fan.*

**Social Studies**

**Grade 6: History, Places, and Cultures in Europe and Americas**

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| **6.1.3** | ***Explain the impact of humans on the physical environment in Europe and the Americas.*** |
| **6.3.10** | *Explain the ways cultural diffusion, invention, and innovation change culture.*  |
| **6.3.11** | *Differentiate between the terms anthropology, archaeology, and artifacts while explaining how these contribute to our understanding of societies in the present and the past.*  |

**Ethnic Studies**

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| **ES.4.1** | *Students examine historical and contemporary economic, intellectual, social, cultural and political contributions to society by ethnic or racial group(s) or an individual within a group.*  |

**Geography and History of the World**

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| **GHW.4.2** | *Use a variety of text (writing, maps, timelines and/or other graphic representations) to show the movement, spread and changes in the worldwide exchange of flora, fauna and pathogens that resulted from transoceanic voyages of exploration and exchanges between peoples in different regions. Assess the consequences of these encounters for the people and environments involved.*  |
| **GHW.4.3** | *Identify and compare the main causes, players, and events of imperialism during different time periods. Examine the global extent of imperialism using a series of political maps.*  |
| **GHW.4.4** | *Analyze and assess how the physical and human environments (including languages used) of places and regions changed as the result of differing imperialist and colonial policies.* |

**World History and Civilization**

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| **WH.7.3** | *Investigate and interpret multiple causation in analyzing historical actions and analyze cause-and-effect relationships.* |
| **WH.7.6** | *Formulate and present a position or course of action on an issue by examining the underlying factors contributing to that issue and support that position.*  |

*Outside of the 6th and 7th grade Indiana standards, the exploration regarding how imperialism has led to an impact on other cultures and environments. Students should be able to examine the role of human environment interaction involved in the development of such items as the cup and fan included in this lesson. There’s room for them to make connections to contemporary issues that are similar to and a consequence of this result of imperialism.*

**Language Arts**

**Writing Skills:**

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| **4.W.5**  | **Conduct short research on a topic.** * **Identify a specific question to address (e.g., What is the history of the Indy 500?).**
* **Use organizational features of print and digital sources to efficiently locate further information.**
* **Determine the reliability of the sources.**
* **Summarize and organize information in their own words, giving credit to the source**
* **Present the research information, choosing from a variety of formats.**
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| **5.W.5** | Conduct short research assignments and tasks on a topic.* With support, formulate a research question (e.g., What were John Wooden’s greatest contributions to college basketball?).
* Identify and acquire information through reliable primary and secondary sources.
* Summarize and paraphrase important ideas and supporting details, and include direct quotations where appropriate, citing the source of information.
* Avoid plagiarism and follow copyright guidelines for use of images, pictures, etc.
* Present the research information, choosing from a variety of sources.
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*Students could conduct research projects in which they examine examples of cultural diffusion and/or how animals and environments have been used, and potentially abused, for human products.*