1. Lesson Objectives/ Abstract

Ethiopia's global importance and its rich artistic, cultural, and folkloric traditions make it on of the most important case studies for world history and art history students today. This lesson plan is designed to introduce your students to Ethiopian culture through their artistic works and artifacts, and will also help them to develop their critical research skills.

This lesson introduces the history and art history of Ethiopia by utilizing some of the best online public resources available- the online catalogues of the Walters Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the British Museum. These catalogues contain high-quality images and thorough metadata, making object-based learning possible for students all across the globe, not just those fortunate enough to live within travel distance to Baltimore, New York, or London.

This lesson is designed to be integrated into a World History or AP art history course and is designed for students at the 9-12 level. It was designed in accordance with Pennsylvania state standards in history, the humanities, and geography, and the specifications of this are included toward the end of this handout. At least five computers are needed if your students can work in groups, through more may be required depending on your class size.

By adapting the handout and finding a new out-of-class reading, the framework for this lesson plan can be easily adapted for the study of any material culture, and is a productive and engaging means of introducing students to cultures they may be less familiar with.

2. Teacher Preparation

The focus of this exercise is visual analysis and historical context is essential for that. However, you do not need to be an expert in Ethiopian art history to guide a productive discussion. The homework sheet provided for the students will provide the essential background that you will need to guide discussion. If you would like to learn more, a good place to start is with the Metropolitan Museum of Art's *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. You might consider assigning these essays to your students too if you are teaching an art history class.

Useful essays:

"Ethiopia's Enduring Cultural Heritage"
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ethi/hd_ethi.htm
"African Christianity in Ethiopia" http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/acet/hd_acet.htm
"Ethiopian Healing Scrolls" http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/heal/hd_heal.htm

Teaching Ethiopian history and cultural tradition is not necessarily easy. The country's ancient history and its Christian legacy might make it easy for students to draw comparisons to the west, but it does not do the country justice to only explore it's similarities to western culture. It does not do justice, however, to the students or Ethiopia to rest on these similarities. Yet, at the

same time, a student's lack of familiarity with non-western art may lead them to make superficial or problematic conclusions about the works they discover.

Encourage students to be curious and ask questions. However, if a student makes a comment that diminishes the cultural importance of these works, or uses a word such as 'savage,' or 'primitive,' make sure you stop to talk about it. More likely than not such a comment is a knee-jerk reaction to unfamiliar aesthetics, but it comes too from a long tradition of negative stereotypes about African culture, so it is worth pausing to discuss!

Western audiences have long dismissed African styles of art, considering them to be 'primitive,' 'savage,' or contrary to western tastes. Everyone will and should have their own preferences about art, but since this may be the first time your students have critically engaged with African art, push them on why they are feeling the way they are. Ask them to look up more pieces, and see if they like other works, or if there are broader patterns that they can find and appreciate. Challenge them to explain fully what it is they do or do not like. Doing so will not only force them to fully explore why they reacted the way they did, but will also give them more experience in verbalizing the things they are seeing.

Many of the illustrations that students will find are quite abstract, and if your students have primarily been exposed to western styles of art they might find Ethiopian traditions quite different. These styles represent centuries of development and perfection, and many of the works from more recent years are drawing on ancient styles to continue an artistic legacy. Western art, by contrast, is often considered 'good' when it represents something new and innovative, rather than something traditional. Your students might not be able to fully appreciate that through one simple exercise, but explaining these cultural differences may give them more context.

Appreciating and understanding the artistic productions of a culture is one of the most engaging and accessible ways to introduce students to a new history.

3. Lesson Plan: Day One

3.2 Introduction: [Ten Minutes]

The purpose of the introduction is to get the students settled into the computers and comfortable with the museum databases. By the end of the introduction, students need to know how to navigate the digital catalogues, search for materials specifically from Ethiopia, and understand how to read the metadata of the various images so that they can interpret what it is they are looking at

Divide students into groups and assign each student group a category of object. Each category designates the type of object that that particular group will be tracking throughout this lesson. The categories are: Musical Instruments, Head Rests, Scrolls, Textiles, and Manuscripts.

Below are instructions on how to navigate the Walters Museum, British Museum, and Metropolitan Museum of Art databases in order to access their Ethiopian Collections. These instructions are also in the student handouts for easy reference:

Walters Museum

Go to: http://thewalters.org

-in the menu bar click “Art”

-this brings you to a page that says “Welcome to the Online Collection”

-scroll down to “Ways to Browse” and under “Ways to Browse” click “places”

-scroll down and click on “Ethiopia”

-You’ve found the Ethiopian collection! Click on any picture to learn more about the object

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Go to: www.metmuseum.org

-in the menu bar click “Art”

-From the drop-down list click “Collection”

-in the side-bar list under “Filter results by:” click “Geographic Location”

-Click on “Africa,” then click “Show more”

-click “Ethiopia”

-You’ve found the Ethiopian collection! Click on any picture to learn more about the object

British Museum

Go to: www.britishmusem.org

-in the menu list in the very top of the page click “Research”

-on the left side of the page click “Collection Search”

-Underneath the search bar click “Advanced search options”

-this will open up several more search bars

-under “Places” type “Ethiopia” and select the drop down option for “Ethiopia”

-click “Search”

-You’ve found the Ethiopian collection! Click on any picture to learn more about the object. The advanced search both can also help you limit your search in other ways, such as by geographic region, time period, or object type. There are almost 3,000 Ethiopian objects in this collection, so use the advanced search options to quickly find what you need.

Introduce the lesson plan and try to allow the students at least five minutes to explore the websites. Once students are comfortable, you can move on to the actual data gathering section of this lesson plan.

3.3 Exercise: Data Gathering [Remainder of Class, 20-30 minutes]

Now that the students have their object categories and are familiar with the three online databases, it is time for them to begin their research. For the remainder of this class period, their objective is to find any and every object that fits their category.

Each group needs at least one handout, which is attached

Students must use the online catalogues of the Walters Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the British Museum, to find every Ethiopian Object within these three collections that fits their category. The categories are divided so that no group will find more than twenty objects. The date and place of origin will be important later when students will be making cross-cultural or cross-temporal comparisons of some of the objects they have found. The accession number, or registration number, is a number given to an object by a museum when it enters the museum's collection. If a student records the number, they can then plug it back into the search bar so they can quickly and easily find the object again without having to record the object's URL or keep a bunch of tabs open. (and museum)

3. Out of Class Work

In section [x] is a PDF with a brief history of Ethiopia. If you are using a textbook that covers this material that you would prefer to use, please feel free to do so. If you are not, the handout provides a brief overview of Ethiopian history that tailored to this particular exercise so that when students arrive in class on day 2 they will be better equipped to make informed, critical conclusions about the objects that they are studying.

4. Lesson Plan: Day Two- Compare and Contrast [20-30 minutes]

For the majority of class students should be working in their groups at their computers answering the remainder of their handouts. Encourage students to take their time on this and answer the questions fully. The last ten to twenty minutes of class will be dedicated to discussion as a full class, so the more energy students put into the questions in the handout the more productive the final discussion will be.

Now that the students have gathered their data, and have a little more background on Ethiopian history, it is time to start comparing the objects within their own categories. The worksheet has guidelines for which objects to find and compare, so they should be able to choose their own objects. Their descriptions, to be the most productive, should include the following points, so make sure to go over these as a class before they begin this section:

1. What color is the object? Is it many colors woven together, or painted on?
2. Are there any designs on the object? Is it covered in abstract patterns, is there a clear illustration? Is it unpainted entirely?
3. If there is a scene, what seems to be happening? Describe it as closely as you can.
4. How do you imagine this object being used?

Notes for Helping Each Group:

Each group is going to have different challenges. Here are some spoilers about what each group will find, and how you can help them along:

-The Scroll Group will find that they actually have very little geographic diversity. They do, however, have a solid range of time periods as their objects date from the 18th to the 20th century, which represents a significant period of political change for Ethiopia. Many of these scrolls, however, are healing scrolls, which derive from Ethiopian Orthodox Christian religious practice, which probably did not change in response to political change. These healing scrolls are deeply personal objects that are hand-created for a very specific person through a personalized ritual.

Questions to ask the group as they work:

-Does political activity have to change how an object looks?

-How personalized do these scrolls appear to be?

-do they generally look alike or are there significant differences?

-ask them to use this question to get into deep and specific visual analyses of the piece. They don't need to know the language to be able to do this.

These scrolls are usually created in a very prescribed manner that is dictated by religious practice. Ask the students how they think religious needs might influence how a work of art looks.

-The Head Rest Group is a group who will find that a lot of their metadata is missing. Most of the objects do not have a date or location, so for the majority of these objects we actually do not know when they were created, only when they arrived in the museum. Make sure your students know the difference between the date of creation and the date of acquisition. This is a group that will have to consider personal wealth and taste and how that affects how an object looks. This group has the most geographic diversity, so make sure to explore the differences between the Sidamo and Oromo works with the other works that the museum cannot locate (these are given the location tag of Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Djibouti all at once)

Questions to ask the group as they work:

-What other factors besides time and geography affect how an object looks?

-Of the few objects that do have the same geography, are they similar? Different?

-The Textile Group might have the most visual diversity of the whole class. They have clothes, cloth covers with illustrations, ornate saddle cloths, and simple, unornamented fabrics. They will also find that a lot of their metadata is missing. Like the headrest group, asking the students to consider the impact of personal wealth and taste is key. You can also have them explore the different functions of the textiles they have found, as there are several different questions they could come to think of regarding the relationship of form and function.

-The Manuscript Group has the most temporal diversity by far but will find that all of their objects come from only two specific regions in the north- Amhara and Tigray. Like the scroll group, the images in these texts adhere to fairly particular religious traditions. Have students look for similarities, but have them note too which seem to be much more different. Like the textile group, however, these books can change dramatically by how much the monk/artist who made them was paid. Ask your students to imagine the types of people who might have been able to pay for these books. Ask them too to consider why someone might want a particularly fancy or simple book, and whether or not they think these books would have been personal objects or objects that were meant to be shared (hint- size is often a factor in answering this question. Often, but now always, smaller books were made for individual reading while larger books were made for sharing).

-The Musical Instrument Group might have the most trouble with terminology since there are Ethiopian instruments that students may be unfamiliar with. Any unfamiliar terms can be easily clarified through google. For the most common instruments: A Sistrum and a Tsenatsil or Sanasel are all terms for a specific Ethiopian instrument used in the church, and a Masenqo is a type of string instrument. A Kerar is also a string instrument. Like the other groups, wealth, location, and function will play a significant role in how each object looks. Students might also think about audience, since instruments are designed to be played, and how an artist might design an object with performance in mid.

3.1 Group Discussion [remainder of class, 10-20 minutes]

This is the space for groups to discuss their findings and ask more questions. Through group discussion the students will hopefully be able to contextualize some of the questions they found or problems they faced. How you lead this discussion is up to you. Below are some questions to pose the whole class that might help move discussion along that will also get students thinking more critically about how objects can function as primary sources.

1. Did any of you find that your objects changed dramatically with geography or time?
2. What were some of the other reasons you came up with that might have impacted how your objects looked?
3. Do you think that your objects were influenced by trends such as resources, geography, or time, or do you think that they were only influenced by the interests of the artist?
    a. Your students should, eventually, come to realize that both of these things can be true
4. After reading a short text on Ethiopian history and studying Ethiopian objects, how can these objects help you better understand the history?
    a. Students may approach this from many angles. One point might be to bring up how objects can show us what day to day life is like, or how people choose to ornament their lives. Students might point out how precious manuscripts could suggest a deep cultural value placed on religion, or how precious

musical instruments might suggest an interest in preforming arts. Be sure to stress the importance of nuance- these objects offer insight that text cannot, but it does not mean they offer the full story of what a culture values

5. All of these objects are now owned by American or British Museums, which means they are objects that Americans or Brits found to be important. This does not necessarily mean Ethiopia thinks that they are important. What do you think is missing from this study? What are other objects of great cultural value that you would have chosen to place in a museum?
    a. If students need help thinking along these lines this can be flipped to ask students what they personally would put in a museum of their own lives.

Standards

This curriculum was designed with Pennsylvania state standards in mind, but descriptions of each standard and how this plan meets each standard is provided so it can be translated to any state.

Standard Number	Standard Title	Standard Description
7.1.12.A 7.1.W.A	Basic Geographic Literacy (World History 1450-present, and Grade 12)	Use geographic tools to analyze information about the interaction between people, places, and the environment
7.3.12.A 7.3.W.A	Human Characteristics of Places and Regions (World History 1450-present, and Grade 12)	Analyze the human characteristics of places and regions using the following criteria: Population, Culture, Settlement, Economic activities, Political activities
8.4.W.A. 8.4.12.A 8.4.9.A	World History (World History 1450-present, and Grades 9 and 12)	Evaluate the role groups and individuals played in the social, political, cultural, and economic development throughout world history
8.4.9.B 8.4.W.B 8.4.12.B	World History (World History 1450-present, and Grades 9 and 12)	Contrast/evaluate the importance of historical documents, artifacts, and sites

		which are critical to world history
8.4.9.C 8.4.W.B 8.4.12.B	World History (World History 1450-present, and Grades 9 and 12)	Evaluate how continuity and change have impacted the world today
CC.8.5.11-12.G	Integrating Knowledge and Ideas	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media in order to address a question or solve a problem
9.2.8.A 9.2.12.A	Context of Works in the Arts (Grades 8 and 12)	Explain the historical, cultural, and social context of an individual work in the arts
9.2.8.B 9.2.12.B	Chronology of Works in the Arts (Grades 8 and 12)	Relate works in the arts chronologically to historical events (e.g. 10,000 B.C.E. to the present)
9.2.8.D 9.2.12.D	Historical and Cultural Perspectives (Grades 8 and 12)	Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective
9.2.8.E 9.2.12.E	Historical and Cultural Impact on Works in the Arts (Grades 8 and 12)	Analyze how historical events and culture impact forms, techniques and purposes of works in the arts
9.2.8.G 9.2.12.G	Geographic Regions in the Arts (Grades 8 and 12)	Relate works in the arts to the following geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Australia, Central America, Europe, North America, South America
9.2.8.J 9.2.12.J	Historical Differences of Works in the Arts (Grades 8 and 12)	Identify, explain analyze historical and cultural differences as they relate to works in the arts
9.2.8.K	Traditions within	Identify, explain and

9.2.12.K	Works in the Arts (Grades 8 and 12)	analyze traditions as they relate to works in the arts
9.2.8.L 9.2.12.L	Common Themes in Works in the Arts (Grades 8 and 12)	Identify, explain and analyze common themes, forms and techniques from works in the arts
9.3.12.A	Critical Response	Explain and apply the critical examination processes of works in the arts and humanities (compare and contrast, analyze, interpret, form and test hypotheses, evaluate/form judgments)
9.3.12.C	Critical Response	Apply systems of classification for interpreting works in the arts and forming a critical response
9.3.12.D	Critical Response	Analyze and interpret works in the arts and humanities from different societies using culturally specific vocabulary of critical response

Credits

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