

# African American Voices Lesson Plans

**Lesson Plan:** Class Encyclopedia of Ancient Africa

**Subject:** World Geography

**Grade:** 6

**NGSSS-SS:** **SS.6.G.2.3-** Analyze the relationship of physical geography to the development of ancient river valley civilizations.



**Description/  
Abstract of Lesson:** The students will gain an appreciation for ancient African cultures by way of performing research on ancient African civilizations and developing class encyclopedia entries for each civilization.

**Objective(s):** Students will accomplish the following:

- Identify significant early civilizations in a region.
- Describe significant contributions made by civilizations in a region; e.g. social, political, economic, arts/humanities, religion, philosophy, technology.
- Identify significant individuals in a region.
- Assess how innovations in agriculture, urbanization and industrialization have affected culture.
- Arrange significant historical events of a region on a time line.
- Relate significant historical events of a region on a time line.
- Relate significant events in a region's past to current events or problems in the region.

**Materials:**

- Textbooks/workbooks/handouts
- Encyclopedia
- Media center resources and/or Internet

**Duration:** Several Class Sessions

**Lesson Lead In/  
Opening:**

1. The teacher is to begin the lesson by performing a libation ceremony (a custom in West Africa)
  - The teacher will pour water into a cup and will explain to the class that they will be paying homage to their ancestors just as ancient West Africans did and West Africans today do.
  - The teacher will explain that the ceremony they are about to experience is a very ancient one and is still practiced today in West Africa. You may want to also explain that many Black Americans today also pay homage to their deceased relatives and friends in a similar.

- Every time that small amounts of water are poured from the bowl onto a plant (on the ground if you are performing this activity outside) the students are to call the names of deceased relatives that they would like to pay honor to.

2. The teacher will tell the students, "Now that you have honored your ancestors, you will have the opportunity to embrace them spiritually and learn about them." The students are to be told that they will be learning about ancient civilizations of Africa.

**Activity:**

1. Individually or in groups, the students will be assigned an ancient African civilization or culture. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

- Egypt (Kemit)
- Nubia (Kush)
- Axum
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- Mali
- Songhai
- Congo
- Yoruba

2. Have students research their assigned civilizations using the following criteria:

- Major contributions made in the areas of culture, politics, economics, arts/humanities, religion, philosophy and technology
- Significant individuals (powerful ancestors) who made a strong impact, invented great things, etc.
- How the people related to their environment and what they invented to live successful lives.

3. Have students create a timeline of events for each ancient civilization. (Have students critically notice the type of events that disrupt the growth and development of civilizations.)

4. Have students create encyclopedia articles on their assigned civilizations using the information that they learned.

5. Upon completion and evaluation, articles on the civilizations are to be organized according to age (oldest first, most recent last) and placed in a binder, labeled as "Class Encyclopedia of Ancient Africa."

**Assessment:**

Evaluate articles based on accuracy of information, neatness, thoroughness, and inclusion of support material. (Proper citation should be taught prior to activity)

**Higher Order**

**Thinking Questions:**

1. Why is it important to honor our ancestors?

2. What are other ways to honor our ancestors? (Besides the libation ceremony)

3. What is it important to learn about our past?

**Book Resources:**

Diop, C. A. (1983) African Origins of Civilization: Myth or Reality?, Lawrence Hill & Co.

Diop, C. A. (1990) Precolonial Black Africa, Independent Publishers Group

Silverman, D. P. (1997) Ancient Egypt, Oxford University Press

De Villiers, M. (2007) Timbuktu: The Sahara's Fabled City of Gold, Walker & Company

**Web Resources:**

<http://www.homestead.com/wysinger/ancientafrica.html>

<http://www.theancientweb.com/explore/index.aspx>

<http://www.kingtutone.com/kids/>

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## **Libation Ceremony Instructions**

It is tradition to pour libation in remembrance of the ancestors on all special occasions. Kwanzaa is such an occasion, as it provides us an opportunity to reflect on our past and present. Water is suggested as it holds the essence of life and should be placed in a communal cup.

In the tradition of our ancestors, every time you say the name of an ancestor or family member that died we are to say “Yashe.” I will then pour water into the bowl until the water completely runs out. This ritual is meant to give us strength and guidance as we remember great people that came before us as they inspire us to be great today.