



Education Department

Title: Fans Across Cultures

Level: K-5

HISTORY AND VISUAL ARTS UNITS (1 Lesson)

OVERVIEW

Students will identify and review the diverse uses of fans from various cultures and time periods. They will then design and create a traditional African American church fan.

California State Standards for Visual Arts

Visual Arts **Standard 3.0** Students analyze the role and development of the visual arts in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting human diversity as it related to the visual arts and artists.

Visual Arts **Standard 3.3** Discuss art objects from various places and times.

Visual Arts **Standard 4.1** Discuss what is seen in works of art.

Visual Arts **Standard 4.2** Ask questions about works of art

OBJECTIVES (SWBAT)

1. Recognize some of the diverse uses of fans from various cultures.
2. Identify and discuss different types of fans and their countries of origin.
3. Design and create a fan modeled after the African American church fan.

MATERIALS:

- Hand Out A (pages 5-11)
- Printed Image of a Role Model or Family Member OR a Printed Image of a Local Business
- Name, Address, and Phone Number of a Local Business
- Scissors
- Glue Stick
- Hot Glue Gun
- Jumbo Wood Popsicle/Craft Sticks
- Thick Construction Paper or Card Paper
- Markers, Crayons, Colored Pencils
- Ribbons, Patterned Paper, Beads, Feathers, and other craft materials

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PROCEDURE:

1. Distribute **Hand Out A** (p. 5-11).
2. Complete **Activity A**.
3. Begin **Activity B**. Provide additional information (supplied on p. 3-4) to the students as you read through the hand out as a class. As the students read through each cultures' fan, mark the location on the world map (p. 10).
4. Afterwards, students will create their own fans inspired by the African American church fan.
 - a. Use the template provided (p. 11) to cut the card paper into the fan shape.
 - b. Hot glue gun the card paper onto the jumbo popsicle/craft stick.
 - c. Glue the printed image of a cherished role model/family member OR image of a local business on the front of the fan.
 - d. Decorate the rest of the fan with markers, colored pencils, beads, jewels, decorative paper, ribbon, and other craft materials.
 - e. If students chose an image of a role model/family member, have them write positive attributes of the person on the back of the fan.
 - f. If students chose to create a business or political fan. Have them write:
 - a. A catchy slogan or "tag"
 - b. The name, address, and phone number for business
 - c. A description of services provided

Additional Resources:

1. Artist Mark Steven Greenfield uses the icon of the disposable church fan to explore ideas of ancestry in the exhibit *Lookin' Back in Front of Me*:
<http://www.markstevengreenfield.com/>
2. Additional lesson plan on the Egyptian fan:
<http://cdn.dick-blick.com/lessonplans/egyptian-fan/egyptian-fan-egyptian-fan.pdf>
3. Additional information on Egyptian fans and sunshades:
<http://www.artofcounting.com/2012/10/30/variable-of-the-day-ancient-egypt-khu-fan/>
<http://www.artofcounting.com/2012/11/12/variable-of-the-day-ancient-egypt-sunshade/>
4. Images of fans from different cultures:
<https://anthromuseum.missouri.edu/minigalleries/fans/intro.shtml>

Information for the Teacher

Ancient Egypt: Fans functioned in various ways in Egyptian culture. The sunshade, for example, indicated divine presence. Pharaohs who had servants operating the *behet*, a sunshade, signified the ruler was blessed with the characteristics of a god. The *khu*-fan appeared in the middle of the Eighteenth Dynasty during the reign of Amenhotep II. High-status officials with the title “fanbearers on the right of the king” carried this ceremonial fan. There are also other times when a divine bird or a personified *ankh* carried the *khu*-fan above the pharaoh. This fan may have been used to designate the pharaoh as the *seshemn-khwi* or “protected image.” Some Egyptian fans were made carved wood, which was coated in gesso and hammered with gold leaf onto the surface. They also contained precious stones such as cornelian, lapis lazuli, dark resin, and different colored glass (turquoise, red, blue, green, black, and white). Fans made of feathers appeared during the Pre-Dynastic Period (before 3100 B.C.) and were common in the New Kingdom (16th century B.C. to 11th century B.C.). An exciting example that shows the significance of fans is King Tutankhamun’s tomb, which has several illustrations of servants fanning the Pharaoh. The tomb also contains remains of fan made of ostrich feathers and other fans made of ebony and gold. Ancient Egyptians would also use fans for evaporative cooling. For this process, wet mats would be hung over doorways, and enslaved peoples would fan clay jars filled with water to keep cool. Fans were also used to flame sacred fires and to keep away flies from sacrifices.

The Folding Fan: Invented in Japan, the folding fan emerged in China during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) when a Japanese monk in 988 brought one with him to China as a tribute. The design of this fan was inspired by the shape of a bat’s wing. At first, some people in China disliked the folding fan, as they believed they were intended for lower social classes. The customs began to change as the Chinese Emperor Yongle of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) began distributing them to ministers and generals as valued gifts. From then on, the Chinese Sichuan and Suzho provinces became famous for producing fans. Each year, Sichuan produced over a million fans for the imperial court as tribute. Important top and middle-level court officials used these fans. Made of gilded frames and extremely thin silk, fans from Sichuan were the most expensive. Fans from Suzho, on the other hand, became famous for their paintings and calligraphy. The fans were usually white or gilded so that well-known calligraphers and painters could create their works on the fans. White or brown bamboo, black hardwood, and sandalwood usually made up the frames, though sometimes ivory and hawksbill turtle bones were used. The Suzho fans gradually became valuable art objects. After the Japanese folding fan became part of the Chinese culture, it spread to Portugal, Spain, Italy, and eventually France.

Feathered Fans:

Before the era of the conquistadors, fans functioned as a symbol for the nobles and *pochteca* (professional traders) classes in Aztec society. They also adorned the wardrobes of the *tlatoani* (Emperor) and his royal family. The fans were often constructed of wood and colorful feathers. Feathers were rare materials and the incredible skills needed to create feather works made them highly valuable in Aztec culture. Moreover, feathers were connected to the idea of re-birth and the majesty of birds, whose bodies could replenish missing feathers. Feather works were also connected to the deity *Huitzilopochtli* and human sacrifice rituals.

The Flabellum (pl. Flabella): Most likely originating in Egypt, the flabellum was used during the time of the early Christian church. This religious fan was used to cool the priest and to protect the Holy Communion from flies and other pests. Flabella were usually made thin vellum, fine linen, peacock feathers, or ostrich feathers, though some Eastern churches used thin plates of precious metal (e.g. silver). The metal flabellum in the East often had a representation of the six-winged cherub or seraph (angel of the highest rank). Eventually, the flabellum became the symbol of the diaconate (group of deacons) and was given to the deacon when he was ordained. Flabella made of peacock feathers were linked to symbolism from Eastern rulers. The peacock feathers represented the “eyes” of the church members on the Pope, who should be cautious and mindful of church affairs.

The Fan in the Black Church:

The American Paper Fan was usually made of card and a light wooden handle. They were extremely popular in the South and Mid-West during the hot and humid summer months before the advent of the electric fans and air conditioning. These fans were most often used in homes, churches, and other places where people would gather. Local businesses and organizations saw the possibilities for advertising and distributed thousands of free fans to customers, parishioners, and potential voters. Fans given to churches usually had a religious scene and sometimes contained an inspirational message or a quote from The Bible. One the reverse side of the church fan was advertisements for local businesses (e.g.: funeral home, insurance company, banks, etc.). In the 50's and 60's, fans in the Black Churches not only carried religious messages, but also showed scenes that contrasted with stereotypes of the time. For example, some fans would portray a well-dressed Black family at worship, Black children saying their prayers, or a young Black girl watering flowers. Other times, the fans would feature the images of respected African-Americans, such as gospel singer Mahalia Jackson. Although many churches now have air-conditioning, these fans remain an important part of Black Church attendance.

Fans Across Cultures

Fans have been around for at least five thousand years. Some of the oldest fans can be found in Egypt, India, and China, but they have existed in many different times and cultures. Although fans vary from culture to culture, they reveal the interconnectedness of humans throughout time.

Activity A — Introduction: The Many Uses of Fans

Use the word bank provided to fill in the blanks for the different uses of fans.

Dances	Fire	Fashion	Cool
Advertising	Religious	Status	Pests

Different Uses for Fans:

- 1) To _____ the skin.
- 2) To swat away _____.
- 3) To build a _____ and create more oxygen for flames.
- 4) A sign of _____, particularly when operated by a servant.
- 5) A _____ symbol.
- 6) A _____ accessory, like in 19th century Europe or contemporary Nigerian bridal wear.
- 7) Used in traditional _____, such as the Noh or flamenco.
- 8) For _____ businesses or political messages.

Activity B —Fans from Different Countries

(Images in Figures C-G taken from <https://commons.wikimedia.org>)

Read through the hand out. On the map provided, mark the *continent* where each particular fan originated.

Fans in Egypt: In Ancient Egypt, fans had a variety of uses and were made of many different types of materials. They could be used to provide shade, to indicate that a ruler was divine, to flame a sacred fire, or to keep away flies.



Fig A. Khu fan from the Tomb of Khaemwaset (QV 44). Photo taken from <http://www.artofcounting.com>



Fig B. Sunshade from the Tomb of Khaemwaset (QV 44). Photo taken from <http://www.artofcounting.com>



Fig C. Gilded and faience inlaid sunshade from KV62 tomb of king Tutankhamun.

The fan contains the king's royal name.

Today, this fan is part of Cairo Museum of Egypt's permanent collection.

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The Folding Fan as an Art Object

Invented in Japan, the folding fan was inspired by the shape of a bat's wing. A Japanese monk introduced the folding fan to the Chinese in 988. Fans from the Suzho province in China often had ink paintings on them (eg: Fig F) and became valued as art objects. After the Japanese folding fan became part of the Chinese culture, it spread to Portugal, Spain, Italy, and eventually France.



Fig D. China, mid-19th century. Silk leaf, bone sticks and guards and guards, metallic loop, mother-of-pearl button, silk tassel.



Fig E. China, circa 1890. Silk satin leaf, wood sticks and guards.



Fig F. *Landscape* by Sun Zhi, Ming Dynasty, 16th century. Ink on gold paper.



Fig G. France or Austria, 1880s. Silk leaf with ostrich feather tips, bone sticks and guards, brass loop and rivet, mother-of-pearl button.

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Fig H. Aztec Fan. Photo by Dennis Jarvis.
Image taken from "The Commons"
on <http://www.flickr.com>

Feathered Fans as a Sign of Social Class

Like Ancient Egyptian culture, fans in Aztec society had many uses. Fans were associated with religious figures and events, but they often served as a sign of rank. Feathers were rare materials and required incredible skills to use, hence why works with feathers were so valuable.



Fig I. Fan, possibly of Aztec descent. Photo from Museum of Ethnology in Vienna.

The Flabellum (pl. Flabella) as a Religious Fan

Most likely originating in Egypt, the flabellum was used during the time of the early Christian church. This religious fan was used to cool the priest and to protect the Holy Communion from pests. Flabella were usually made of thin vellum (calfskin), fine linen, peacock or ostrich feathers.



Fig J. Pope Pius XII with flabellum in the background.
Image taken from "The Commons" on <http://www.flickr.com>

The Fan in the Black Church as a Form of Advertisement

Fans in Black churches were usually made of cardboard or cardstock and a light wooden handle.

They were extremely popular in the South and

Mid-West during the hot and humid summer months before electric fans and air conditioning were

installed. Local businesses and organizations saw the possibilities for advertising and distributed thousands of free fans to customers, parishioners, and potential

voters. The front would often have a religious scene or an image of a famous person (e.g. Martin Luther King), while the back contained information for local

business or politician. Still today, the church fan can be found in the pews of many African American churches.



Fig K. A classic example of an African American church fan. Courtesy of West Angeles Church.

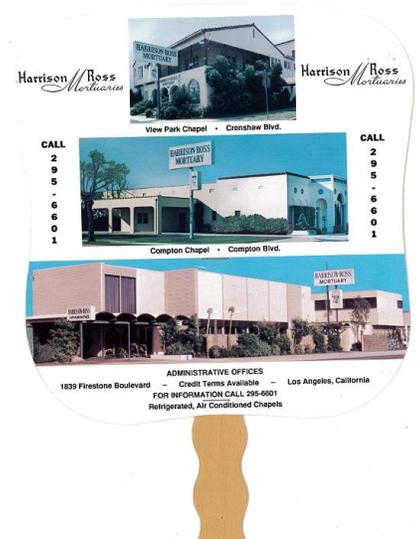
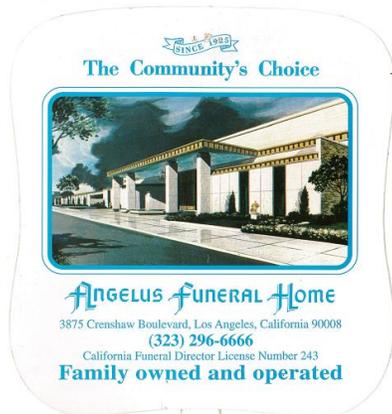


Fig M. An example of an African American church fan. Courtesy of West Angeles Church.

Fig L. An example of an African American church fan. Courtesy of West Angeles Church.

Fig N. An example of an African American church fan. Courtesy of West Angeles Church.



