

## Traditional Bark Cloth Making in Uganda

TEACHER: *Look closely at this picture. Can you tell what this is?*

STUDENTS: *a skirt, an apron, etc.*

*This is a skirt. Do you know what material was used to make this skirt?*

*Cotton, leather, etc.*

*It might look like cotton or leather, but this skirt is made from a very special material called "bark cloth." Do you know where bark cloth comes from?*

*The bark of a tree, the store, a factory, etc.*

*Bark cloth is made from tree bark. Not all tree bark can be made into cloth. The bark used to make this skirt came from a special tree called the Mutuba tree. It is a kind of fig tree that grows in the southern part of Uganda. For over 600 years, the Baganda people of Uganda have been using the bark of the Mutuba tree to make cloth. The Baganda people consider clothing made from the tree to be extra special, and they only wear it for important occasions. Even the kings and chiefs wear bark cloth! They like to dye it white or black. Raise your hand if you have clothing at home that you only wear for special occasions.*

*(Acknowledge the number of hands in the air, and continue.)*

*What does tree bark usually feel like when you touch it?*

*It is rough, hard, scratchy, bumpy, etc.*

*Do you think it would be comfortable to wear bark for your clothing?*

*No*

*What do you think the Baganda people do to the bark to make it soft like clothing you buy in the store?*

*Rub it, peel it, pound it, soak it, etc.*

*Turning bark into cloth is not an easy job. It takes a lot of time and practice to do it right. There are many steps involved in turning a strip of bark into a skirt. First, a section of the outer bark of the Mutuba tree is carefully cut away. This exposes the inner bark of the tree, which is moist and fleshy. Horizontal and vertical cuts are*

*made, and a cut banana stalk is used to scrape long, narrow pieces of the inner bark away from the trunk. This will be used to make the cloth. When the bark is cut away, it is like getting a cut on your skin. It does not kill the tree, but the Baganda people make a bandage for the trunk from banana leaves. The leaves are tied to the trunk to help protect it while it heals. How long do you think it takes for the cut to heal?*

*One day, one week, one month, one year, etc.*

*The banana leaf bandage is kept on the tree for one year, so the new bark has time to grow back.*

*Once the bark is peeled off of the tree, dried banana leaves are placed on top of it and set on fire. The ash from the leaves helps give the peeled bark a darker color. Why doesn't the bark catch fire like the leaves?*

*The leaves are dry, and the bark is wet.*

*Trees store water in their trunks and send it up to the branches and leaves as they grow, so the bark stays wet and does not catch on fire.*

*Then the bark is wrapped in fresh banana leaves and placed under a covered building. If the bark is dried out by the sun, it cannot be made into cloth. It has to stay moist. Next, it is stretched on a thin log, and special tools are used to pound it. The mallet like tools are all made of wood, but come in different sizes and shapes. They are carved with small grooves that help soften and add texture to the bark as it is pounded. The process of pounding the bark is called, "okukomaga" and the tools used to pound it are called, "nsaamu." How long do you think the bark needs to be pounded before it is turned into cloth?*

*One minute, one hour, five hours, etc.*

*The bark is pounded, turned and stretched for five hours before it is soft enough to be used as cloth. While it is being pounded, it gets bigger. The finished cloth is up to four times its original size!*

*When the cloth is finished, it is stretched and dried in the sun. Now it is ready to make clothing. What else do you think you could make from bark cloth? Turn to the person next to you, and tell them one thing you would make with a piece of bark cloth.*

*(Allow for a short time to share ideas.)*

*Now you know how bark cloth is made in Uganda. But, bark cloth is made in other places in the world too. People in other parts of Africa, Asia, and many Pacific Islands make the cloth. In fact, people in the United States make bark cloth on the island state of Hawaii. (Locate these regions on a map.)*

*Bark cloth is just one more example of the creative and useful things people have learned to make from trees all over the world.*

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## **Kindergarten Standards:**

### **NYS Common Core Kindergarten Social Studies Standards**

- K.2.b Cultures include traditions, beliefs, and shared values and ideas generally accepted by a particular group of people.
- K.2.c Children, families, and communities from different cultures all share some common characteristics, but also have specific differences which make them unique.
- K.7.b A globe represents Earth at large, but maps can be used to represent the world as well as local places or specific regions.
- K.8.b People and communities adapt to their physical Environment in many ways, including building homes, buildings, and transportation systems; accessing food and water; and developing ways to protect themselves from shifting weather patterns.
- K.9.a Children, families, and communities of today can be compared with those in the past.

### **Kindergarten ELA Power NYSCCLS (ICSD Power Standards in Bold)**

#### *Reading Standards for Informational Text: Kindergarten*

- **Integration and Knowledge of Ideas**  
**7. With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).**

#### *Speaking and Listening Standards: Kindergarten*

- **Comprehension and Collaboration**  
**1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *kindergarten topics and texts* with peers and adults in small and larger groups.**
  - a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).**
  - b. Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.**
  - c. Seek to understand and communicate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.****2. Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.**  
**3. Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.**
- **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**  
**6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.**

#### *Language Standards: Kindergarten*

- **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**  
**6. Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.**

### **Next Generation Science Standards for Kindergarten**

#### *K-ESS3 Earth and Human Activity*

- ESS3.A: Natural Resources  
**1. Living things need water, air, and resources from the land, and they live in places that have the things they need. Humans use natural resources for everything they do. (K-ESS3-1)**