

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

# A FREE Learning Resource Pack



A research project exploring African gods, goddesses, stories, objects and artefacts and their counterparts in other cultures

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LOTTERY FUNDED

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

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# IROKO

Theatre Company

African Theatre, Music, Dance, Arts & Crafts

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

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## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

### Learning Resource Pack

The basis of the 'Our Shared Heritage' project has been the investigation and identification of similarities between African stories, objects, tricksters, gods and goddesses and their counterparts in other cultures particularly, Asian, Aztec, European and Islamic.



The research carried out by a team of dedicated volunteer researchers threw up some fascinating similarities. For instance, coral beads have been used for centuries in various parts of the world and in many cultures have become symbols of wealth and prosperity. In fact, coral was highly prized as far back as the Ancient Greeks and Romans and it was believed to have spiritual and medicinal qualities, to the point that during a smallpox outbreak in 1850's London, people wore coral charms to protect them from contracting the disease!

Although a research project, we must stress that 'Our Shared Heritage' is not an academic exercise! As a family friendly project, it has been specially designed as a fun way of stimulating people's interest in heritage matters and encouraging them to 'dig deeper' about given objects, artefacts, stories, gods or goddesses in order to find out and understand their uniqueness and cross-cultural significance. We hope that by doing this, people will be able to learn more about other cultures, understand their own heritage even better, while at the same time appreciate the inter-relatedness of different cultures.

We have learnt a lot in the process of carrying out the project and we hope that you find the Resource Pack, the associated Fun Quiz and Learning Activities stimulating and useful. Enjoy!

**Alex Oma-Pius FRSA**

*Our Shared Heritage Development Director*

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### EXHIBITION AND FACTSHEET



Huehecoyotl in the Codex Telleriano-Remensis.  
Mexico (Aztec)  
C.16 AD



Sun Wukong, the Monkey King  
Framed and glazed painting  
Hong Kong C.20  
Horniman Museum



Hanuman figure  
Koppal, India  
Horniman Museum

### TRICKSTERS

Trickster figures are at the centre of storytelling traditions all over the world. Typically, they are mischievous and dualistically embrace both good and evil. As liminal, crossroad characters, they are often depicted as incorporating human, divine and animal characteristics. They can be both helpful and hindering, but can also be bargained with and tricked themselves.



Br'er Rabbit  
Southern USA  
C19 illustration



Anansi the spider man  
Asante, Ghana  
<https://mrpsmythopedia.wikispaces.com/Anansi>



Loki, the Norse  
Depicted in manuscript  
Iceland

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Hindu Ganga river goddess  
Kalighat painting C.19



Santiera shrine for Yemoja  
Nigeria/Brazil

## RIVER DEITIES

Like water, river deities are essential to life but also very dangerous. As liminal beings they control boundaries of land but also grant safe passage necessary for trade and travel. Water can be seen as purifying and healing, both physically and spiritually. It is also unpredictable and can house monsters and the unknown. River goddesses are nourishing, mysterious and untameable. Their influence is widespread due to the constant movement of water.



Syrian coin depicting Atargatis as half fish,  
surrounded by barley

Bronze head of Isis, possibly  
a boat-fitter  
Egypt, Late Period  
British Museum



## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT



Headpiece for masquerade  
Ibibio people,  
Nigeria late 20th century  
British Museum



Haida Wedo (Mamy Wata) Vodou  
Banner  
Roudy Azor  
Port-au-Prince, Haiti 2013

### MAMI WATA

Emerging from a huge variety of visual and aural traditions surrounding water spirits and mermaids, Mami Wata is a contemporary, cosmopolitan spirit. Her image is thought to have been inspired by European depictions of mermaids and a lithograph brought to Nigeria by sailors of a Samoan snake charmer. Mainly venerated by West African communities and diasporas, she is portrayed as fairly light-skinned with long, wavy hair; an outsider. She is emblematic of travel, trade, displacement and multiculturalism. Water spirits are linked to fluidity and fertility, snakes can represent regeneration.



Manasa Devi  
Hindu snake goddess  
India, Musee du quai



Clonfert Cathedral, Ireland Mermaid  
Stone carving  
C15 AD

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Shango ceremonial staff  
Yoruba: Benin/Nigeria  
British Museum



Mask of Tlaloc  
Mexico (Aztec)  
C.15/16AD  
British Museum



A mask from the secret Nyau society of the Chewa people, relating to thunder god Chiuta  
Malawi  
C20 AD  
British Museum

## THUNDER GODS

Although frequently vengeful and destructive, thunder gods are essential to life because of their association with rain and fertility. Zeus, Jupiter and Chiuta also have dominion as most high gods. Thunder gods are often equipped with aggressive objects such as lightning bolts, axes and hammers. Cult followers devote themselves to appeasing these gods and therefore avoiding the consequences of their dissatisfaction.



Bronze Zeus with eagle and thunderbolt  
Greece  
British Museum



Thor  
Marvel comics  
USA



Thor with hammer  
Iceland (Viking)  
BBC

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Bronze figure of Ares  
Greek/Roman  
C.1 BC  
British Museum



Bronze figure of Mars  
Roman  
C.1/2ADB

### GODS OF IRON AND WAR

These gods embody various aspects of war; whilst Ares is portrayed as dangerous and violent, his Roman counterpart Mars is ultimately a god of peace through military strategy and intelligence. As the Yoruba god of metals, weapons, tools and war, Ogun has adopted a more modern role as a deity of taxi drivers and vehicles in response to technological developments. Huitzilpochtli, like other war gods, demanded elaborate and expensive worship rituals in order to ensure success in battle for the Aztec nation. Overall, war gods are fearsome protectors of justice, symbolised by their weapons and armour.



Karkikaya or Murugan India (Hindu)  
Raja Ravi Varma



Huitzilpochtli  
Mexico (Aztec)  
Codex Borbonicus.



Ceremonial Ogun adze (axe)  
Yoruba, Nigeria  
C.20 AD  
Neuberger Museum of Art

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The Buddha in meditation, guarded by the naga snake *Mucalinda*, 1150-1175AD  
Cambodia



The bands around this Igbo chief's hat represent the serpent "Eke"  
Nigeria

## SERPENTS

Snakes are regarded as creation beings in cosmologies around the world. In the Christian creation narrative it is emblematic of the introduction of evil and autonomy, but in many other traditions it has a more explicitly positive influence. Feathered serpents of Mesoamerican belief are dualistically able to fly to the heavens and crawl along the earth, linking the two. Snakes are also associated with healing, vengefulness, fertility, regeneration and protectiveness.



Medusa the snake-headed Gorgon  
Roman mosaic  
Ancient Greek/Roman  
Museum of Sousse, Tunisia



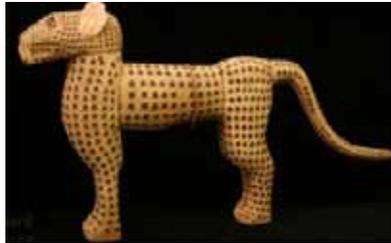
Quetzalcoatl as a feathered serpent  
Codex Telleriano-Remensis  
Aztec C. 16

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Ivory leopard figure  
Benin, Nigeria  
C19  
British Museum



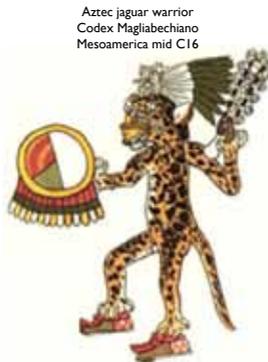
### ANIMALS

Animals are frequently used as symbols of strength or royalty. In the pre-colonial kingdom of Benin, both the leopard and the Oba (the king) were considered solitary and dangerous hunters. Only the Oba was allowed to spill a leopard's blood, and tame leopards were kept for this purpose. Similarly, eagle and jaguar warriors were the most elite, high status fighters in the Aztec civilisation. Jaguars were also thought to be supernatural beings who could move between the material and spiritual world. As the 'king of beasts', the lion is used on English heraldry so symbolise royalty, strength, bravery and nobility.

Eagle feather war bonnet headdress  
Native American (Plains)  
North America C18



Clay jaguar  
Monte Alban, Oaxaca  
200BC - 600AD  
American Museum of Natural History



Aztec jaguar warrior  
Codex Magliabechiano  
Mesoamerica mid C16



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Wooden Netsuke featuring a Dutchman and a cockerel, Japan C.18/19AD



Bronze cockerel  
Lyons, France (Roman) C.2AD  
Louvre, Paris



Bahuchara Mata  
Hindu goddess pictured seated on a rooster  
India

## COCKERELS

Cockerels are often emblematic of dominant, ostentatious masculinity. Solitary and independent birds, they can be aggressive, extroverted and courageous in their pursuit of hens and battles with other cockerels. Their vocal announcements of the dawn links them to the rising sun and vigilance or protectiveness, as well as assertiveness and pride. In China they are particularly regarded as possessing the virtues of kindness and innocence. Overall their presence signifies bravery, perseverance and triumph.



Bronze Rooster  
Benin, Nigeria  
C.18  
Metropolitan Museum



Gallo di Ramperto  
Weathervane in the shape of a rooster  
Italy, 820AD  
Museum of Santa Giulia in Brescia, Italy.

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Wooden prayer beads (Misbaha)  
Iran  
British Museum



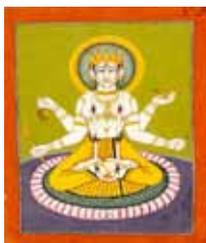
Coral necklace  
Abruzzi, Italy  
C.19  
Victoria and Albert Museum



Royal regalia of Oba Akenzua II  
Kingdom of Benin (Nigeria) (1933–1978)

## BEADWORK

Beads have been produced and valued across the world for thousands of years. Formed from shell, bone, coral, wood and latterly, European glass, beads have found a range of functions from currency to divination. When adorning people and textiles they can express identity and deflect evil forces. Each colour can hold several meanings, and drawing colours together in particular patterns intensifies their spiritual or healing powers. Patterns can also communicate the social or marital status of the wearer, and are particularly important on occasions such as birth, death, puberty and marriage.



Wooden prayer beads (Misbaha)  
Iran  
British Museum

Painting of Lord Shiva with prayer beads  
India  
1790-1810  
British Museum



Gold and Turquoise skull necklace,  
Mexico (Aztec)  
Dumbarton Oaks Museum

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A felt fez hat  
Turkey



A red Igbo hat  
Nigeria



Ottoman Sultan Mahmud II  
Ottoman Empire  
1830

### RED HATS

To the Igbo people in Nigeria, the red hat is an important indicator of wealth and high status. Known as the “red ozo” or “ichie okpu, the hat is reserved for chiefs and other men of nobility, who have earned the status of ‘peace warriors’. Red is a powerful colour which in this instance can symbolise fire, a divine spirit or the soil of the earth. Wearing the hat affirms a man’s belonging to the land, whilst conveying his elite status. It is very similar to the Turkish fez which emerged from the Ottoman Empire and became synonymous with the ‘Oriental’ cultural identity.



White clothes symbolise mental, physical and spiritual purity; the addition of an eagle feather to the cap emphasises the wearer as particularly important



Gathering of Igbo chiefs in regalia and red hats  
Nigeria, 2014

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Nalain Mubarak  
Islam



Eben ceremonial sword  
Benin, Nigeria  
C.18  
British Museum

## SWORDS

The Islamic Nalain and the Benin ceremonial Eben sword are both high status, sacred objects from two apparently very different cultures. The Eben was carried by the chief in the king's court, whereas the Nalain symbol, inspired by the footprint of the prophet Mohammed (pbuh) is worn reverentially by Muslims to invoke blessing. Very similar in shape, the objects raise interesting questions about how and when these cultures interacted. It is probable that Sahelian influences from the north in the process of trade, may have introduced the Islam shape to the Benin citizens, but it is still unclear why the elite of the Oba's court adopted the sacred symbol.

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Kente Cloth  
Ghana, Asante  
2001  
Women's cloth  
Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford



### WOVEN CLOTH

To many cultures, the method by which textiles are produced is as important as their design as a means of expressing identity. Techniques are preserved and taught to each generation, ensuring the continuation of traditional production in defiance of mass-produced fashion. Ghanaian Kente cloth and Scottish tartan are both classed as “common twill” fabrics, woven on a loom in a similar manner. Both cloths use particular patterns to communicate the heritage of the wearer. The colours on Kente cloth and Mexican huipils (traditional garments worn by women from Central America to Mexico) also relate to proverbs and myths.



Aztec huipil



Various Scottish tartans

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Rowan tree  
Northern England/Scotland

Textile depicting a tree  
(Probably the tree of life)  
Egypt  
Coptic C6/7AD  
British Museum



## TREES

With their roots deep in the ground and branches stretching across the sky, trees stand between the heavens and the earth. Their majestic proportions, age and provision of fruits, have long been revered as icons of life and fertility. Different tree types hold different supernatural properties, able to heal or protect against evil. The Rowan tree's mythic roots date back to Greek mythology, where it was formed from the drops of an eagle's blood. In Norse and Christian tradition, trees are essential to the forming of humanity. The Yoruba people of Nigeria believe that the Iroko tree, after which IROKO Theatre Company is named, contains a spirit which must never be disturbed. It is extremely sacred and must be approached with caution.



Igi Irokó – Iroko tree, Nigeria

Tree of life sculpture  
Cristóvão (Kester) Canhavato  
2004  
Mozambique/UK  
British Museum



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### STORIES

#### **Oluronbi and the Iroko Tree**

A very long time ago, there was a village where many of the women were barren. They desperately wanted children and decided to ask the spirit that lived inside the big Iroko tree for help.

One by one, they went to visit the Iroko tree to beg the Iroko tree spirit for help. The Iroko tree asked each of the women who showed up what she would give in return for bearing a child. Woman after woman promised the Iroko tree spirit goats, yams, handwoven cloth or whatever it was she sold for a living as many of these women were traders who sold their wares at a weekly market in an open field.

One of the women who was named Oluronbi also approached the Iroko tree for help. She was so desperate for a child that when the Iroko tree spirit asked her what she would give in return for a child, she eagerly offered her first born child.

Before a year ran out, many of the women had given birth to children and returned to the Iroko tree to fulfil their various promises. When it was time for Oluronbi to fulfil her promise, she went to the Iroko tree to plead her case. She could offer the Iroko tree everything, anything else but not her child. But the tree spirit would not be swayed and took the child despite Oluronbi's cries and pleas.

Since then villagers have sang this song as a reminder of the event:

Oníkálukú jèjè ewúré  
Others offered sheep  
Oníkálukú jèjè àgùtàn, àgùtàn bòlòjò  
Others offered goats  
Olúrónbí èjé omo re  
Oluronbi offered her child  
Omo re a pón bí epo  
Her beautiful child  
Olúrónbí ò jo jo  
Ìròkò jo jo

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

Story I

### **How Sango became a Thunder god (Africa)**

Shango was a great warrior king and was greatly feared but soon his people grew tired of his fighting and pleaded with him to have a time of peace. He agreed but two of his most powerful generals refused to stop because war had made them rich and famous. In order to get rid of them, Shango made them fight each other hoping they would die fighting. One of them, Gbonka, had powerful charms that kept him from being hurt by the other warrior, Timi's arrows. Gbonka was able to use magic to put Timi to sleep and he beheaded him. Gbonka realised Shango's plan was to get rid of him so he turned against Shango now he also had magical powers. He knew Shango's fire powers would not harm him so he ordered a large fire to be built and ordered oil and Shea butter to be poured into it to make it bigger. Everyone saw he remained unhurt and knew couldn't be beaten by Shango's fire and all of Shango's followers deserted him. With the shame of his defeat, Shango left the town and hung himself from a tree and then ascended into the sky. Oya, his wife, is the only one who stayed loyal to him and she gathered his followers and gained control over his kingdom with Shango defending his supporters with lightning and thunder.

(Beier, 1980: 21-22)

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Story 1a

### **Tlaloc Sought Revenge (Aztec)**

Tlaloc ruled as the Third Sun, the Rain Sun, in the cycle of the five suns. His was Xochiquetzal (goddess of erotic love). She is seduced and raped by Tezcatlipoca and as a result Tlaloc will have nothing to do with her. In his anger Tlaloc continues his duties as god of the sun but not as god of rain, resulting in drought and starvation. Finally, Quetzalcoatl (another god) gets fed up with Tlaloc and knocks him out of the sun position and orders him to bring rain. Tlaloc is still angry but produces rain made of fire. As a result the Third world is destroyed and surviving humans become birds.

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### Story 2

## Ananse and The Python

Once upon a time, there was a peaceful and happy village somewhere in Africa. The villagers were known for their hard work and their ability to farm the land. People were coming from neighbouring kingdoms to buy produce from the villagers. It was such a happy village until the arrival of a deadly python.

The python was killing livestock and was causing havoc to the village. The villagers tried all their best to kill the python but they could not. At last, they went to Nyame, the skygod to ask for help. The skygod answered by telling the villagers that he created the python and that he cannot destroy it. Nyame added that he will reward any living creature that is able to catch the python.

Ananse, the spider heard about the skygod's promise and got excited. Ananse was known to be the canniest and laziest of all skygod's creation. Ananse thought hard about how to catch the python and one day he declared to the astonishment of all the creatures, including human beings that he will catch the python but to do that he needed four things – a very long rope, a log, a basketful of eggs and a calabash of palmwine. The villagers gave Ananse all the four items and surprise, surprise, Ananse was able to catch the python after he tricked the python into drinking the calabash of palmwine. Ananse went to the skygod and the skygod rewarded Ananse with knowledge and wisdom.

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### Story 2a

### **Susano'o and The Snake (Asian, Japanese)**

One day on earth, Susano'o fell in love with a beautiful girl. The girl's parents told him her seven sisters had been killed by a monster who was returning to kill the girl too. Susano'o said if he could marry her, he would save her. When the parents agreed, he turned her into a comb and tucked her safely in his hair.

The snake soon appeared. He got the snake drunk and when it fell asleep. Susano'o then cut off its many heads winning the girl and finding Kusangi (magical sword inside the dragon/snake).

Some legends say he then gifted Kusangi to Amaterasu as in order to make peace.

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### Story 3

## **A Bird Steals Iyawo's Baby** (Africa)

There was a man who had two wives. The senior wife was called Iyale while the junior wife was called Iyawo. The senior wife, Iyale was very mean to Iyawo. She made life very hard for Iyawo so much that Iyawo never had enough food to feed her children or nice clothes to wear. The nicer Iyawo was, the meaner the Iyale became.

One day, the junior wife, Iyawo needed to get some firewood. Since Iyale would not help her watch her baby she had to take her baby into the forest with her. She placed her baby under a tall tree while she went to gather some wood.

She finished gathering her firewood and returned to get her baby but the baby was gone. "Yey!" She cried. "Ta lo gbo mo mi o?" "Who took my baby?" She screamed. She ran back and forth looking for her baby, crying and yelling but couldn't find her baby anywhere.

Then she looked up, and she saw a bird perched high up in the tree, holding her baby in its clutches. "You bird up in the tree, give me back my baby!" She called to the bird. The bird threw down a bundle and Iyawo quickly ran to get it. But it was not her baby. It was a bag of coral beads. She once again appealed to the bird. "I want my baby, what will I do with coral beads? Please give me back my baby!" The bird sang to her, saying that corals are worth more than her baby but Iyawo would not hear of this. She insisted on getting her baby.

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**(cont.)**

The bird threw down another bundle and lyawo ran to get it. But again, it was not her baby; it was a bag of gold. She cried to the bird, "I want my baby, what will I do with gold? Please give me back my baby!" This scene was repeated again with the bird throwing down precious stones, but the lyawo refused to take these in place of her baby. Finally, the bird flew down and placed the baby on the ground. "Here is your baby. And as you have proven not to be a greedy person, you can have all that I have offered you." Now lyawo had not only her baby, but also the bag of corals, the bag of gold and the precious stones.

When lyale saw her come home with all these items, she demanded to know how lyawo had come into possession of such expensive goods. lyawo told her story and lyale decided to get her own goods too since she could not be satisfied with sharing these with lyawo. She needed to have more than lyawo did.

The following morning, the mean senior wife, lyale, took her baby into the forest and laid the baby under the same tall tree from which lyawo's baby had been taken. Then she went away to make as if she was gathering firewood. When she got back, her baby was gone. She looked up and saw her baby in the clutches of the bird perched high up on the tree. "Give me corals, gold and precious stones. And give me back my baby!" She called to the bird. The bird threw down a bundle. The lyale eagerly ran towards this bundle, but instead of coral beads or gold or precious stones, she found stones.

"You stupid bird, give me corals, gold and precious stones. And give me back my baby!" She called to the bird again. This time the bird threw down a bag of rubbish. lyale screamed at the bird demanding corals, gold and precious stones. But this time, the bird threw down a bag containing the bones of lyale's baby.

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Story 3a

### **Susano'o and The Beads (Asian, Japanese)**

Susano'o was born when Izangi returned from Yomi (the land of the dead/darkness). He sprung from Izangi's nose as the god purified himself on his return.

Susano'o is known as the 'impetuous male'. At first, he was one of the most powerful gods. He was given the sea to rule over by Izangi but he was not satisfied; he was jealous his brother had been given the moon and his sister the sun. His father in anger banished him for his ingratitude. But not wanting to leave, he challenged his sister Amaterasu to a contest saying whoever could create the most gods would be the winner.

His sister took Susano'o's sword and broke it into three pieces, ate it and spat it out. Three goddesses formed from the mist. He then stole her beads and cracked them open producing five gods. He then declared himself winner but his sister disagreed as the 5 gods had come from her beads. Susano'o became very angry causing his sister to retreat into a cave whilst he brought destruction on the earth.

The other gods got sick of his behaviour and stripped him of everything including his beard and fingernails and banished him from heaven sending him to his mother in Yomi.

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Story 4

### **How The Leopard Got It's Spots (Africa)**

Once upon a time, Ijapa, The Tortoise had a big big feast and invited all the animals in the animal kingdom. His best friend leopard was the first to arrive and helped Ijapa to bake the 'akara' (bean cake). All the animals are always looking forward to Ijapa's yearly feast as Ijapa was known to bake the best of 'akara'.

All the animals at the feast ate to their hearts' content and Ijapa left a piece of akara for his cousine, Koulou who was coming all the way from Gabon. When Koulou arrived, Ijapa went to where he had left the bean cake but he could not find it. The cake had disappeared!

Ijapa was so annoyed that he made all the animals to pledge their innocence by jumping over the fire. It was believed that the fire had a magical spirit that would pull into it anybody that was not telling the truth. All the animals jumped until it was the turn of the leopard. And so, the leopard, his best friend jumped but may be because of his guilty conscience or the heaviness of the bean cake in his stomach, he fell inside the fire. For seven days and seven nights, the leopard felt very ill as the fire burnt all his beautiful and golden fur. Then Diasy, the Crocodile, the creature gifted with the knowledge and wisdom to heal different kinds of illnesses using different types of herbs, decided to treat the leopard. When he did, the wound all over his body was healed but, the scars remain forever after to remind the leopard never never to steal again.

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Story 4a

### **Why Snakes Shed Their Skin (Islamic)**

Gilgamesh, the ruler of Uruk, did not rule well and the people appealed to the gods for intervention. They created a man, Enkidu, as a rival. Initially enemies, they eventually became close friends

One day they went to the Cedar Forest to find trees for a cedar gate for the city. Before they could cut down the trees, they had to fight a monster, Humbaba, who lived in the forest. They fought and killed him and the Goddess of Love, Ishtar was so impressed by Gilgamesh's daring that she tried to seduce him. He rejects her and in her anger she asks her father the god Anu to revenge her by sending the sacred Bull of Heaven to Uruk.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the bull but that same night Enkidu has a dream that the gods have decided that one of the two friends must die for killing Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven. Enkidu falls ill and is dead within 12 days.

Enkidu's death breaks Gilgamesh who then begins to fear his own death. He decides to find Utnapishtim, the man who survived the great flood and had been granted immortality to ask him about the secret of eternal life.

Gilgamesh finds Utnapishtim after a long journey who tells him how he had survived the great flood and the boat he built for his family and animals. Gilgamesh is told that he must stay awake six nights and seven days and if succeeds, he will be granted immortality too. He fails but the man tells him about a plant that will give him an eternal youth.

Gilgamesh finds the plant and continues his journey back to Uruk. When he stops to bath, a snake steals and eats the plant (which explains why snakes shed their skin).

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

Story 5

### **Oshun, The River Goddess (Africa and African Diaspora)**

Oshun is a beautiful human wife of the Yoruba orisha, Shango. Oya was also one of Shango's three wives. Yoruba myth tells how Oya was jealous of Oshun's great beauty whilst Oshun was jealous of Oya's ability to cook.

Oya humiliated Oshun in front of the gods and her husband Shango at a great feast. To escape the shame Oshun walked away from her human life, into a river and so became the river deity, a demigod.

Oshun is known for her happiness, beauty and coquettishness and her sweet fresh waters of the river are a contrast for the salty waters of Yemoja's oceans. Oshun's attributes are healing love, and Oya's are that of the mother goddess and chaos, whilst both share that of prophecy.

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

Story 5a

### **Atargatis, The River Goddess (European – Greek/Roman)**

The Goddess Atargatis was in love with a human shepherd. Her magnificence was such that the simple shepherd was entranced by this vision of beauty and love and being a human in the presence of the goddess was overcome by her supernatural powers and energy. The shepherd's mortal constitution was unable to bear the primal force of Atargatis and to her grief and sorrow his life force ebbed away and his soul flew to the heavens.

The Goddess sat at the cliff edge of the pasture amongst the flock with her love still at her side and her tears rolled down her beautiful face and fell far below into the ocean. Atargatis knew deep down that her behaviour had been selfish, that a human could never live with a God and out of grief and guilt she flung herself into the ocean hoping to become a fish, never to be tempted to fall in love with a human again.

However, her beauty was so great that she was unable to fully become a fish. Looking down at herself she saw the green and silver shimmering scales and her fish tail in the azure waters and her still beautiful features reflecting back at her.

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### “The Green Stone Bead”

#### Synopsis

“The Green Stone Bead”, written by Alex Oma-Pius, is an original, cross-cultural creative concept that explores the encounter between Eshu, the mythical Yoruba god of fate and two very canny tricksters, Ananse and the Monkey who have been chosen by Olodumare, the creator, to retrieve the green stone bead from the underwater world of Olokun, Atargatis and Ganga et al.

On their journey to the bottom of the sea, Eshu invites the tricksters to a ‘toast’ to celebrate their remarkable feat for being ‘the chosen ones’. Eshu offers them palm wine and the two tricksters drink to their hearts’ content and fall asleep. Ananse goes into a dream and in his dream he confronts the sea and river goddesses from around the world, demanding that they hand over the Bead.

The play is a metaphorical depiction of the angers of the river spirits and goddesses and their skygod counterparts as they decide to hold on to the green stone bead, not out of hate but because of their belief borne out of their benevolent and protective spirits, that the proverbial grandmother must look after ‘the child’s prized toy’ to save it from destruction! The ‘grandmothers’ elect to hold on to the bead as they believe that ‘our shared heritage’ and our common humanity will be at risk if mortals lay their hands on it. “The living cannot look after the destiny of humanity”, they declare.

‘The Green Stone Bead’ is a magic-reality parody of our laboured search for happiness, peace and harmony!



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### We will charm Olokun with love (A song from 'The Green Stone Bead')

The musical score is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody is simple and repetitive, with lyrics written below the notes. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 4, 6, 9, 11, 14, 16, 19, and 21 marked at the start of their respective lines. The lyrics are: 'We will charm O-lo - kun with love; Charm O-lo - kun with love with our smiles and with our wiles we'll leave a God - dess be - guiled; We'll charm O-lo - kun with love; Charm O-lo - kun with love; We can sweep her off her feet and tug her heart strings till she's sweet you know our skills are hard to beat; We're here to serve the li - ving! Serve the li - ving; We're here to serve the li - ving. We must fetch the Green Stone Bead in ser - vice of the li - ving; We'll charm O-lo - kun with love; Charm O-lo - kun with love; We can sweep her off her feet and tug her heart strings till she's sweet you know our skills are hard to beat; We're here to serve the li - ving!' The score ends with a double bar line and four empty measures.

We will charm O-lo - kun with love; Charm O-lo - kun with love  
4 with our smiles and with our wiles we'll leave a God - dess be - guiled; We'll  
6 charm O-lo - kun with love; Charm O-lo - kun with love; We can sweep her off her feet and  
9 tug her heart strings till she's sweet you know our skills are hard to beat; We're  
11 here to serve the li - ving! Serve the li - ving; We're here to serve the li - ving.  
14 We must fetch the Green Stone Bead in ser - vice of the li - ving; We'll  
16 charm O-lo - kun with love; Charm O-lo - kun with love; We can sweep her off her feet and  
19 tug her heart strings till she's sweet you know our skills are hard to beat; We're  
21 here to serve the li - ving!

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

### Our Shared Heritage Project Learning Activities

The aim of these Learning Activities is to encourage engagement in heritage through fun. The activities cover various curricular subject areas e.g. RE, Arts, History, Geography, PSHE & Citizenship, ICT, English, Literacy, Drama, etc. Teachers should encourage learners to:



#### Activity 1: Objects & Artefacts

- Use the world map to locate the country or geographical origin of some of the objects, gods or goddesses.
- Find out more about the people that the objects, gods or goddesses belong to (e.g. their language, religion, customs and traditions.)
- Choose an image from the pack and try to find out if the object or artefact tells a story. Remember that objects and artefacts can tell stories in many ways (e.g. through symbols, gestures, expressions, inscriptions, etc.) Discuss the hidden stories in small groups and share with the rest of the group.
- Group together three images and invent a narrative or imaginative story to link them all.
- Africans tell stories through their dances, masks and masquerades. Look at either the mask of Yemoja or the Mami Wata masquerade mask from Ibibio, Nigeria.
  1. How was the mask made?
  2. What material was used in making it?
  3. What does the mask look like?
  4. How does the mask make you feel?
  5. How would a performer move while wearing any of the mask?
  6. Inspired by either of the masks, design your own mask and masquerade.  
You might want to consider the following:

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

- What characteristics does the mask have?
- How would the mask move?
- What kind of music would be playing at the masquerade?
- Work in groups to look closely at the images in the Learning Resource Pack and try to find similarities in patterns, shape, colours, poses, gestures, etc.
- Draw a tree of their own, inspired by the different trees in the Resource Pack. Encourage them to think carefully about:
  1. The story they want the tree (their drawing) to tell;
  2. The best drawing technique to convey the story.

### Activity 2: Storytelling/Drama

From our past experiences, audiences, particularly young audiences are more likely to engage with heritage when it is visually presented. That is why we decided to use choreopoem performances – storytelling, poetry, drama, songs, dance and movements as a vehicle for presenting our research outcomes and in so doing stimulate interest in heritage from a cross-cultural perspective.



### Activities

- Looking at the “Tricksters” in the pack, ask learners to describe the features and main characteristics of at least two tricksters. Learners could use computers to research into the features and characteristics of the tricksters.
- Learners should draw their own favourite trickster and design a suitable costume for it.
- ‘The Green Stone Bead’ is a metaphor. Put the learners in groups and encourage them to explore themes found in the synopsis of ‘The Green Stone Bead’ or in any of the other stories in the pack, especially themes of happiness, peace and harmony.
- Ask the groups to discuss the offering of palm wine to Ananse and Monkey and how they themselves would try to avoid temptations in their daily lives.

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

- Ask learners to write about Ananse and The Monkey and find words to describe the friendship between them.
- Divide the learners into groups and ask them to re-enact the scene where Eshu is offering palm wine to the two friends, Ananse and The Monkey, who are on an historic mission.
- Divide the learners into two groups and ask them to re-enact the meeting of Ananse and The Monkey with the various Sea and River Goddesses from around the world. You may like to discuss:
  1. The specific characteristics of each goddess
  2. Their costumes and paraphernalia
  3. The conflict between the goddesses and the tricksters
- Gesture and pose show the character of a god and goddess. They help us to understand status and their stories. Look at the image of the Hindu Ganga river goddess in the pack and discuss the following:
  4. What do you notice about the figure's pose?
  5. What do you think the pose means?
  6. Use your hands and legs to recreate the pose.
- Thunder gods are often equipped with aggressive objects such as lightning bolts, axes and hammers. Make a list of any such objects found in the images of the thunder gods.
- Divide learners into three groups and ask them to re-enact the battle scene between the thunder gods and Ananse and The Monkey, using movement, songs, chants, sounds and rhythm.
- Crafty Monkey, well known for his trickery, changed into an ant to retrieve the Bead. Conduct an exercise exploring the various movement, acrobatics, trickery, etc. that The Monkey possibly could carry out and also how it changed into an ant.



## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

- What are the striking differences between the facial features of thunder gods Chiuta (Malawi, Chewa) and Tlaloc (Mexico, Aztec)?
- Encourage learners to imagine how the characters in the story above and other stories in the pack might speak. Encourage them to explore their voices paying particular attention to:
  1. their speech patterns;
  2. accent;
  3. projection, emphasis and inflections.
- Ask learners to list the various storytelling/drama elements that they would use to bring the above story or any other story in the pack alive. Ask them to justify their answers with reasons why they have chosen the particular elements to tell the story.
- Discuss the sort of activities that might take place during the celebration of the return of The Green Stone Bead. Discuss, the costumes, colours, songs, mask and masquerades that might be used for the celebrations.



### Activity 3: English/Literacy

- Ask pupils to list foreign words found in the stories e.g. Arabic, Asian (Indian), etc.
- Choose an object, write a letter to the people from where the object originates telling them why you've chosen the object, what you like about it and how you will preserve it for future generations.



- Choose an object, god or goddess and compile a mini-factfile about the country/continent of the object's origin.
- Choose an object and list three or more words to describe it. Think about adjectives that best describe the chosen object and why they have chosen the words.

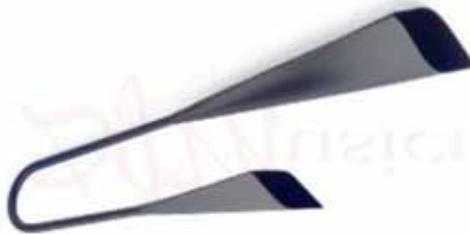
## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

- Use an image of an object or artefact to write an imaginative story.
- Write about Ananse and The Monkey and find words to describe the friendship between them as intimated in the synopsis of 'The Green Stone Bead'.

### Activity 4: Musical Composition

#### Activities

- Ask learners to analyse the lyric of the song "We will charm Olokun with love", included in the pack. Learners could pay particular attention to:
  1. The poetry in the lyric
  2. Tactics being employed by the singers
  3. The level of their self-esteem and confidence
  4. The seriousness with which they have embraced their mission
- Encourage learners to write their own lyric using the song above as a stimuli
- Discuss the musical composition for each re-enactment in the activities above bearing in mind the different features of the characters, using pitch, texture, volume, etc.



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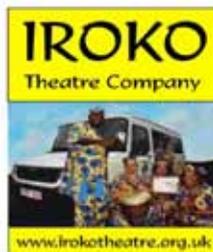


Brekete



Djun-Djun

## African Drums & Percussion



Sogo



Djembe



Kpanlogo



Conga



Gan-gan



Okoga



Tamalin



Bata



Balafon



Bongo



Tambour



Sekere



Sho-Sho



Clave



Tambourine



Agogo



Woodblock

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

### FUN QUIZ

- 1. Who or what is Ananse?**
  - A) An African name for Germany
  - B) The African name for Brer Rabbit
  - C) Ananse, the spider is the trickster character originally from Ghana, West Africa.
- 2. Which country does the Mask of Tlaloc come from?**
  - A) South Africa
  - B) Slovenia
  - C) Mexico (the Aztec Kingdom)
- 3. What type of god is the Greek/Roman god Ares?**
  - A) God of peace and harmony
  - B) River goddess
  - C) God of war
- 4. What is the King of Benin called?**
  - A) Ebu of Benin
  - B) Oba of Benin
  - C) Uchebe, The Highest
- 5. What is the name of the red hat worn in the Ottoman Empire?**
  - A) Fez
  - B) Turkiye
  - C) Otto
- 6. What do the Yoruba people believe about the Iroko tree?**
  - A) The Yoruba people believe that the Iroko tree is never to be believed.
  - B) The Yoruba people believe that the Iroko tree contains a spirit that must not be disturbed.
  - C) The Yoruba people believe that the Iroko tree is best cut down to make firewood.
- 7. What type of goddess is Atargatis?**
  - A) Atargatis is the Mexican river goddess
  - B) Atargatis is a Greek/Roman river goddess
  - C) Atargatis is the Hindu river goddess

OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

**(FUN QUIZ CONTD.)**

**8. Who is Ijapa?**

- A) Ijapa, the snake is a trickster character from Haiti.
- B) Ijapa, the tortoise is a trickster character from the Yoruba people of Nigeria.
- C) Ijapa, the monkey is a trickster character from China.

**9. In the story, “Ananse and The Python”, what is the name of the sky god who helped protect the villagers from the python?**

- A) Nyame (from Ghana).
- B) Okpotogume
- C) Olawole

**10. What is Eben?**

- A) Eben is the name of the Benin ceremonial sword.
- B) Eben is the trickster character from Japan
- C) Eben is a Lithuanian trickster character

**11. Water spirits are linked to:**

- A) Fertility
- B) War and hunger
- C) Darkness.

**12. Snakes can be symbols of:**

- A) Crawling
- B) Talking
- C) Regeneration

**13. The image of Mami Wata, the water spirit is thought to have been inspired by:**

- A) Asian depictions of mermaids
- B) Chinese depictions of mermaids
- C) European depictions of mermaids

## OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

### (FUN QUIZ CONTD.)

**14. Manasa Devi is a:**

- A) Kenya folk goddess of snakes
- B) Hindu folk goddess of snakes
- C) Mexican folk goddess of snakes

**15. Sango (Shango) is a:**

- A) Yoruba thunder god
- B) Indian thunder god
- C) Japanese thunder god

**16. Although frequently vengeful and destructive, thunder gods are essential to life because of:**

- A) their association with witches
- B) their association with rain and fertility
- C) their association with monkeys

**17. In the mythical story of 'Oluronbi', she fulfilled her promise by sacrificing her only child to the:**

- A) Rowan tree
- B) Tree of Life at The British Museum
- C) Iroko tree

**18. Thunder gods are often equipped with:**

- A) Aggressive objects such as lightning bolts, axes and hammers
- B) Bloutooth
- C) Green grasses

**19. Zeus, Jupiter and Thor are:**

- A) River goddesses
- B) Snake charmers
- C) Thunder gods

OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

**(FUN QUIZ CONTD.)**

- 20. As ‘the king of beast’, the lion is used on English heraldry to symbolise:**
- A) °Cowardice and trickery
  - B) Royalty, strength, bravery and nobility
  - C) Foolishness
- 21. The cockerels’ vocal announcements of the dawn link them to:**
- A) Laziness
  - B) War mongering
  - C) The rising sun and vigilance
- 22. According to Greek mythology, after Perseus beheaded the Gorgon Medusa, droplets of blood from the severed head fell into the sea and became what the Greeks called:**
- A) Rain drops
  - B) Tear drops
  - C) ‘Gorgiea’ or Red Coral
- 23. In medieval Europe, strings of coral beads were placed around the necks of babies and children to help:**
- A) Keep away sickness and to help with general protection
  - B) Them to fall asleep
  - C) Keep them warm
- 24. The Islamic Nalain and the Kingdom of Benin ceremonial sword (Eben) are both similar in shape. They are both:**
- A) Used for farming
  - B) Used for dancing only
  - C) High status and sacred objects

OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

**(FUN QUIZ CONTD.)**

- 25. To the Igbo people in Nigeria, the red hat known as “red ozo” or “ichie okpu” is an important indicator of:**
- A) Poverty
  - B) Wealth and high status
  - C) Fertility
- 26. In Aztec culture, members of the elite would often wear beads in the shape of various animals such as frogs and turtles, which are associated with:**
- A) Rainfall and fertility
  - B) Death
  - C) War
- 27. To many cultures, the method by which textiles are produced is as important as their design as a means of expressing:**
- A) Love
  - B) Hatred
  - C) Identity
- 28. Oshun is a beautiful human wife of the:**
- A) Aztec thunder god, Tlaloc
  - B) Hindu thunder god, Indra
  - C) Yoruba thunder god, Sango (Shango)
- 29. Oya was one of the three wives of:**
- A) Oba of Benin
  - B) The Yoruba thunder god, Sango (Shango)
  - C) The Mexican King
- 30. IROKO Theatre Company was formed since:**
- A) 1996
  - B) 2006
  - C) 2012

1. A) Ananse, the spider is the trickster character originally from Ghana
2. C) The Mask of Tlaloc comes from Mexico (the Aztec Kingdom)
3. C) Ares is a Greek/Roman war god
4. B) The King of Benin is referred to as The Oba
5. A) The red hat worn in the Ottoman Empire is called a Fez
6. B) The Yoruba believe the Iroko tree contains a spirit that must not be disturbed
7. B) Atargatis is a Greek/Roman river goddess
8. B) Ijapa the tortoise is a trickster character from the Yoruba people of Nigeria
9. A) The name of the sky god that helped to protect the villagers from the python is Nyame (Ghana)
10. A) Eben is the name of the Benin ceremonial sword

## FUN QUIZ ANSWERS

OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

20. As the king of beasts, the lion is used on English heraldry to symbolise:  
**B) Royalty, strength, bravery and nobility**
19. Zeus, Jupiter and Thor are:  
**C) Thunder gods**
18. Thunder gods are often equipped with:  
**A) Aggressive objects such as lightning bolts, axes and hammers**
17. In the mythical story of 'Olurogbi', she fulfilled her promise by sacrificing her only child to the:  
**A) Iroko tree**
16. Although frequently vengeful and destructive, thunder gods are essential to life because of:  
**B) their association with rain and fertility**
15. Sango (Shango) is a:  
**A) Yoruba thunder god**
14. Manasa Devi is a:  
**B) Hindu folk goddess of snakes**
13. The image of Miami Vata, the water spirit is thought to have been inspired by:  
**C) European depictions of mermaids**
12. Snakes can be symbols of:  
**C) Regeneration**
11. Water spirits are linked to:  
**A) Fertility**

## (FUN QUIZ ANSWERS CONTD.)

OUR SHARED HERITAGE PROJECT

30. IROKO Theatre Company was formed since:  
A) 1996
29. Oya was one of the three wives of:  
B) The Yoruba thunder god, Sango (Shango)
28. Oshun is a beautiful human wife of the:  
C) Yoruba thunder god, Sango (Shango)
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C) Identity
26. In Aztec culture, members of the elite would often wear beads in the shape of various animals such as frogs and turtles, which are associated with:  
A) Rainfall and fertility
25. To the Igbo people in Nigeria, the red hat known as "red ozo" or "iche okpu" is an important indicator of:  
B) Wealth and high status
24. The Islamic Nalain and the Kingdom of Benin ceremonial sword (Eben) are both similar in shape. They are both:  
C) High status and sacred objects
23. In medieval Europe, strings of coral beads were placed around the necks of babies and children to help:  
A) Keep away sickness and to help with general protection
22. According to Greek mythology, after Perseus beheaded the Gorgon Medusa, droplets of blood from the severed head fell into the sea and became what the Greeks called:  
C) 'Gorgiea' or Red Coral
21. The cockereis' vocal announcements of the dawn link them to:  
C) The rising sun and vigilance

## (FUN QUIZ ANSWERS CONTD.)

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**The Learning Resource Pack is available online for a FREE download.**

*The Fun Quiz is also accessible via our website. The system has an inbuilt mechanism to recognise emails and if you have done the first stage of the quiz, it will automatically forward you to the next session when next you visit. Please visit the project page on our website for more fun. All the best!*

*DVD*

# IROKO

Theatre Company  
African Theatre, Music, Dance, Arts & Crafts

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