

Arts 2L / INTL 24: Visual Arts of Africa
SAMPLE – Slide identification - Significance
Cadge-Moore

Part of each exam will include slide identification. The slides shown will depict subjects that have been discussed in class and the textbook. You will be asked to write a short essay (paragraph) that shows that you know what the subject is and why we are studying it. Your essay should include relevant facts about the subject and its cultural context. It should also include a discussion of its significance to a study of African arts using some of the concepts and terms used in class and the text.

For example, this is the Benin Ivory Mask discussed in Chapter One. Below are some sample essays that might be written about this subject.



The identification of the subject is worth 2 points, and the essay discussion up to 10. These questions will be worth a total of 12 points. Essay has a grade value of roughly:

A	B	C	D	F
10	9	8	7	6
				below 6

Grade:

A. This is a 16th century royal ivory mask, probably worn by Benin Oba (king) Esigie as a waist ornament, thought to represent Idia, the Queen Mother, or Iyoba. She was a powerful member of the royal court and helped to end a civil war at the beginning of Esigie's reign. She was considered so powerful that she was not allowed to meet with her son face to face. The use of ivory in the mask signifies wealth, royalty and power. The mask wears a crown of bearded faces that represent the Portuguese, who traded with the Benin and were seen as bringers of wealth and power, supernatural ability to travel on land and water, and whose help was instrumental in some military victories. In 1897, the British launched a 'Punitive Expedition' to crush Benin's resistance to colonial rule. They burned Benin City and looted vast amounts of treasure and artwork, which was then sold to pay for the expedition.

B. During Esigie's reign, he often wore this mask on his hip to commemorate his mother Idia, who helped win a civil war. He wore the mask at ceremonial gatherings. On top of the mask are carved Portuguese men because the Benin people admired the Portuguese. Scarification is depicted on the mask's forehead. This is the Queen mother.

C. The significance of the mask of Idia is that she was the mother of King Eigise of Benin and she stopped the civil war. The mask was carried around by the king. We know this piece of art to be from Benin, an important kingdom in Africa's past, because it has big eyes.

D. Benin mask with row of faces attached to what seems to be the face's crown. This signifies that figure head has power over the man figures on its head. It's a queen head made of ivory. Queen was a mother.

F. Benin mask with hair of faces attached to what seems to be the face's beards. This signifies that figure head has power over the man figures on its head. It's a queen head made of ivory.